



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

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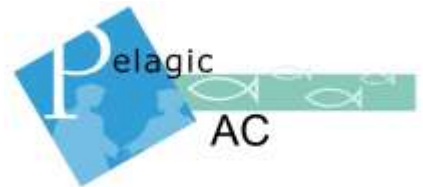


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PELAC MEETINGS

CONTROL FOCUS GROUP MEETING (25 JANUARY 2019, SCHIPHOL)

Attendance by the European Commission: John Hederman, Francesca Arena.

The meeting aimed to discuss the Commission proposal 2018/0193 amending the control regulation on an article by article basis, in order to draft detailed recommendations. The Focus Group appreciated the presence of the DG Mare Control Unit to offer guidance in this discussion. The Focus Group finalized this work via WebEx on February 8, 2019.

The main topics in the proposal that were identified as potentially problematic for the pelagic industry concerned the compulsory use of CCTV for control of the landing obligation, the new weighing at landing provisions, monitoring of fishing capacity, assuring a level playing field with third country vessels... The PELAC has already submitted comments on most of these topics in a previous recommendation. These comments will be used as a basis to which more detailed comments will be added following an article by article analysis of this proposal.

In some cases there were issues with regard to ambiguity in the interpretation of certain provisions. Examples include whether the new provision regarding issuing of fishing licenses changes the current situation (article 6 point 5), the definition of 'obstruction' (article 90) or whether capacity limits also apply to reefer vessels (definition article 4, point 34). The PELAC will seek clarity in relation to these points, as a reassurance no misunderstanding on the interpretation may arise in the future.

The PELAC will draft an extensive recommendation for this proposal to be shared with the Commission, MS and EP in light of the co-decision process. The aim was to have the draft ready by the next PELAC Working Group II meeting on 28 February in Copenhagen, for discussion and approval by the Executive Committee. Unfortunately, no consensus within the Focus Group could be reached before the February meeting. Another Focus Group will be held later in 2019 to finalize the recommendations.

6A HERRING FOCUS GROUP (27 FEBRUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

The meeting focused on the ongoing EASME project in relation to the 6a, 7bc herring stocks. An update was provided by Ed Farrell on the ongoing progress of the genetic and morphometric research. DTU Aqua also presented a project regarding genome variation in herring.

The genetic data is key to include into the benchmark, which can hopefully be held late 2020 or 2021. The latest results show the 6a South and Celtic sea herring are grouping tightly together. North Sea herring is distinctly different from 6a South, but indistinguishable from 6a North. By April, results from another round of samples should indicate whether these results continue to hold true. An update on the morphometrics baseline was also presented. These results will be compared to the genetic analysis and if there is agreement between both methods, it will be possible to retrospectively split past samples. Ultimately the aim is to drop the morphometric analysis, because

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it is very labour intensive, but for retrospective analysis it could be useful. Once again, in April there should be a clearer picture if morphometric analysis is a viable method for comparison with genetics.

Some issues with regard to genetic sampling were also presented, stressing the need for standardizing sampling tools and protocols. A process that allows for more efficient use of time and reduce manual labour is highly desirable for this project. Several methods were presented along with an overview of their benefits and downsides. One ideal method was clearly favoured and highlighted, and the possible self-design of such a device will be looked into before the next meeting.

In the DTU Aqua genetics project, different herring genomes in wild spawning samples in various areas in the West East Atlantic have been sequenced. It was an interesting exchange and the potential for genome sequencing is looking promising. The statistical certainty to assign fish back to the home stock was high and in general good separation powers are observed between different stocks. It was decided to hold this presentation again at the PELAC April meeting since the covered stocks fall under the remit of Working Group I.

Finally, the Focus Group went over a proposal for 2019 herring acoustic surveys, where a shift in the effort of the survey was discussed and agreed. A 10 day shift will be introduced this year, at the same time the HERAS survey is taking place. The follow-up regarding the 6a herring rebuilding plan was not discussed any further, as this was left for discussion at Working Group II the following day.

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (28 FEBRUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

The meeting went over the stocks covered by Working Group I on a stock by stock basis to evaluate the ICES and PELAC advice with the final outcome at December Council, as well as set priorities for 2019.

During the meeting there was some debate about the lack of progress in relation to impacts of seismic surveys on herring spawning grounds. A discussion was held as how to advance with this topic within the Pelagic AC. There was a general agreement amongst members that this topic needs more attention, but it proves difficult to find commitment and manpower to lead the work. The NGO community is exploring options to revive the Ecosystem Focus Group. A possible way forward would be to narrow down the topic, refine the workload and define specific objectives. It was decided to return to this topic at the April meeting for further discussion and in the meantime try to follow the work done within the NSAC Ecosystem focus group.

The meeting also discussed a possible letter to the Commission to express Pelagic AC disappointment in the lack of consultation for the second Technical Measures regulation proposal that has entered into co-decision process. It was decided to propose such a letter to the Executive Committee.

The lack of clear guidelines from ICES for developing rebuilding plans was also discussed. This might potentially create problems with ongoing work on rebuilding plans for other stocks. It was agreed to propose to ExCom a letter to the Commission to ask ICES for clear guidelines, in order for the PELAC to remain productive in its work.

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The most important priorities will be to develop a management strategy for blue whiting, if possible in collaboration with Coastal States stakeholders. The working group will also follow the development on reference points for ASH, the MSE for North Sea herring and the BSAC efforts on the rebuilding plan for WBSS. Finally, it will remain important to engage with demersal sector to get more bycatch information.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (28 FEBRUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

Working Group II also focused on evaluating the relevant WGII stocks and setting priorities for 2019. For all stocks, it's an important priority to provide annual TAC advice in October.

One of the main priorities of this working group will be to participate actively in NEA mackerel inter-benchmark and the workshop held in May 2019 which will undertake a strategic review of data requirements for assessing the mackerel stock going forward. For Celtic sea herring, it will be necessary to finalize the rebuilding plan on short notice, and to finish developing a management strategy for Western horse mackerel.

Other priorities included the continuation of various research initiatives ongoing for 6a, 7bc herring, e.g. in relation to genetics and acoustic surveys. The Working Group will follow-up on the 6a herring rebuilding plan with ICES to try and resolve the standstill. Another important priority will be to finalize the draft recommendations for the revision of the control regulation, and follow-up on de minimis rules in discard plans.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (28 FEBRUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

Subsequently, the Executive Committee approved the mid-term report. It was furthermore agreed to draft several letters to the Commission: a request to ask STECF to add a chapter on pelagic fisheries in the STECF fleet report, another letter regarding the revision of the Technical measures regulation expressing Pelagic AC disappointment in the outcome of the new proposal and the lack of consultation for this process. It was also agreed to draft a letter to the Commission to ask ICES to develop criteria for rebuilding plans. The ExCom also agreed to adopt the Celtic Sea recovery plan via a quick written procedure round after some minor revisions to be submitted by the Marine Institute after the meeting.

A discussion was held on the collaboration with regional groups and notably the lack of resonance the Pelagic AC recommendation seems to have to introduce the gramme size requirement as a risk assessment tool for controlling the landing obligation. The ExCom decided to take this discussion up further with the Control Unit from DG Mare at the next Control FG.

All detailed meeting minutes can be downloaded from the PELAC website once they are finalized:
<https://www.pelagic-ac.org/2019>

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

MSC SEMINAR: INTERACTION EU LANDING OBLIGATION WITH MSC CERTIFIED FISHERIES (6 DECEMBER 2018, BRUSSELS)

PELAC representative: Patrick Murphy.

The Seminar was held in THON Hotel EU on Thursday 6th December 2018.

The program of MSC comes under four key headings:

1. Sustainable fisheries
2. Food
3. Jobs & Community
4. Finding solution to end wasteful practice of Discarding

Scientists evaluate the health of our fish stocks around the globe, we introduce stock recovery plans, we reward sustainable fisheries that help protect our eco-system, the habitats, protect other species like birds and sea mammals, we do this through management and monitoring and through enforcement and compliance.

MSC certification have 28 performance indicators each scoring on a scale 1-5. Once accreditation is given it is for five years but this is subject to a review every year and it can be withdrawn in that year if it fails previously passed evaluation. 12% of all stocks are certified leaving 88% have not met MSC certification.

Markets require certification as customers are asking for fish from sustainable fisheries.

It was clear unless the three key players Fishermen, those who formulate Policy and NGO's work together no one on their own can achieve the common goal sustainable fisheries adding to that sustainable businesses. It was pointed out that the landing obligation is a policy that has nothing to do with the marketing of fish.

Fishermen continue to follow new technical measures to reduce unwanted catches of undersize fish but it will not eliminate unwanted catches as vessels have to fish the quota that is allocated to it, in a mixed stock fishery other fish regardless of quota will be caught.

The consumer wishes to trust and have confidence that the fish they buy is caught by vessels who fish sustainably but a member state with a larger share of a stock will have a greater ability to reach the performance indicators where the other member state vessels have a smaller share of the same stocks in the same shared waters in which they operate.

If MSY is reached, industry needs to be able to demonstrate they are compliant to maintain sustainability. This is where MSC becomes an important tool to assist this goal. Currently MSC assessment teams have not picked up fully the implications of the landing obligation. Thus the MSC standard needs to evolve. New systems that are introduced under control and compliance will assist with MSC certification in the future.

The Commission see a greater role for MSC where certification can complement its policies.

A detailed report from the seminar can be found in [Annex I](#).

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MIAC MEETING (17 JANUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

PELAC representatives: Sean O'Donoghue (chair), Gerard van Balsfoort, Ian Gatt, Anne-Marie Kats.

The MIAC is the new acronym for the AC-led pre-meeting between ICES and Advisory Councils before the MIACO meeting. The reason for holding this pre-meeting is to enable in-depth discussions between AC's and ICES about specific issues relevant to AC's that they've encountered over the last year. This year the PELAC organised and chaired the meeting. Individual AC's brought forward their contributions with written clarification prior to the meeting. The following points were brought in by the PELAC and discussed with ICES at MIAC:

0 catch advice for Western Baltic herring

Several elements related to this year's zero catch advice were raised during the meeting: On the one hand the decision/interpretation taken by ICES that stocks under Blim must be rebuilt within one year, leading to a 0 TAC advice. Both the BSAC and PELAC felt this decision was not very transparent and contradicted the discussion held during the ADG for this stock. Secondly, a discussion was held as to why ICES did not follow the management plan for this stock, when it had done so previously in other similar cases. Finally, the PELAC asked if there's any way to introduce changes in reference points more gradually in the advice. The changes to the Western Baltic reference points heavily impacted the outcome of the advice from one year to the next.

ICES replied that the decision for a 0 TAC was taken by ACOM during a WebEx open to observers, so it was transparent. The ADG decision was overruled by ACOM because there was a discussion ongoing simultaneously about what to do when a stock is below Blim. This decision was further explained at MIACO. ICES did not follow the management plan because Norway, who is a party to the plan, did not agree to it. ICES asks the recipients of the advice beforehand what the advice should be based on. Norway didn't agree to it in this case while in other examples other parties may not have objected to following the management plan. ICES admitted they do not have a mechanism yet for the phasing in of new reference points, and will raise this issue with recipients of advice.

Guidelines for rebuilding plans

The PELAC summarized its experience with ICES over the last 2-3 years regarding the development of a rebuilding plan for 6a, 7bc herring and expressed its frustration with regard to the outcome and the process. In order to avoid a similar disappointment in the future, the PELAC asked ICES for guidelines/criteria by which they determine whether a plan is precautionary or not, and what this is based on. ICES indicated it had no clear guidelines at the moment but hopes the MSE workshop in February would provide building blocks for the developments of such guidelines. ICES proposed to start a process, based on the results of the February 2019 MSE workshop, to define better the guidelines for evaluating rebuilding plans.

Underwater noise

Both NWWAC and PELAC raised the subject of underwater noise effects on fisheries and asked to what extent ICES could take on this research field as an independent body, since it is becoming

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increasingly important. For the PELAC, more independent research on the effects of notably seismic surveys on herring spawning grounds would be desirable. The AC's also wonder to what extent ICES can integrate this field into their stock assessments. It was agreed to discuss possibilities for this during MIACO.

Quality Assurance

The main discussion point for the PELAC were issues in relation to quality assurance. The PELAC prepared a document highlighting the main problems around the most important pelagic stocks. The paper presented the volatility in the ICES advice over recent years, which is a concern to the industry. The PELAC recognizes that this is partly related to nature, partly to QA but also to decisions that ICES takes. The industry is not convinced a proper quality control system is in place over the entire advice process and offers its help to look at the stocks and work together to get a better grasp on them. ICES replied that the main reason for the lack of stability in the advice is related to the frequency of benchmarks, which often leads to changes in the assessment. There is a workshop planned in May dealing with NEA mackerel revisions, and discussions have been held with clients as well for a more balanced trade-off between responsiveness to requests and advice stability. ICES further explained their QA framework during MIACO.

It was agreed to continue in this format, and that the AC's would chair the 'MIAC' meeting on a rotation basis. Next year the LDAC will organize the MIAC meeting.

Detailed minutes of the MIAC meeting can be found on our website as soon as they are finalized.

MIACO MEETING (17-18 JANUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

MIACO is the annual meeting between ICES, AC's and other observers. ICES chaired the MIACO meeting and issues discussed that are relevant to the PELAC are summarized below.

Quality assurance

ICES recognizes the need for improving QA of its advice to limit corrections and to ensure that advice is transparent and reproducible. ICES has been developing a QA framework that guides the advice process. Examples of improvements ICES has seen this year are audits, recurrent advice requests and internal audits. This helps to check how the assessment is carried out in working groups and if it conforms with the guidelines recipe. According to ICES, the quality of these audits has improved. Potential problems encountered were input from observers on some of the scientific uncertainties, and the independence of expert groups and ADGs. ACOM approval has worked well to ensure the advice that comes out is of good quality.

Data collection across member countries whilst ensuring it is of highest possible quality, remains a challenge. A key QA development in this respect is the set-up of a regional database and estimation system (RDBES) for catch and fishery data. ICES encourages all member countries to incorporate their data into these ICES managed systems. ICES expects all stocks to be tested by RDBES in 2020. Specific expert groups such as WGDATA map out QA framework by scrutinising and updating collected data

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and checking if QA systems/documents are in place. The Initiative Transparent Assessment framework, centralizes assessment scripts and stock assessment results so that coding errors can be checked. One of the things ICES is struggling with is the proliferation of assessment methods, an issue which needs to be managed.

The PELAC has consistently brought this issue forward at MIACO meetings, and recognizes ICES has begun the work. But the PELAC still isn't convinced the QA framework is robust enough to identify problems. The inclusion of RF tagging data in the benchmark for mackerel was mentioned as an example. Such a QA system needs to be accredited under ISO. In addition, it is not just the modelling and the data, but the entire advice process that needs to be quality assured. ICES replied in the mackerel case it was not a question of the quality of the data, but the way it was included in the assessment. ICES said it will consider carrying out external audits in the future, but new systems need to be put in place before this can be explored.

Greater consistency of the advice

ICES works with a consistent advice framework, even though stocks experience fluctuations and the advice may therefore vary from year to year. Benchmarks also change ICES' understanding of population dynamics and may end up with updated reference points. Productivity may also lead to a change in reference points, even though there may not be a large change. The solution is being clear, which ICES tries hard to be in the advice. ICES is working on the prioritization of benchmarks.

In category 1 and 2 stocks, adding more data can cause an advice to be revised. When looking at new estimates, it's important to identify bias. The benchmark doesn't show the bias. In the ICES system there is quite some tweaking of assessment models, so it's difficult to keep track. One key aspect ICES wants to introduce in 2019 is a correction factor to correct the bias in the advice. That loses the historical perspective, so it brings other problems. It needs to be determined whether bias estimates are really significant. If there's a significant bias in category 3 stocks, ACOM has discussed giving advice following the precautionary approach, unless the bias can be resolved in an inter benchmark. ICES confirmed a benchmark for herring 6a, 7bc will take place later this year to resolve retrospective bias.

The PELAC commented that sometimes assessments do not reflect the reality of the stock. ICES needs a mechanism to relook at an assessment when something goes wrong. The PELAC also indicated it will submit a paper on the reporting of Fmsy in ICES catch advice. ICES replied that experts and reviewers are part of the benchmark system, but is considering a system of secondary review as well, when new information becomes available.

ICES advice rule when stocks are below Blim

ICES presented its decision regarding the rule when stocks are found to be below Blim. This level is poorly understood, so it's difficult to predict what the dynamics are, but often linked to poor recruitment. For this reason, ICES is maintaining its rule and it can be considered a part of ICES

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approach unless safe and rapid rebuilding plans have been developed, evaluated and found to be precautionary. Otherwise this may result in an advice of zero catch.

Many participants had issues with this approach by ICES. ICES is making a judgement on interpreting 'rapid' rebuilding (i.e. 1 year), 'precautionary' and 'short term', but one can wonder if it's up to ICES to make such interpretations. Everyone accepts something must be done when a stock falls below Blim, but there are other options to consider and participants felt ICES is being too rigid in this sense. Does it imply management plans are no longer precautionary, when they were only updated in the last year? The PELAC intervened that if managers had followed this advice with the Western Baltic herring, the fisheries would have closed and others as well. When developing a rebuilding plan, we are caught in the interpretation of 'rapid' rebuilding (i.e. 1 year). The timeframe needs to be discussed, because it makes no sense to design a plan if you need to rebuild within a year. The timeframe should be linked to stock biology and looked at case by case. The risk vs. time trade-off needs to be evaluated in the MSE. It was agreed to follow this discussion up during the ICES MSE workshop.

Special Workshops

ICES informed participants that a special workshop on a "Research Roadmap for Mackerel" (WKRRMAC), will be held in Bremerhaven on 7-9 May 2019. Dr. Carl O'Brien will chair this workshop which will undertake a strategic review of data requirements for assessing the mackerel stock going forward.

Other topics

The ICES new Code of conduct (CoC) was discussed, which aims to ensure the independence, objectivity and integrity of ICES as a scientific knowledge provider. The CoC applies to scientists participating in expert groups, review groups, ADG's, as well as SI- and ACOM, and any conflicts of interest need to be declared and assessed before the work commences. Most industry representatives, notably from the pelagic industry, encouraged this initiative. When employed industry scientists bring extra information to the table to improve the assessments and their development, it's important that a level of integrity is maintained.

Another issue that was frequently raised was the lack of resources within ICES and availability of experts. The PELAC industry proposed the adoption of more PhD students by those industries that feel acquainted with science. It's a long term process and could be a way of recruiting new experts.

Finally, the creation of an ICES Economics WG was discussed, which resulted in a debate with mixed views from the participants. Some questioned the need for ICES to diverge from its core expertise of issuing biological advice, especially considering there already are bodies such as STECF with the expertise to deliver on socio-economic advice. Duplicating efforts would not make sense, so the work should be well coordinated at least. ICES replied that it wants to explore the space of decision making, and take into account data coming in from different sources. There's no intention of

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duplicating efforts but ICES is wider than Europe, and there's an active community that calls for this input.

TECHNICAL MEETING SCHEVENINGEN GROUP (22 JANUARY 2019, BRUSSELS)

PELAC representatives: Esben Sverdrup-Jensen, Anne-Marie Kats.

The meeting was the first Technical meeting of the Scheveningen Group under the new Danish Presidency. The work program for the coming year was presented and representatives of the NSAC and the PELAC were invited to share their views.

Update from Technical meeting Scheveningen Group

In 2019 the Scheveningen Group will concentrate on the following topics:

- Implementation of the Landing Obligation, continuation of work on choke species and JR
- Fully documented Fisheries
- Brexit
- Natura 2000 (more on High Level than on Technical level)
- Other items relevant for the NSAC such as Road map for skates and rays, the work on data collection for Brown shrimp, exemption for cod and whiting etc.

As regards the landing obligation and possible choke species, the group will continue looking at possibilities for applying different tools in the discard ban toolbox. Examples include elements in the TAC/quota regulation such as potential TAC increases to alleviate choke situations, or the pooling of quota which the NWW group is currently experimenting with. Other options include the removal of certain very minor TACs but this has been rejected by ICES, so will be looked into further. The option for swaps is still being encouraged, but has led to some uncertainty in light of Brexit. The chair commented that as far as they were aware, swaps with UK would still be able to continue in 2019. There were no new developments with regard to inter-species flexibility.

A Joint Recommendation has been developed for 2020 and the group will continue the work of developing exemptions. One example being looked at is the extension of the plaice exemption in trawl fishery to year round as opposed to the current exemption applying only for the winter months. Another example on the table is a de minimis exemption for industrial bycatch in demersal fisheries. The Scheveningen group will continue working on a Joint Recommendation which is due end of May, and will be reviewed by STECF in the beginning of July. At an earlier expert meeting the Commission underlined the importance of data as a basis for argumentation and justifying exemptions. The group will therefore put as much emphasis on data as possible to explain their reasoning.

Contributions ACs

Members of the NSAC and PELAC were invited to comment on their plans and raise any challenges/issues they are facing. The NSAC intervened that they are very much impacted by the Brexit as it has resulted in the move of its secretariat from Aberdeen to the Netherlands. A procedure is underway to hire a new Executive Secretary, so their plans for the coming year are not definitive yet. The NSAC welcomes any input from the Scheveningen group to help them in shaping the

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priorities and decide on focus topics. Natura 2000 is equally relevant for the NSAC which is dealt with in its Ecosystem FG, so any guidance from the group would be welcome.

The PELAC explained their situation is a bit different from other ACs in that it does not have a regional focus but a broader one across Member States, dealing with specific pelagic stocks. For the PELAC it would therefore make sense to group the work on pelagics ongoing in a regional subgroups. With regard to landing obligation, the PELAC has tried hard to foresee what the impacts will be but with the LO now in full force it remains to be seen where the issues will pop up. The PELAC has repeatedly highlighted choke issues in relation to bycatch, such as pelagic bycatch in demersal fisheries and vice versa, has put effort in trying to map out problem species and will continue this work. The PELAC recognises the Scheveningen group has focussed on demersal problems until now and believes more attention should be given to pelagics in 2019. There are real risks associated with these choke species that may result in fisheries closing prematurely, both on the demersal as on the pelagic side. Species that don't appear as a choke can suddenly become one, so this needs to be followed carefully. Conflict between pelagic and demersal fisheries need to be avoided as much as possible.

On fully documented fisheries, the PELAC has developed a joint recommendation on haul by haul reporting (gramme size recommendation), which serves as an example of fully documented fisheries in pelagic fisheries. We are happy to continue to bring forward our ideas, perhaps at the conference on fully documented fisheries organised on February 26th. On a final note, the Brexit is very relevant for the Pelagic AC. As is the case with other AC's, the PELAC is preparing itself for the UK leaving the EU and in what way fisheries can continue. One important implication to consider is the fact that EU vessels normally operating in UK waters will most likely divert to other EU areas that have never been fished before. This can bring about differences in catch compositions that have not yet been considered but may result in possible choke situations. On stocks relevant for the North Sea, the PELAC will focus on the long term management of NS herring and on the quality of the scientific advice for mackerel.

The Scheveningen group invited the ACs to share more information with them about choke situations whenever this becomes available. Subsequently, a discussion with the Technical Group members was held about how AC's are handling Brexit and how they are preparing for it. The NSAC noted that they currently work under the assumption that no change will occur in 2019. The PELAC mentioned the meetings held with other AC's to roadmap different scenario's and highlighted the importance of finding some way to keep on collaborating with our UK partners. UK is a key member for the stocks under PELAC remit.

SOUTH WESTERN WATERS TECHNICAL AND HIGH LEVEL GROUP (19 FEBRUARY 2019, LISBON)

PELAC representative: Gonçalo Carvalho.

The meeting was mostly about going through the exemptions for the demersal discard plans that were given for 2019 only on a provisional basis, with the discussions focusing on the additional data that could be provided to ensure the maintenance of the exemptions.

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The most important point for PelAC where the *di minimis* exemptions for by-catches of pelagic species in demersal trawl fisheries. Commission specifically highlighted these have been some of the provisional exemptions that need additional data to be maintained. The PELAC mentioned that these are a great concern, and that in the end what is needed is to have the clearest notion of what is caught by whom.

There seemed to be some intention of providing or analysing the existing data on a species by species basis, in order to justify the exemption. Boarfish was also mentioned, namely the fact that in area 9 it must be removed from the discard plan, because it is not included in the TAC.

Generally speaking there was little expectation that in the short time frame available - made even shorter by the elections and new Commission - new scientific evidence can be collected. And so, Member States seem to be more engaged in getting socio-economical evidence to prove disproportionate costs.

CONFERENCE FULLY DOCUMENTED FISHERIES (26 FEBRUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

PELAC representatives: Ian Gatt, Patrick Murphy and Anne-Marie Kats.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Denmark, Presidency of the Scheveningen group in 2019, organized a conference on fully documented fisheries to discuss possibilities for implementing Remote Electronic Management (REM) solutions onboard EU fishing vessels with stakeholders in the fisheries sector.

The conference included several presentations, including contributions from the Danish Fisheries Minister, DG Mare and the Technical University in Denmark. A Canadian case study was also brought forward to highlight the benefits of CCTV as a compliance tool for fishery regulations. Subsequently, a panel discussion was held which included representatives from diverse fishery stakeholders, to discuss implementation of REM in Europe.

The Danish minister opened the conference by reminding stakeholders about the implementation of the landing obligation, which entered into full force this January 2019. Denmark is currently involved in a national dialogue on fully documented fisheries and CCTV, and hopes to take this dialogue to EU level as well. The minister believes it is the best way to achieve the results we all want in terms of sustainability. Moreover, the Ministry believes REM would not only be a cost effective way to ensure compliance, but it could also become integrated in fishery certification.

According to the DG Mare representative, REM is now more important than ever if the EU wants to stay credible and reassure consumers. Since 2015 it is clear the landing obligation is not properly implemented. Larger amounts of discards are found than are estimated, which undermines CFP objectives. Inspections and observers are expensive and only give a snapshot of what happens on board. REM could be a cost effective replacement for that. EFCA is coordinating an expert group dealing with the application of REM. In the Commission's view, REM has the following benefits: full documentation of catches, monitoring of technical measures, and the generated data could contribute scientific research. Data protection issues remain the largest bottleneck. Nonetheless, it

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is only a matter of time before CCTV becomes a reality and EU should take a proactive role. The Commission encourages MS to achieve consensus over the implementation.

A scientist from TU Denmark updated the conference on the latest research in relation to REM. The technology is not limited to camera's but also includes sensors, computers, GPS and satellite modem devices installed onboard vessels. Trials are being carried out all over world (USA, Canada, Chile...) and also in Europe (NL, DK, SW, Germ...), mainly in demersal fisheries. Results demonstrate changes in fishing patterns and improved discard estimates. Computerized algorithms have the potential to review large amounts of data. REM can also be used as a tool to verify fishing logbook data. However, TU Denmark insisted that before implementing REM, objectives need to be clearly defined first.

Wes Erikson, a Canadian fisherman highlighted a case study from Canada where REM is currently in place in groundfish fisheries. It served as an example of a bottom-up approach, where industry and stakeholders proposed its implementation. An independent professional facilitator supported this development. During this process, fishermen realized CCTV would eliminate the issue of trust and allow better dialogue between industry, managers and scientists. The key to is to involve stakeholders, impose a deadline and trust the process.

During the panel discussion, the PELAC expressed its skepticism over CCTV implementation through its panel participation and interventions from the floor. The PELAC panelist couldn't quite understand why one would implement 24hour surveillance camera's when this happens in no other sector, it gives the assumption fishermen are criminals. For the pelagic sector, REM has no added benefits: Pelagic fisheries target single species with little bycatch, and these are sorted at the factory. The PELAC has repeatedly brought forward its recommendation for recording gramme sizes on a haul by haul basis, that generates detailed catch information and is shared with control authorities. This is an example of fully documented fisheries in pelagic fisheries and serves as risk assessment tool. In the EU there are many issues: a 20-year old technical measures regulation and outdated policies. These issues should be sorted before installing camera's on board fishing vessels.

The demersal industry panelist acknowledged REM has a role to play and has potential, but there are still practical and ethical issues to resolve first. He insisted the top-down approach the EU industry is now faced with doesn't work in the case of European fisheries, which is a very different approach from the very bottom up, inclusive Canadian example described. In the EU, the governance context is much more crucial than the practical aspects. It doesn't seem fair to the industry that REM is being considered as a crucial control component for the landing obligation, when so many issues in relation to its implementation have not yet been resolved, such as choke species in particular.

The PELAC has submitted recommendations in the past, and brought forward issues such as data access, which were never followed up on. A major concern for the PELAC has never been addressed: the level playing field with third country vessels fishing the same stocks (Iceland, Norway etc). Such elements need clarity before moving forward. The PELAC asked to the Commission to have another look at the gramme size proposal and insisted on the value of Advisory Councils as a source of advice.

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CIRCULAR ECONOMY APPLIED TO FISHING GEAR MEETING (26 FEBRUARY 2019, BRUSSELS)

PELAC representative: Siegfried Schmuck attended the meeting as representative of Sciaena (arranged by Gonçalo Carvalho). Meeting was organized by DG Mare.

Among participants it was not very clear what the purpose of the meeting DG MARE called for was. The EC clarified that the main purpose was to have an informal talk on what extent a European standard would help to increase recycling of fishing gear.

There were 2 presentations by WFO on the activities of the fishing industry and recycling companies. Seas at Risk also shared the work they did in Aquaculture AC on gear.

A link was shared by DG MARE to the presentations and to further meeting material:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/node/4296>

EXPERT GROUP CONTROLS (27 FEBRUARY 2019, PARIS)

PELAC representative: Jérôme Jourdain.

On February 27, an expert meeting of the three regional groups (NS, NWW and SWW) met in Paris to discuss control issues in relation to the landing obligation.

PELAC was invited to an exchange of views on pelagic fisheries control issues. This meeting was the occasion to focused on some past PELAC recommendations that have been developed on this topic: level playing field, risk assessment, gramme size proposal, control requirements such as CCTV.

This exchange of views with regional groups could lead to a new working group on this issues, hosted by the expert group of the three regional groups, probably in autumn 2019.

SCHEVENINGEN HIGH LEVEL GROUP (27 FEBRUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen. AC-representatives: Irene Kingma (NSAC), Kenn Skau Fischer (NSAC), Gerard van Balsfoort (PELAC).

Subjects discussed

Joint Recommendation for a Discard Plan 2020

Workplan presidency: several technical meetings working towards JR & discard plan for 2020. Still early phase of the discard plan, so no concrete steps formulated yet, main issues:

- Schev group identified 12 issues that they will work on and 4 new exemptions:

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1. plaice all year exemption in all trawl gear proposed by DK and FR (now only exemption for winter months in TR1 based on 44% survival) but because WW has plaice exemption with 42% survival this should be
 2. Exemption for Scottish seine fishery for plaice from NL
 3. Dutch & Belgian exemption for turbot (did not make it last year)
 4. French request for further de minimis for ling in longline fishery
 5. Danish de minimis for industrial bycatch (did not make it last year)
- Draft for comments will be send to the AC's before Easter with deadline for comments on May 3rd

Choke species – state of play

- Stat of play on choke species -> for now no-one is experiencing choke issues yet, some issues were solved at December council
- Discussion on pooling system in Western waters, experiences seemed to be quite positive, Scheveningen will follow this development

Joint Recommendation on implementation of technical measures in Skagerrak on RTC and Danish Anchor Seine (implementation of EU/Norway agreement)

Has been approved by the Scheveningen group will be send to EC pending final approval of Danish parliament scrutiny (formality). Nb: Irene checked this with Lisbet Nielsen and she confirmed that this is a written procedure where the ministry has to inform then parliament of incoming legislation. Should she estimated this should take about a month.

Natura2000

JR on all four areas (Dogger Bank (Habitats Directive), joint proposal with Germany and UK; Cleaver Bank (Habitats Directive); Frisian Front (Birds Directive); Frisian Front and Central Oystergrounds (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)) has been approved by the Scheveningen group to send to the EC pending final approval by the Danish parliament. This is a formality that should happen within the next four weeks.

- Frisian Front and Central Oyster grounds (Marine Strategy Framework Directive): we asked if due process was followed in the stakeholder consultation on the closed areas in the proposal.
- ➔ NL replied that there has been extensive consultation with all relevant parties during the whole process and they hold that all obligations in that regard have been met.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

Questions to the AC

Two things that Scheveningen group would like the AC to work on is the skate and ray exemption and the need for a best practice plan and the Scheveningen group would like input on the control regulation.

- 1) Skates and Rays: we reiterated that we are committed to working with the Scheveningen group on the best practices but asked if the group can resend the formal request to us as that will help us organize putting this on the agenda.
- 2) On the control regulation Kenn gave an update on where the NSAC is in the advice drafting stage and when the advice can be expected to be sent to the regional group. We explained that there is strong consensus in the advice but some differences in opinion between the industry and OIG are likely to remain. Gerard indicated that the PELAC has produced a draft advice on the control regulation but at this stage the advice has not reached consensus and more time is needed for finalization.

There was a long discussion with the HLG on the outcomes of the REM seminar the day before and what the logical next steps will be. The Scheveningen group is very interested in how they can work with the AC's on how to incentivize the use of REM among industry. Reference was made to the presentation by the Canadian fisheries representative who presented at the meeting and to the CCTV project Defra ran where fishermen are rewarded with additional quota. The Danish chairman also stressed that data quality is of vital importance to discard plans and cameras can play a role there too.

The AC's responded that the discussion on this subject is strongly linked to control and that is not helping to move the discussion along. We explored the possibility of doing a follow-up joint workshop with the ACs and the regional groups on different ways REM can be applied in the context that overall the industry members of the AC's oppose the introduction of the CCTV as a control instrument, a view that differs from other stakeholders. Objectives of such a workshop should be very clear.

Maya Kirchner from the European Commission concluded with the following: we have been fishing on a common good and we have no idea of the control. We see now also with the control of the LO that we can't control it. CCTV would be a cost-effective instrument to add control in fisheries. We see a lot of opposition in Council WP and EP. In UK on vessels that had CCTV on board there was a change in behaviour, decrease in discarding. Commission wants to move forward in discussion with others and would like industry buy in but it needs to be clear where this train is moving.

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NORTH WESTERN WATERS TECHNICAL GROUP (19 MARCH 2019, PARIS)

PELAC representative: Sean O'Donoghue (by WebEx).

During the meeting the PELAC explained the difficulty it has with de minimis exemption for mackerel and horse mackerel in the discard plan for certain demersal fisheries in North-Western waters for the period 2019-2021 (reg 2018/2034) and that the wording was different for mackerel and horse mackerel in the details of implementation of the landing obligation for certain demersal fisheries in the North Sea for the period 2019-2021 (reg 2018/2035).

The Commission stated even though the wording was different the meaning was the same in that it only applied to small bycatches of horse mackerel and mackerel in demersal fisheries. The PELAC disagreed with this interpretation and asked that the Commission confirm its interpretation in writing. The French Chairman asked two questions: one if the PelAC was submitting a recommendation on our concerns and two if the PelAC preferred the North Sea wording. The PELAC replied yes to both. The PELAC asked a question in relation to updating the NWW Pelagic discard plan during 2019. This was not possible in 2019 due the EP elections but should happen in 2020. The French Chairman encouraged the PELAC to bring forward any recommendations it may have as soon as possible. The PELAC also mentioned the TAC reduction calculation for Western horse mackerel to the Commission and it was agreed to further discuss it.

Finally the French Chairman said the PELAC would be invited to the High Level Group meeting in Paris on the 26th March at 2.00pm.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL COSTS

Please remember that the secretariat has to receive your reimbursement claims within 1 month after the meeting by post or email including copies of all receipts. Reimbursement sheets received after the deadline will not be taken into account. If you cannot meet the deadline, please inform us as soon as possible. To find out more about reimbursement rules please consult the PELAC's "Rules of procedure" or contact the secretariat.

<https://www.pelagic-ac.org/aboutus>

UPCOMING MEETINGS

BLUE WHITING FOCUS GROUP MEETING (26 APRIL 2019, THE HAGUE)

The next Pelagic AC Focus Group meeting for blue whiting will take place on April 26 in the Hague. The Focus Group will discuss a way forward to develop a management strategy for this stock keeping in mind the fluctuating recruitment patterns and the predicted stock decline in the latest ICES advice. The PELAC will try to involve Coastal State stakeholders to this Focus Group.

WORKING GROUP I AND II, AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (25 APRIL 2019, THE HAGUE)

The next Pelagic AC meeting will take place on 25 April 2019 in the Hague. The main focus of these meetings will be on the Fmsy project, a presentation by DTU Aqua on herring genetics and progress made on various research projects as well as several rebuilding plans.

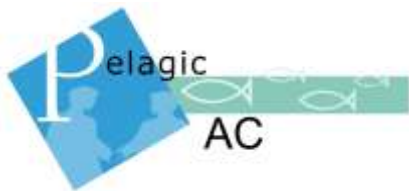
For more information please visit our website:

<https://www.pelagic-ac.org/pracmeetings/upcomingmeetings>

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