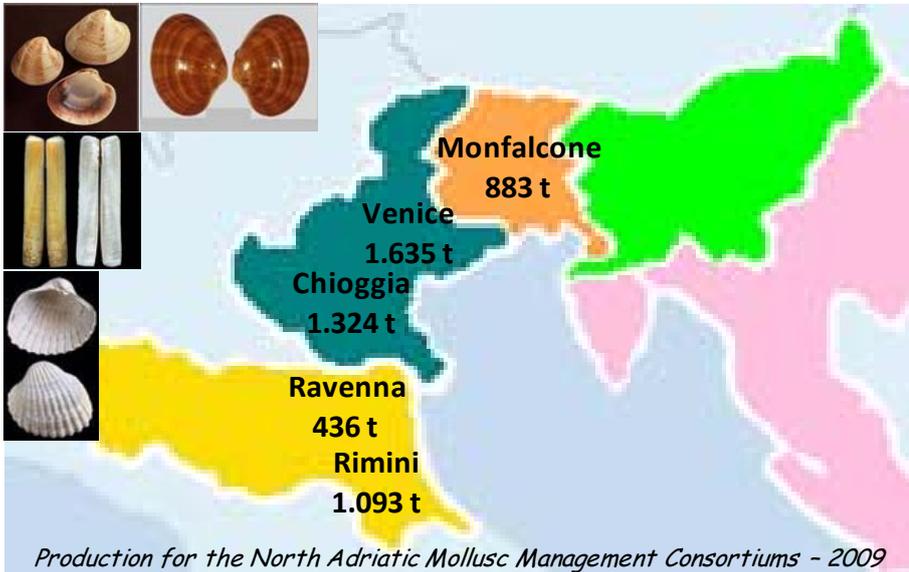


## THE STRIPED VENUS CLAM CRISIS



This issue of the newsletter discusses the current crisis affecting the striped Venus clam fishing sector in the North Adriatic and the production of molluscs harvested by hydraulic dredging. The bivalve mollusc sector, and the striped Venus clam sector in particular, is experiencing a time of crisis that is testing the resilience of operators in the sector.

As the map shows, the data provided by the area's Mollusc and Striped Venus Clam Management Consortiums indicates that bivalve production ranged from 436 tonnes in Ravenna to 1,635 tonnes in Venice.

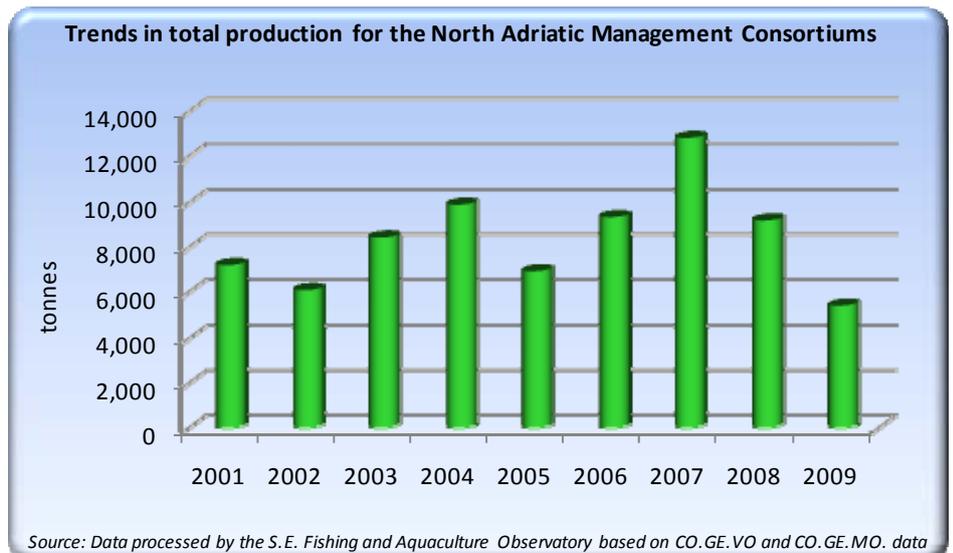
The figures concerning the decline in productivity with respect to 2008 are much more meaningful, ranging from -15% in Ravenna to -61% in Monfalcone, with an average of -49%.

The most recent die-off of striped Venus clams, which progressed from north to south, was recorded in mid-2008. The reason for this die-off has not been determined, but it is believed that several concurrent causes are to blame. Although several studies have been conducted, scientific evidence supporting this hypothesis has yet to be provided. This has led to pessimism and exasperation among operators in the sector, who have had to face months-long fishing bans due to a crisis that now seems to have become entrenched and permanent.

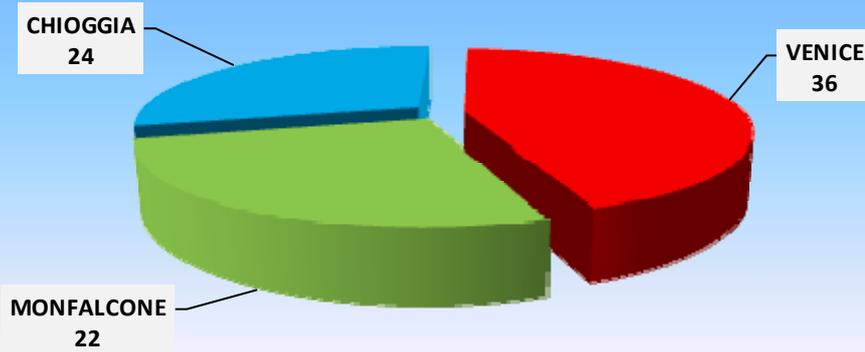
This graph provides clear confirmation of the existence of a crisis in the mollusc sector, and the North Adriatic striped Venus clam sector in particular.

The total 2009 production of striped Venus clams, carpet shells, cockles and smooth clams for the area was 5,371 tonnes, representing a 42% decline with respect to the previous year and a 58% decline with respect to 2007, which was an exceptionally good year.

The striped Venus clam was the most important contributor to the decline in the Consortiums' bivalve mollusc production. This was due primarily to the previously mentioned die-off, which led to long fishing bans that are still in effect in the North Adriatic maritime districts.



### Number of boats authorized to harvest smooth clams 2010



Source: Data processed by the S.E. Fishing and Aquaculture Observatory based on CO.GE.VO and CO.GE.MO. data

In the North Adriatic, 82 boats were authorized to fish smooth clams in 2010, an increase of 19 boats (+30%) compared to 2008. The striped Venus crisis has forced many affected operators to use their vessels to harvest smooth clams in an attempt to generate at least some, albeit minimal, economic return.

While the number of boats in Monfalcone only grew by one, the increase in Chioggia and Venice was more significant, with 7 boats and 11 boats respectively.

All of the 82 businesses that harvest

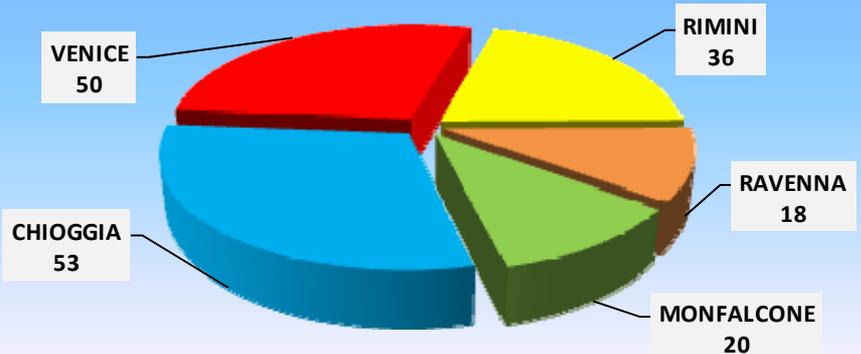
smooth clams are members of the North Adriatic Smooth Clam Producers Organization, with headquarters in Chioggia.

With respect to striped Venus clams, there were 177 boats authorized to harvest this species in the North Adriatic in 2010.

The period of crisis affecting the entire striped Venus clam sector has led to a loss of 19 boats with respect to 2008, corresponding to a 10% decrease.

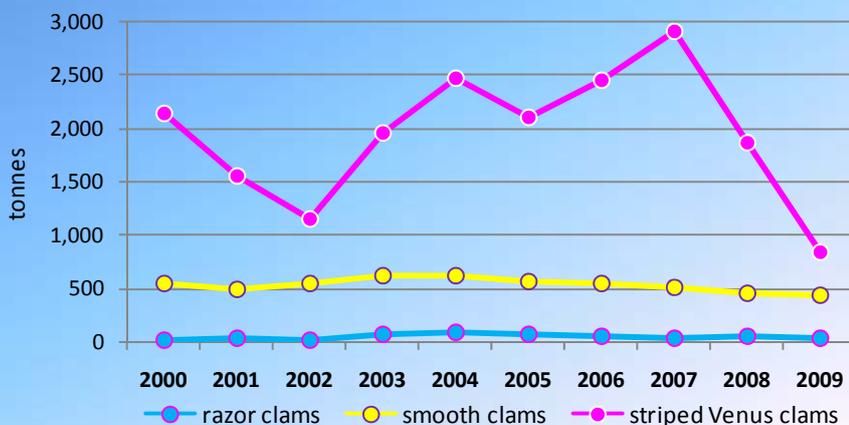
All of the boats that no longer harvest striped Venus clams switched their focus to smooth clams, which are more stable and have less significant fluctuations in production.

### Number of boats authorized to harvest striped Venus clams 2010



Source: Data processed by the S.E. Fishing and Aquaculture Observatory based on CO.GE.VO and CO.GE.MO. data

### Catches by species group – Chioggia Consortium



Source: Data processed by the S.E. Fishing and Aquaculture Observatory based on CO.GE.VO. data

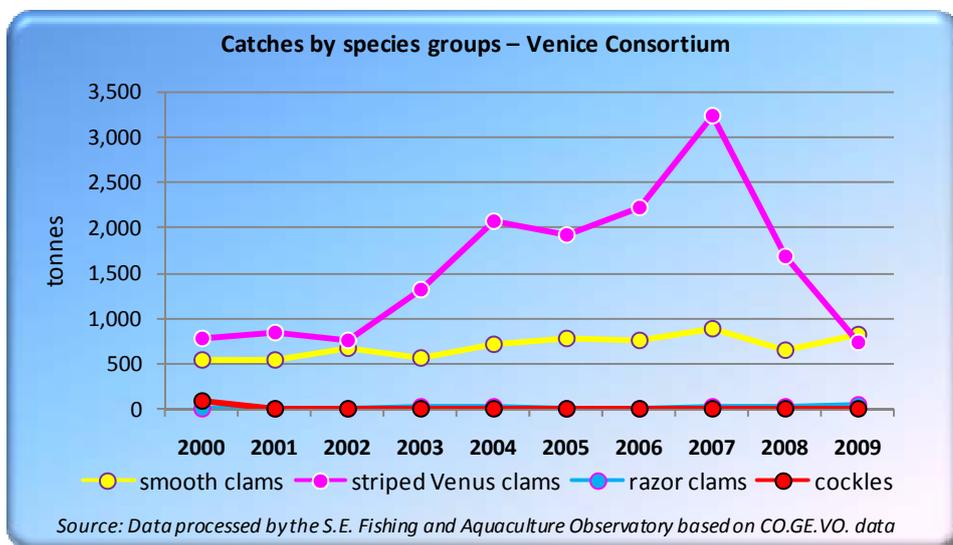
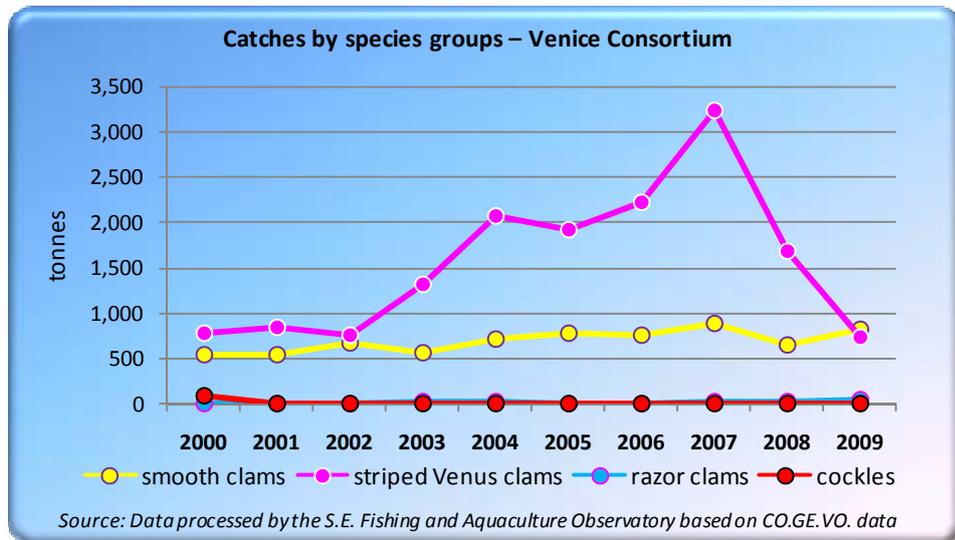
A discussion of the statistics for mollusc harvesting in the individual North Adriatic districts follows, starting with Chioggia in Veneto.

Analysis of the data provided by the Striped Venus Clam Management Consortium in Chioggia reveals that the striped Venus production for 2009 was 845 tonnes, a drop of 55% with respect to the previous year and a 71% decrease with respect to 2007.

The production figures for smooth clams have been more stable over time – in 2009 the total was 446

tonnes, only a 3% decrease with respect to 2008. Although the volume of razor clams harvested in 2009 was only 33 tonnes, this species also showed a significant decline in production (-38%) compared to the previous year.

Venice has also recorded a considerable decrease in the volume of striped Venus clams that have been harvested since the 2007 production peak. According to data provided by the Striped Venus Clam Management Consortium of Venice, 751 tonnes of striped Venus clams were harvested in 2009, which is less than the volume of smooth clams. The decrease with respect to 2008 was 56%, while the drop with respect to 2007 is 77%. In 2009 a total of 829 tonnes of smooth clams were harvested, an increase of 25% compared to 2008. The figures recorded for razor clams and cockles were much lower, totalling 55 quintals and 800 quintals respectively.



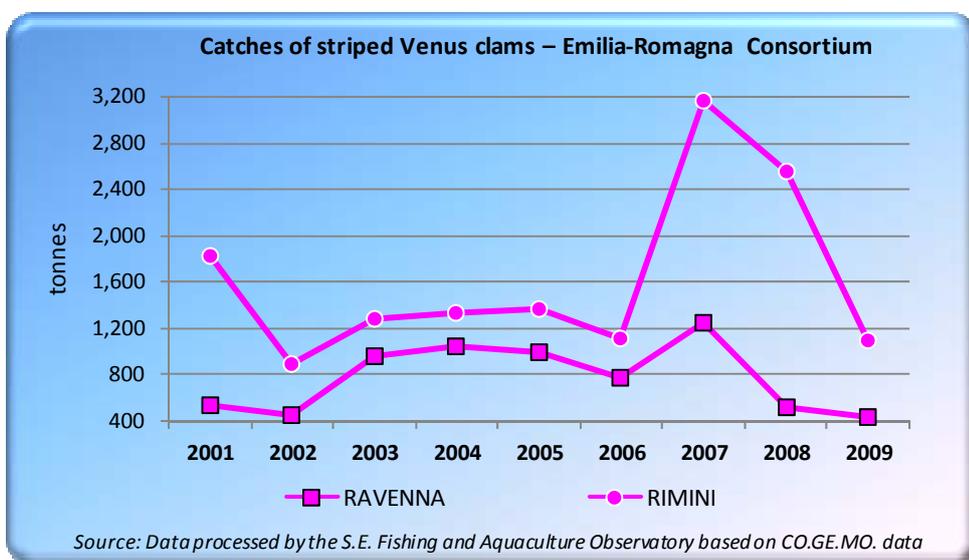
The data provided by the Mollusc Management Consortium indicates that 304 tonnes of striped Venus clams were harvested in Monfalcone. This represents a 61% drop with respect to the previous year, but is similar to the figure for 2007, although the low production in 2007 was due to commercial rather than biological issues.

The production of smooth clams improved, however, reaching a volume of 576 tonnes - a slight 4% increase compared to 2008.

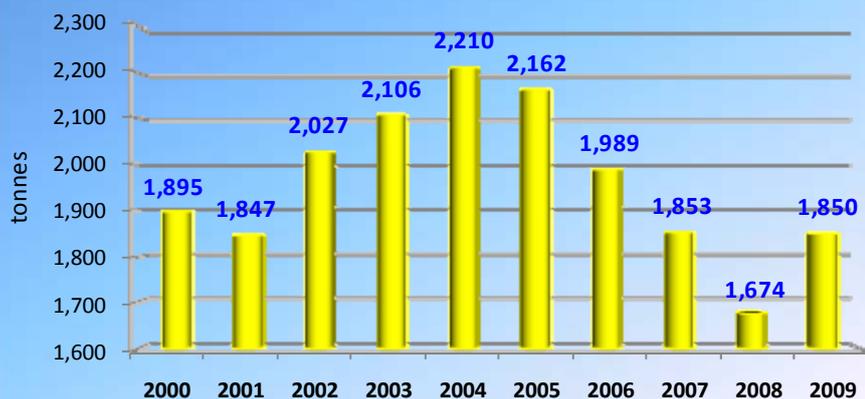
Though the production of cockles (5 quintals) and razor clams (25 quintals) is limited, both species showed a significant decline, 45% and 28% respectively, compared to 2008 data.

In Emilia-Romagna, the striped Venus clam crisis is very apparent in the Rimini district, where production dropped to 1,093 tonnes; this figure effectively brings the volume back to 2006 levels and is in strong contrast to the peak of 3,161 tonnes recorded in 2007. There was a 57% decrease in the volume of striped Venus clams harvested in 2009 with respect to 2008.

In Ravenna the data indicates a production of 436 tonnes of striped Venus clams, representing a 15% drop with respect to 2008. Ravenna also reached its peak production (1,254 tonnes) in 2007, although this peak was less dramatic than that of Rimini.



Production trends for smooth clams in the North Adriatic



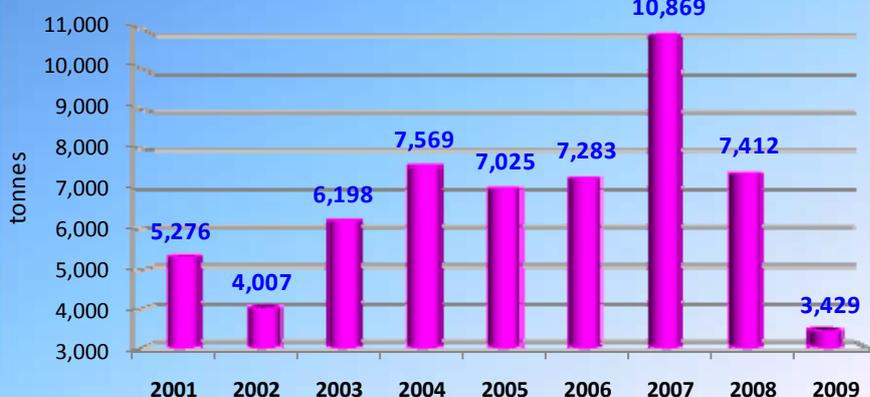
Source: Data processed by the S.E. Fishing and Aquaculture Observatory based on CO.GE.VO. and CO.GE.MO. data

Moving on to a discussion of the most harvested species in the North Adriatic, the total production of smooth clams in 2009 was 1,850 tonnes.

An analysis of the data collected for the past ten years in the North Adriatic demonstrates that the 2009 production figure for smooth clams is very similar to that of 2007 and represents an 11% increase with respect to 2008. However, this figure is significantly lower (-16%) than the peak recorded in 2004.

In 2009 the production of striped Venus clams in the North Adriatic was only 3,429 tonnes, a 54% drop compared to the previous year and a 68% decrease with respect to the production peak recorded in 2007. The die-off and consequent crisis that has been gripping the sector for almost two years has pushed fishermen to redouble their commitment to repopulation and sampling projects, and to search for nursery areas where seed clams can be grown. These activities are being performed in the hope of emerging from a period of forced inactivity that threatens to bring this type of fishing to an end.

Production trends for striped Venus clams in the North Adriatic



Source: Data processed by the S.E. Fishing and Aquaculture Observatory based on CO.GE.VO. and CO.GE.MO. data



A resolution adopted by the EP that processes a series of suggestions for the growth of the European aquaculture. For more information: : [europedirect@venetoagricoltura.org](mailto:europedirect@venetoagricoltura.org)

The Commission published the Report NESPMAN -Improving the knowledge of the biology and the fisheries of the new species for management. For more information:

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/studies/nespman/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/studies/nespman/index_en.htm)

**Next Issue:**  
The import and export of fish and seafood products in the North Adriatic

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