

1. Introduction

The Marine Institute has conducted groundfish surveys to determine the distribution and abundance of commercial fish around Ireland since 1990. Historically, the surveys were carried out on commercial fishing vessels and later included small research ships. The Irish Groundfish Survey (IGFS) in its current form commenced in 2003 on the 65m research vessel, the *R.V. Celtic Explorer*.

The IGFS forms part of a co-ordinated International Bottom Trawl Survey programme (IBTS) under the umbrella of the International Council of the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). In Irish waters currently, France and Ireland cover the Celtic Sea area, Ireland covers the shelf West of Ireland, Ireland and the UK Scotland cover the north coast of Ireland and the UK Northern Ireland covers the Irish Sea (Fig 1).

Fisheries management often relies on commercial data to estimate the quantity of fish removed from a stock annually. In contrast, scientific surveys such as the IGFS provide data for juvenile fish not typically found in commercial data in order to predict what will be replenishing the stock in the coming year(s). In addition, areas outside of commercial hotspots are also monitored.

The IGFS contributes to Ireland's international obligation to supply scientific data that support the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Data is collected under the Data Collection Framework (DCF), which is the main instrument used by the European Commission to collect scientific data for the CFP.

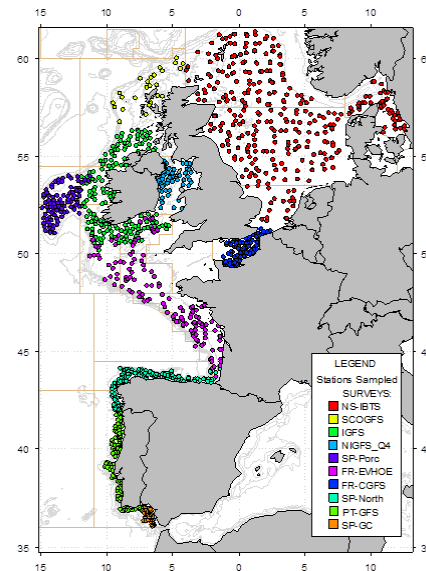


Fig 1. Map of the IGFS in the context of the other IBTS quarter 3&4 Surveys.