Mortality of fish escaping trawl gears

Selective fishing has a large potential to reduce bycatch and discards, but it can be justified only if significant numbers of escaping fish survive. Many factors affect the survival of fish escaping from fishing gears and few studies have adequately explained the full range of stress, injury and mortality that can occur when fish escape from trawl codends under commercial fishing conditions. There are various options available to improve the survival of escapes. Installing escape panels or other sorting devices at strategic positions in a fishing gear can enhance escape and the survival of juveniles and non-target species. Facilitating the voluntary escape of fish through various constructional and operational solutions would increase the likelihood of their survival. In some cases, use of other fishing methods may be an appropriate approach to reducing unaccounted mortality associated with escape.
Cover illustration:
Fish escaping from a codend equipped with a square mesh panel. Courtesy of Mr Vesa Tschernij.