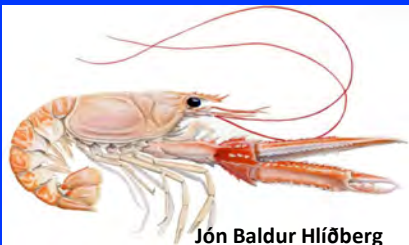


The beginning of catching Norway lobster in Iceland - stories from Höfn i Hornafirði-

Sigurjón Arason
Chief Engineer, Matís
Professor emeritus, University of Iceland



Hornafjörður - photo from 1959.



Photographer: Hans-Jörg Kühl

The beginning of lobster catching in Iceland.



Adalbjörg RE-5 (22 gross tons) was chartered



Von VE-279 caught lobsters for the lobster processing in Vestmannaeyjar in 1940.

Crab junk or delicacy food?

- The pioneers that started the catching and processing Norwegian lobster in Hornafjörður-



Ari Sigurjónsson



Start of lobster catching in Hornafjörður

- In 1954, KASK received a license for one boat to catch lobster with a bottom troll (trawl). The catch was very small and there were constant failures.
- There were a few more attempts to catch lobster before 1959. Then Ásgrímur the manager of KASK contacted Ara Sigurjónsson, my father, who was the captain of Hafbjörg NK 7
- My father had gained knowledge in handling bottom troll from his work on side-trawlers.
- My father said: "Ásgrímur was very interested in this catching and firmly believed that there was a catchable amount of lobster at the southeast coast".

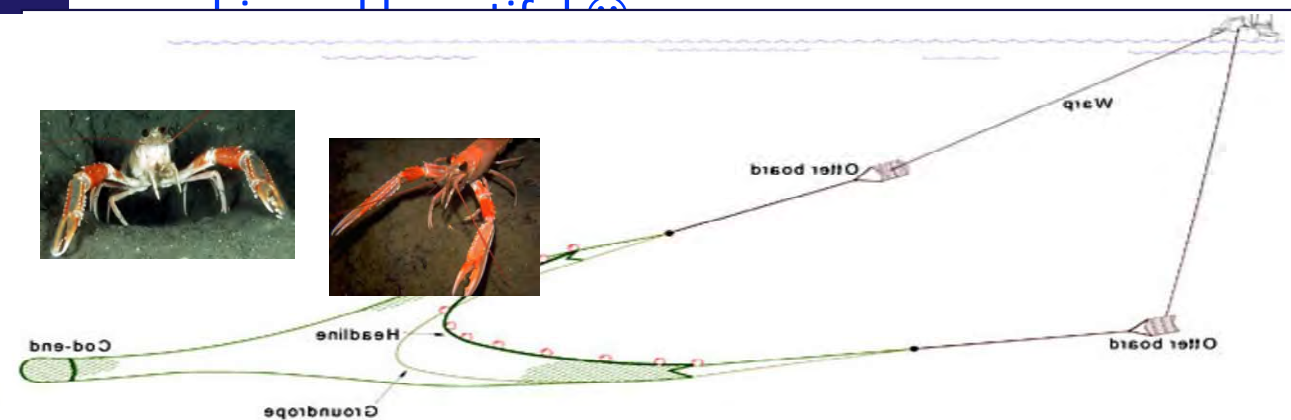
Catching gear used at Hafbjörg

matís

The first year, 1959, two lobster trolls (trawls) from Denmark were tried out. The trolls were made of hemp and the durability was short. After 1960 nylon trolls came with a better durability.

At first, towing was only done in “Breiðamerkurdýpi”, and in the beginning it was towed for one to one and a half hour at a time, as the towing areas were unknown. They got into a lot of trouble with the Danish trolls. The troll was so narrow that it was difficult to get the lobster into the bag. They spent 2-3 hours to take the troll onboard and shaking the lobster out of it.

My mother helped my father to make some improvements of the trolls. When we went back catching it was completely different, the catch was good, and the lobster



What kind of boat was Hafbjörg NK 7?

Built in Nyköbing in Denmark in 1924 from oak 25 tons.



- When most were caught, they landed three times a week and they usually had a full hold and the lobster was on deck too. The most they got was 5 tons of whole lobster after 2 days in the early years.
- The lobsters were landed whole at the beginning and did not stack well and required a lot of storage space. In 1964, man began to take the lobster apart on board and only lobster tails were landed.
- Sometimes they lost the troll along with the trolldoor. They hit a rock that didn't come under the depth-sounder. They didn't have asdic or radar in the boat at that time.
- Dad was asked if they had eaten the lobster themselves when he first went fishing. "Yes, yes, we did. We cooked the lobster on board. We ate it boiled with potatoes and tomato sauce."



People's attitude towards lobster in the early years of lobster catching

In the beginning, the discussion was negative, and many had no believe in this lobster catching.

A few local boats were fishing with the Danish seine during these time, and some captains made fun of Hafbjörg's crew "and their damn crab junk". The lobster was also called, grasshopper or the rat of the sea!

In those years, the larger boats from Hornafjörður were fishing herring in the summer and fall, but around 1966 most of them had stopped after the herring collapse.

After that, the number of local lobster catching boats increased, but these were large boats and well equipped with navigational and fish-finding equipment and with larger engines than Hafbjörg.

The number of lobster boats increased in Hornafjörður

Sævaldur SU 2, began catching 1961



Ver SF, began catching 1964



Dagný SF, began catching 1964



Adalsteinn Sigurðsson, fiskifræðingur:

Haf- og fiskirannsóknir

HUMARLEIT OG HUMARMERKING

Laugardaginn 11. maí var lagt upp í hálfmánaðar leiðangur á v/s Maríu Júlíu til leitar að nýjum humarmiðum og til merkinga á humar. Leiðangurstjóri var höfundur þessarar greinar, skipherra Sigurður Árnason og leiðsögumaður við suðausturlandið, Ari Sigurjónsson, Norðfirði.

hverri stöð, hve mikið fékkst af leturhumar miðað við klukkustundar tog og meðallengd skjaldar og hala í cm.

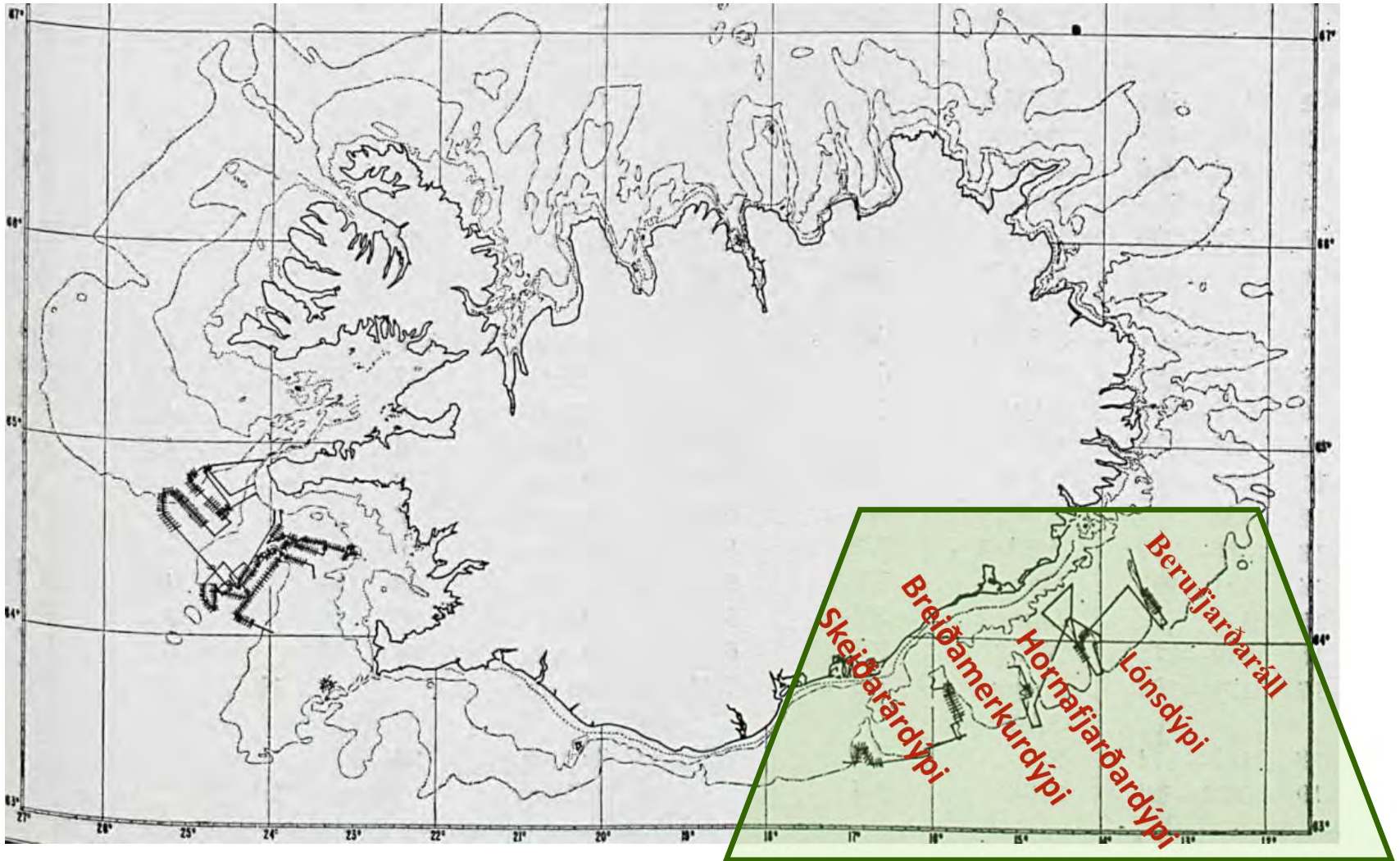
1. mynd sýnir togstöðvarnar og númer þeirra.

2. mynd sýnir, hvar leitað var og hvar dýptarmælirinn sýndi líklegan togbotn. Þó við fengjum engan humar á fyrstu

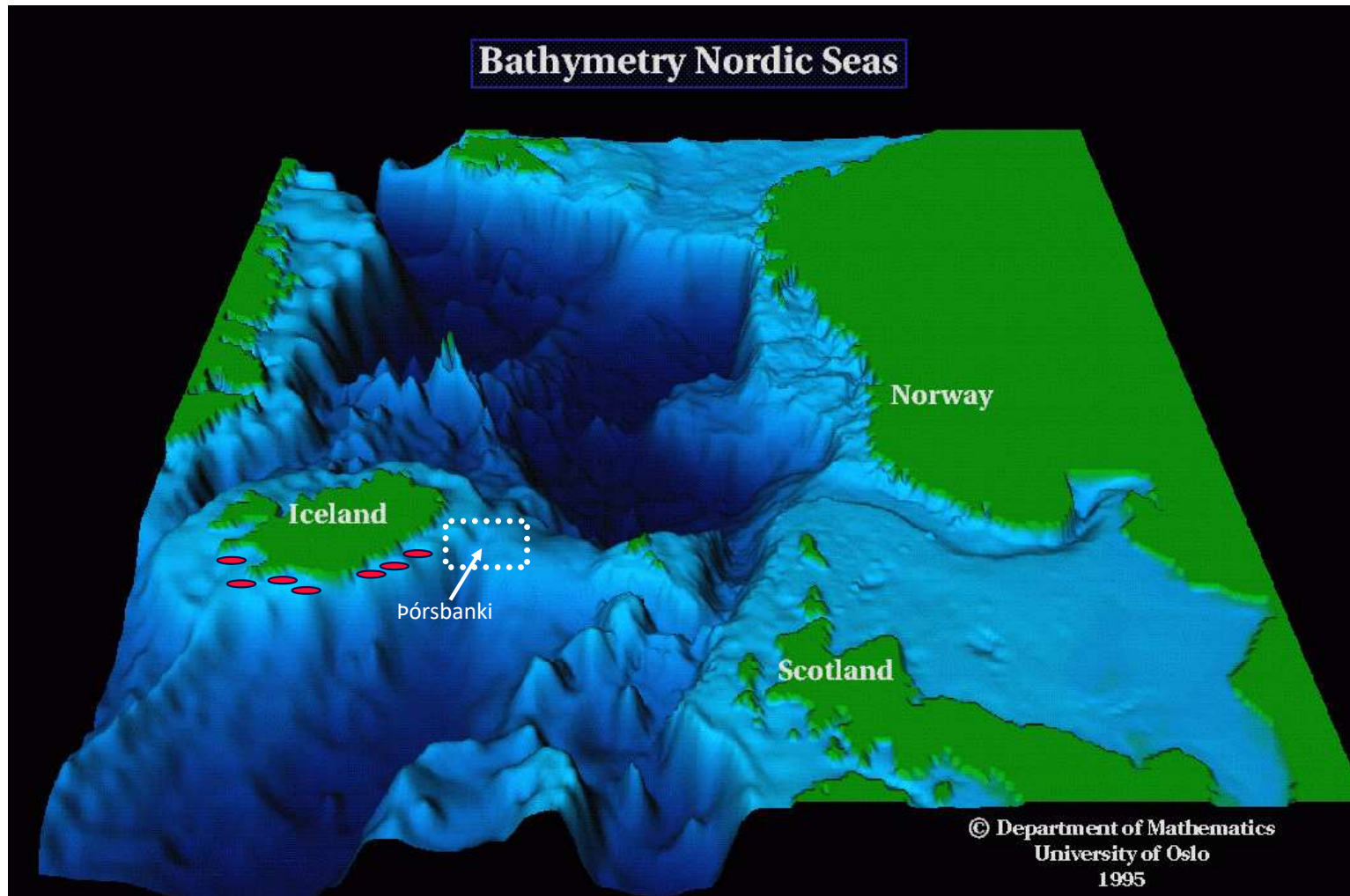


In 1963, a half-month marine research was carried out on the María Júlía (guard ship) to search for new lobster catching grounds, investigate the distribution of lobsters and tagging lobsters.

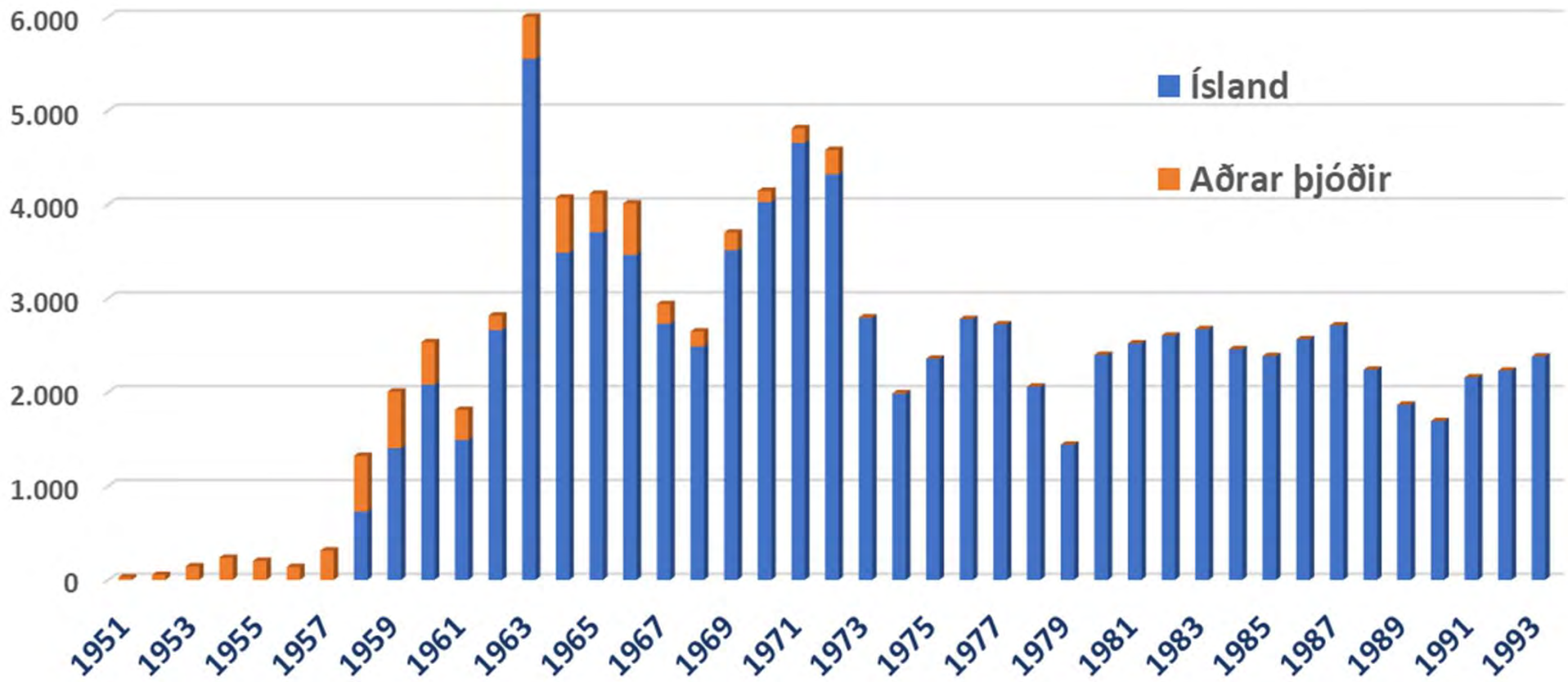
The catching areas where this research was carried on



Icelandic continental shelves



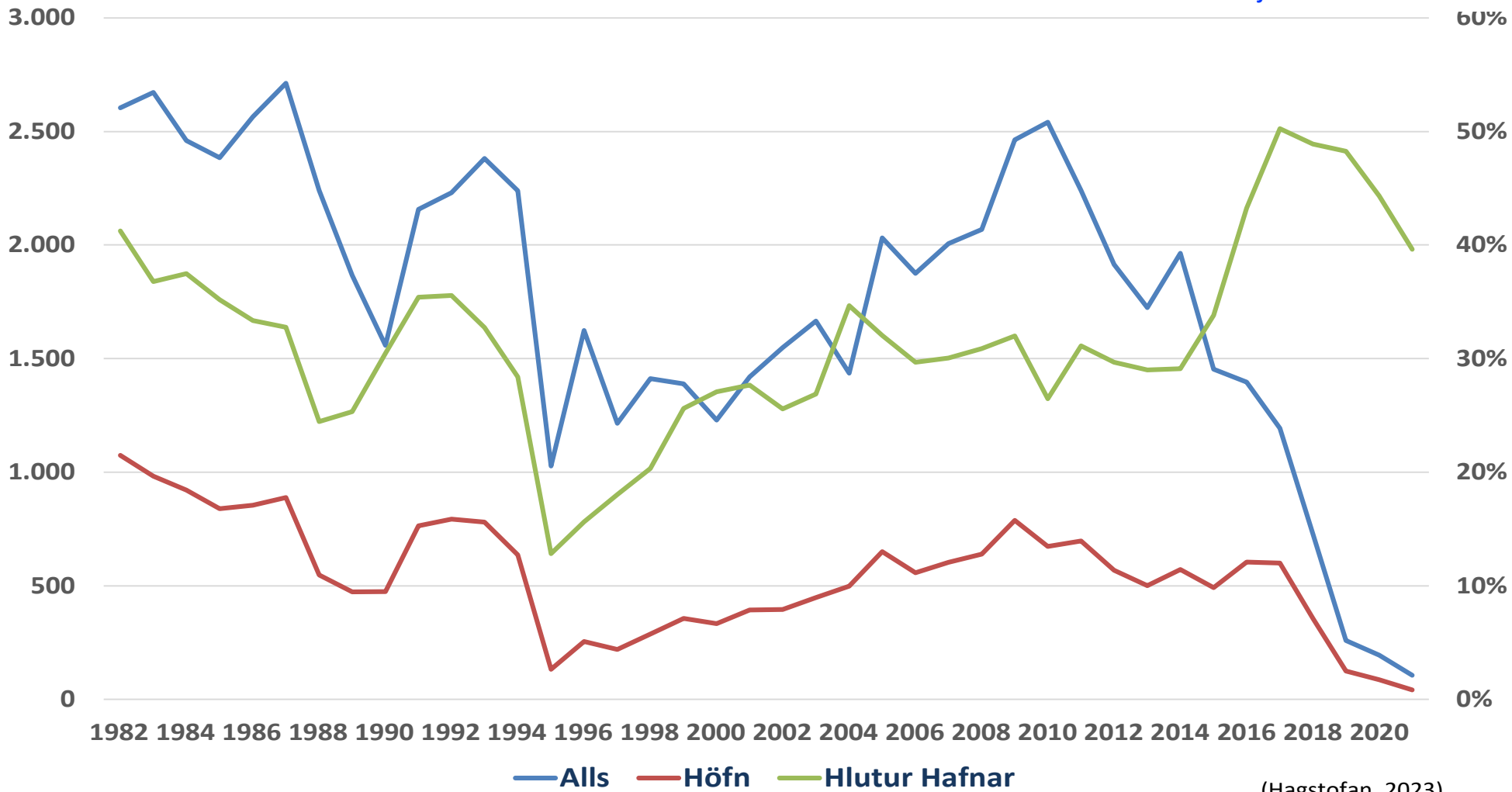
Lobster catching at Iceland



(Ástand nytjastofna sjávar og ráðgjöf 2021, Hafró)

Lobster catch 1982-2021

Hornafjörður's share of the catch



(Hagstofan, 2023)

Development of lobster catching in Scottish waters

The Fishery for *Nephrops* in Scottish waters has developed from landings of a **few tons in the early 1960s** to ***over 30,000 tons in the mid 2000s***. Landings in **2011 of just under 25,000 tons** had a first sale value of **£86.7 million** making *Nephrops* the second most valuable species landed into Scotland.



Hvanney SF



Ólafur Tryggvason SF



Sigurfari SF



Gissur Hvíti SF



Handling of catches on board in Hafbjörg 1964

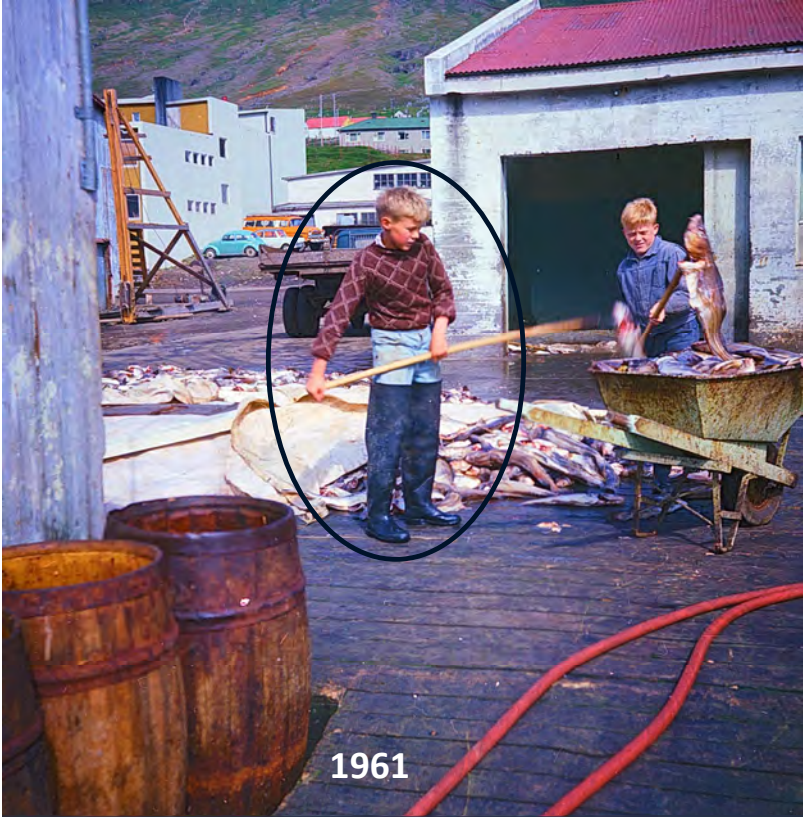


Photo: Sigurður Eymundsson

Trolling



Photo: Sigurður Eymundsson



Thanks!

