North Eastern IFCA Edible Crab (*Cancer pagurus*) Fishery Status Report 2024

Landings

Landings data are collected from the MMO iFish2 data set and monthly NEIFCA shellfish catch returns submitted by permitted vessels. These returns include landed weight, the number of active days, fishing effort, and the area fished. A breakdown of key statistics for the European lobster fishery within the NEIFCA district can be found in the Multiple Indicator Framework (MIF) (Table 1).

Landings per unit effort (LPUE) is a key metric for analysing trends in the fishery, allowing for the observation of seasonal variations (Figure 1). LPUE is expressed in kilograms per 100 pots hauled (kg/100 pots).

In 2024, landings of edible crabs from NEIFCA-permitted vessels fell to 489.4 tonnes, down from 622.3 tonnes in 2023 (Figure 1). Fishing effort within the NEIFCA District also declined, with 2.7 million pots hauled in 2024 compared to 3.3 million in 2023. MMO iFish2 data show an increase in overall crab landings between 2023 and 2024, although the broader trend since 2019 has been downward. These figures include both inshore and offshore "vivier" vessels, which explains the higher landings reported compared to NEIFCA's catch return system. The rise in offshore landings in 2024 is likely due to increased fishing effort in offshore areas. For inshore edible crab stocks, the average landings per unit effort (LPUE) declined from 26.5 kg/100 pots in 2023 to 22.9 kg/100 pots in 2024 (Figure 2). This drop in both landings and LPUE may indicate a decline in inshore crab stocks. However, further investigation is needed to better understand the relationship between inshore and offshore stocks, and more detailed data on offshore fishing effort is required.

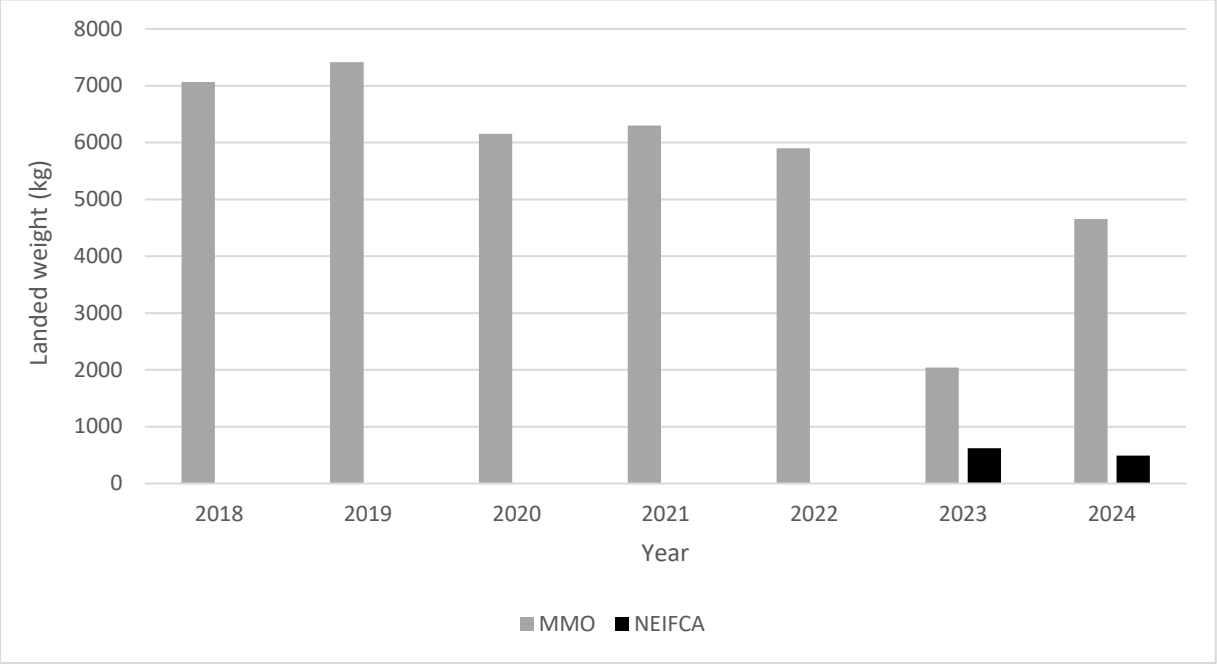

Figure 1: NEIFCA district landings of edible crabs (Cancer pagurus) 2018 to 2024. NEIFCA catch returns (black) & MMO iFish2 (grey).

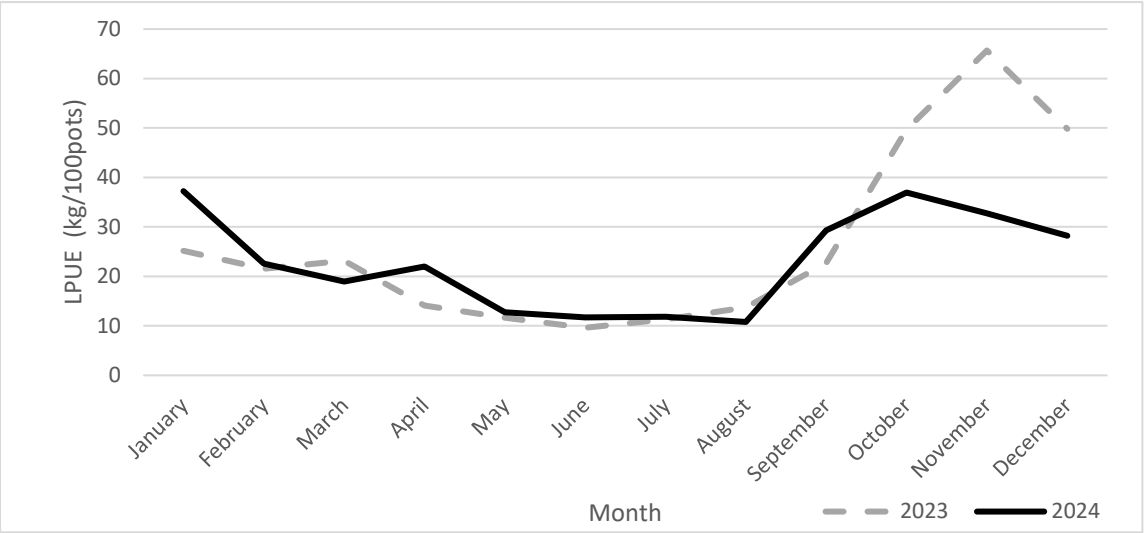

Figure 2: LPUE of edible crab per month for 2023 and 2024. Data: NEIFCA catch returns.

Biometric Data

Biometric data are collected through quayside sampling at Bridlington, Scarborough, and Whitby, observer trips aboard NEIFCA-permitted vessels, and NEIFCA-led surveys (Table 1). These data—focusing on size and sex—are used to monitor trends in the edible crab population, both above and below the minimum landing size.

Observer trip data from 2022 to 2024 include crabs of all sizes. The mean carapace length for both male and female edible crabs increased slightly between 2023 and 2024: males from 136.0 mm to 136.9 mm, and females from 141.2 mm to 141.9 mm (Figure 3). However, both sexes showed a decrease in average size compared to 2022, indicating a potential shift in population structure.

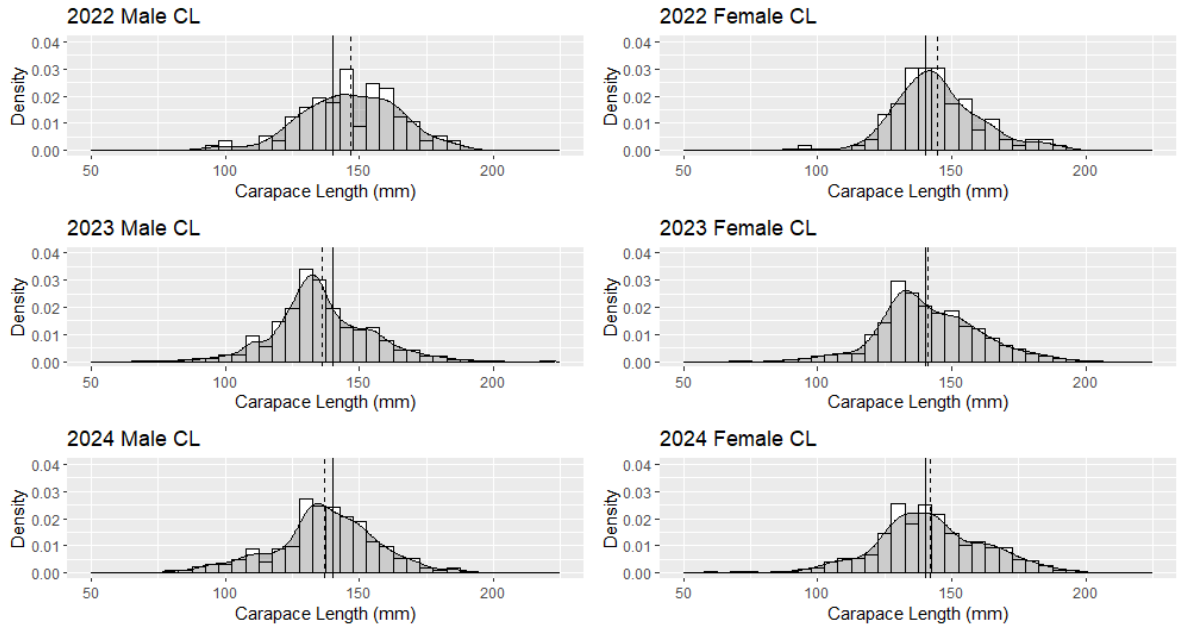

Figure 3. Size density of edible crabs between 2022-2024 separated by sex. Solid line is the minimum landing size (140mm) and the dashed line is the mean. Data: NEIFCA observer trips.

Table 1: Edible crab (Cancer paguras) Multiple Indicator Framework.

Fishery Overview	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	**Data Source**
Total Landings	7067.54	7411.9	6152.8	6296.46	5900	2039.7796	4653.4311	Tonnes	MMO
Total Landings						**622.3442**	**489.3785**	Tonnes	NEIFCA Returns
Total Effort (Pots Hauled)	3.09	3.08	2.29	3.2	2.67	N/A	N/A	Million	MMO
Total Effort (Pots Hauled)						**3.32**	**2.72**	Million	NEIFCA Returns
Total Effort (Pots Set)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**78**	**77**	Thousand	NEIFCA Returns
Q1 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	7.3	14.04	10.27	10.1	13	12.4/**13.7**	12.7/**15**	Q1 %	MMO/NEIFCA Returns
Q2 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	12.06	14.59	12.98	13.5	13.6	16.7/**16.6**	11.8/**19.4**	Q2 %	MMO/NEIFCA Returns
Q3 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	41.84	36.93	40.35	35.4	37	32/**32.1**	33.7/**36.3**	Q3 %	MMO/NEIFCA Returns
Q4 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	38.8	34.44	36.4	41	36.4	38.9/**37.6**	41.8/**29.3**	Q4 %	MMO/NEIFCA Returns
Primary Reference Points	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	
Mean LPUE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**26.5**	**22.9**	KG/100 pots hauled	NEIFCA Returns
Economic	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	
Average Annual Price	2.28	2.32	1.78	2.43	2.71	2.59	2.21	£/kg	NEIFCA IFCO reports
Gross Catch Value	16.18	17.19	10.95	15.3	15.98	6.81/**1.6**	10.28/**1**	**£ Million**	MMO/NEIFCA Returns
No. Active Vessels	268	266	273	259	226	199	195	#	NEIFCA Returns
Biometric Above 87mm (quayside)	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	
Average Carapace Length M (mm)	154	155	155	153	154	**155**	**153**	mm	NEIFCA Survey
Average Carapace Length F (mm)	157	158	156	153	156	**156**	**155**	mm	NEIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length M (mm)	220	224	200	195	213	**220**	**212**	mm	NEIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length F (mm)	220	220	210	188	203	**207**	**207**	mm	NEIFCA Survey
Sex Ratio (% Female)	52.78	54.32	49.55	98.86	54.46	**55.90**	**53.57**	%	NEIFCA Survey
***Biometric all sizes**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	
Average Carapace Length M (mm)	**128	**127	N/A	N/A	135	**136**	**136.9**	mm	NEIFCA Survey
Average Carapace Length F (mm)	**142	**141	N/A	N/A	142	**141.2**	**141.9**	mm	NEIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length M (mm)	**220	**212	N/A	N/A	185	**220**	**206**	mm	NEIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length F (mm)	**209	**207	N/A	N/A	191	**202**	**196**	mm	NEIFCA Survey
Sex Ratio (% Female)	**50.8	**48.3	N/A	N/A	46.7	**41.2**	**47.4**	%	NEIFCA Survey

***This section includes all data from observer trips and NEIFCA surveys with sizes below and above 140mm.**
**** This data was taken from surveys on the NEIFCA vessel NEG3, with used of blocked escape gaps in the pots.**