



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 4/2018

September - December 2018

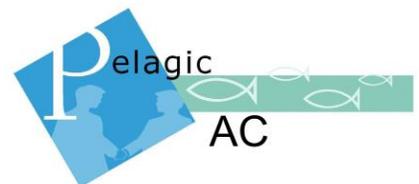


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

PELAC meetings	2
External meetings	5
Miscellaneous	8
Practical information	9
Upcoming meetings	10
Contact information	11

PELAC MEETINGS

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (OCTOBER 2ND 2018, THE HAGUE)

The meeting focused on the ICES advice for blue whiting, Norwegian spring spawning herring and North Sea horse mackerel, as well as setting TAC recommendations for 2019.

ICES advice for blue whiting indicated that the stock is well above MSY Btrigger. The last two recruitment estimates are weak and mortality has been above FMSY in recent years. ICES advises to follow the LTM plan, reducing catches by 33% in 2019. The Pelagic AC followed the advice and decided to reconvene a Focus Group to deal with the recruitment issues.

ICES indicated not being able to provide advice on Norwegian spring spawning herring until late October 2018. Various HCR were examined for this stock, and one needs to be agreed upon between the Coastal States. The PELAC decided to write a letter to the Coastal States recommending a LTM strategy that is in line with the precautionary principle. The PELAC also decided to 're-float' a recommendation on the closure of the "2a triangle".

For North Sea horse mackerel, ICES advises a roll over TAC from the previous year, since the advice for this stock was given for a two year period. This was supported by the PELAC. The PELAC also expressed concern about discard figures from different sources. Members were asked to submit to the secretariat any information on bycatches in demersal fisheries.

The July ICES advice for North Sea herring (the proposed 51% reduction) was discussed. The PELAC recommended to advance work on the long term management of the fishery. Industry expressed its disappointment with the position of the Commission with regard to extending banking/borrowing flexibility to 25%. There were situations in the past where the flexibility was warranted following consultation with ICES. The PELAC decided to draft principles for banking and borrowing in light of the recent dramatic cuts advised by ICES.

There was another discussion regarding the 0 TAC advice by ICES for the Western Baltic herring. For the industry this advice was unacceptable (especially considering the lack of transparency and stakeholder involvement in decisions taken by ICES), but the NGO's support it. It was decided to respect the advice from the Baltic Advisory Council on the stock, push for the development of a rebuilding plan and discuss the basis for the 0 TAC advice at the next MIACO meeting.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (OCTOBER 2ND 2018, THE HAGUE)

The meeting primarily dealt with ICES advice for NEA mackerel, Western & Southern horse mackerel, boarfish and herring 6a, 7bc and the PELAC TAC recommendations for 2019.

The ICES 2019 advice for mackerel was controversial. The advice stated that the stock was found to be just below Btrigger, fishing mortality has been increasing over recent years and SSB has started to decline since 2011. Recruitment was weak in 2015-2016. ICES advises a 61% reduction in catches compared to last year's TAC. This advice included data from radio frequency tags (RFID). This highly influenced the outcome of the advice.

PELAC MEETINGS

The advice came as a shock to the industry. Several industry representatives questioned the quality of the tagging data, and ICES' application of a quality assurance system. The reasoning for including the data into the assessment was also questioned. Furthermore, the advice contradicted what fishermen observed at sea as well as results from 2017 surveys. The PELAC called for an immediate benchmark in relation to the RFID tagging data, and recommended a request to Coastal States to ask ICES to re-evaluate the assessment by removing the tagging data. Once this re-evaluation is complete, the PELAC recommends the use of the agreed three party management strategy.

ICES advice for the Western horse mackerel was equally surprising to the industry. ICES proposed a 24% TAC increase for 2019. According to ICES the stock is in good shape: mortality estimates were well below the MSY trigger point and recruitment looked promising. The assessment was benchmarked in 2017 and new reference points were established. All industry participants indicated their disbelief to the conclusions, since fishermen are struggling to catch horse mackerel within the quota while mackerel is found in masses. The PELAC recommended following the MSY advice of 145,237 tons for 2019 and the industry noted a lack of confidence in the advice. The PELAC also stressed the importance of developing a long term management strategy for this stock, and pursuing an inter-benchmark. An update was given from the Western horse mackerel Focus Group and the genetic sampling project. Further progress of both projects would be updated during next meetings.

ICES advice for Southern horse mackerel was based on ICES FMSY approach, resulting in a 154% TAC increase for 2019. The PELAC was disappointed by the use of MSY for the advice while there is a long term management strategy in place for this stock, that was evaluated by ICES and deemed precautionary. The PELAC recommends following the management strategy (26% TAC increase for 2019) and questioning the Commission's use of MSY for this advice.

ICES advice for Boarfish is a roll over TAC from last year, which the PELAC supported. The PELAC will also continue working on an assessment for the species.

Finally, updates were given for the herring 6a and 7b,c stock identification project, the 6a north herring survey and the Celtic sea herring recovery plan. The Dutch Ministry for Economic Affairs gave a presentation on the landing obligation, where it was acknowledged that regional groups have primarily been focusing on demersal fisheries. More efforts will be put on choke issues. The PELAC felt that a number of issues inherent to pelagic fisheries were being ignored, notably species at risk of choking fisheries. Clarification was requested for the 7% deminimis rule, which would further be discussed during the Scheveningen Group meeting the next day.

PELAC MEETINGS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY (OCTOBER 3RD 2018, THE HAGUE)

During the General Assembly meeting the final activity and financial report for 2017-2018 was presented which was subsequently approved by the meeting. The meeting dates for the first half of 2019 were announced. The chair also announced that a new Executive Secretary had been appointed: Anne-Marie Kats will take up the post as of 19th of November 2018.

Finally, the chair took time to thank Verena Ohms for her hard work as Executive Secretary of the Pelagic AC over the last six years. He remarked on her professionalism, organisation, ability to balance interests and to accurately record discussions. Ohms thanked everyone and encouraged AC members to stay in touch.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (OCTOBER 3RD 2018, THE HAGUE)

Subsequently the Executive Committee discussed the socio-economic effects of the landing obligation as well as the advice from the Working Groups. The AC will further discuss the possibility of including a pelagic chapter in future fleet economic reports at the next meeting.

The advice from the working groups was presented and approved. A draft recommendation about concerns in relation to mesh sizes in annexes to the Technical Measures Regulation was discussed and approved. A text error pointed towards 80 mm minimum mesh sizes for fisheries in the North Sea, and 100 mm for North Western Waters, while this should be 16 mm for pelagic fisheries. The ExCom also agreed to draft a letter to Parliament and Council requesting additional funding to AC's for scientific projects under the new EMFF.

Finally, preparations for the next MIACO meeting were discussed, since the Pelagic AC will be hosting the Pre-MIACO meeting beforehand. It was stressed that preparations needed to start as soon as possible. This will be the first priority on the new Executive Secretary's desk when she starts the post.

All detailed meeting minutes can be downloaded from the PELAC website:

<http://www.pelagic-ac.org/2018>

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

TECHNICAL MEETING SCHEVENINGEN GROUP (12 SEPTEMBER 2018, BRUSSELS)

Participants: Technical representatives from the MS administrations around the NS. Representatives from the NSAC and PelAC. Esben Sverdrup-Jensen attended on behalf of the PELAC.

Main topic of the meeting was to discuss the Demersal Discard Plan. ACs were invited to participate only for a very short while of maximum 40 minutes. Only issues of direct relevance to the Pelagic AC was the question on how unavoidable bycatches of demersals in pelagic fisheries are going to be accounted for after the 1st of January 2019 and how the matrix of the proposed *de minimis* concepts for bycatches of pelagics in demersal fisheries is designed and is expected to function.

For both issues the technical representatives had no specific answers or explanations. The general feeling AC representatives got, was that the general demersal issues were of such a magnitude, that there was no resources to deal with the challenges for pelagics.

PelAC warned that the undefined use of “*de minimis*” to cover pelagic bycatches in polyvalent and demersal fleets was a serious concern to the PelAC. *De minimis* in principle could allow demersal fishermen to discard pelagic fish equaling up to 7% in weight of their total annual catches. If not managed correctly, this could have a significant negative consequence for the setting of pelagic TACs and would be against the provisions of the CFP. I further underlined, that the fact that MS were unable to explain how the *de minimis* would work in the future was of deep concern to stakeholders across the board.

NORTH WESTERN WATERS HIGH LEVEL GROUP (20 NOVEMBER 2018, BRUSSELS)

PELAC representative: Gonçalo Carvalho.

AC representatives were called to speak for no more than 30min.

The PELAC said that we haven't been able to go beyond what we have agreed – identifying the chokes and having clarity on how we are going to deal with the category 3 chokes – pelagic in demersal and the other way around. We also mentioned that we have questions about the footnotes (i.e. multi-species *de minimis*, and the inter-species flexibility) and that we couldn't reach agreement within the PelAC on these two, even though one is in the CFP and the second is not.

The chair asked for “personal views” from the ACs. The PELAC reiterated that this was a personal view and not the PelAC's. Carvalho pointed towards the joint NGO position on MSY+LO, and mentioned that our key point is that we should not forget the objective of the LO, which is to reduce the discards to the minimum and have fisheries as selective as possible. PELAC also added the NGOs see a lack of incentives to identify the discards and to continue to develop ways to reduce them. Finally, questions were raised about the time frames and specific mechanisms of the utilization of the by-catch TACs.

NSMAP – Heather Hamilton and Emile Brouckaert- Produced advice, and discussed it at length. They mentioned specific consensus points and each college. When asked “personal” views, EB said that they don't want to see fisheries closed, and that they are particularly worried about pelagic and deep

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

sea species causing choke situations in demersal fisheries. HH also mentioned the NGO MSY+LO position paper and that we don't want to see fisheries closed. But in order to avoid that, additional efforts must be made, as described in the position paper.

Conclusions: There is clearly a considerable uncertainty on how the bycatch TACs will be used, and there seem to be conflicting views among some of the Member States and with the Commission.

SCHEVENINGEN GROUP (28 NOVEMBER 2018, COPENHAGEN)

PELAC representative: Jesper Raakjaer

On November 28th 2018, the Danish 2019 Presidency of the Scheveningen Group had invited NSAC and PelAC for an introductory meeting. The meeting was very fruitful and the Danish chair of the Scheveningen Group emphasised that he wanted a close collaboration and hold in-depth discussions with the relevant ACs. In cases where the agenda has little importance for the PelAC, it would be possible to connect via videoconference.

The Danish presidency understood the frustration of the PelAC having to deal with three Regional Groups, that seldom coordinated management of shared stocks. This is problematic to secure a level playing field and the Danish Presidency promised to make an effort to ensure better coordination between the relevant regional groups.

The chair welcomed involvement of the NSAC and PelAC in a conference scheduled for 27.02.2019 and Jesper Raakjaer suggested to move the PelAC meeting 28.01.19 from the Hague to Copenhagen in order for PelAC representatives to participate in the conference as well as the Scheveningen High-level Group meeting 26.02.19. It later turned-out that the PelAC will not become directly involved in organising the conference as indicated during the meeting, as invitations had to be sent out early December.

INTER-AC MEETING ON BREXIT (DECEMBER 4TH 2018, MADRID)

PELAC representatives: Gerard van Balsfoort, Jesper Raakjaer, Sean O'Donoghue, Esben Sverdrup-Jensen and the secretariat.

On December 4th representatives of the different Advisory Councils came together in Madrid for an exchange on Brexit, following up on the meeting held in April this year. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the role and structure of ACs after Brexit and provide DG Mare with some recommendations for future models.

DG Mare gave an update from the Commission side regarding the state of the negotiations. Assuming the UK follows the withdrawal agreement, after March 30th 2019 it will become an independent Coastal State and enter a transition period during which a future economic partnership agreement on fisheries will need to be reached. During the transition period the UK is bound to all the rules of the CFP but will not be part of the decision making. The EU stresses the importance of a positive collaboration during this period because the future partnership builds from that, and both sides

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

share the need for sustainably managed stocks. The Commission emphasized that the EU has not experienced a management challenge of such magnitude before.

Representatives of the NGO community, the UK and EU fishing industry offered further reflections from their own perspectives. For the NGO's it is important that the sustainable management of the shared stocks is safeguarded in the debate and that any new UK fishery bill should ensure alignment with precautionary principles, international cooperation and aim for fishing below MSY. The UK industry underlined the value of ACs, especially considering the work done on LTM plans and scientific projects. The buy-in from UK stakeholders to become active observers in ACs was questioned, but working areas could be reshaped to separate EU affairs from issues of common interest. For pelagics in particular, continued collaboration between EU and UK stakeholders is needed. The UK in turn, expects to develop its own stakeholder forum to advise its own politicians. The EU industry sees opportunities to adapt and improve current structures to the new reality, such as the creation of a broader stakeholder body including all Coastal States. In the case of pelagics there have been attempts in the past to set up stakeholder fora under auspices of the NEAFC. The EU industry underlines however, that while everyone agrees on the need for sustainable management of shared stocks, continued disagreements over access and fishing rights may overshadow that objective.

During the discussion it became clear that each Advisory Council share common uncertainties and challenges in relation to the loss of UK membership. But some ACs are more impacted than others. A one size fits all approach will therefore not be suitable. There are discussions to be had about the role and status of UK members, and whether the current AC structure will still be fit for purpose. The Commission cannot give answers at this time but assured clarification will be given once an agreement with the UK is ratified. The Commission also indicated that there are no plans to review the CFP in the near future, so options to reshape/merge existing ACs will be difficult in legal terms. For the Pelagic AC it is clear that continuation in its current form without the UK is not meaningful. Also the role of regional groups needs to be re-evaluated, as well as reciprocity arrangements for EU stakeholders in UK policy making.

It was concluded that the next meeting would be co-organised between the LDAC, NWWAC and PELAC and will take place in March 2019 in Brussels. The three respective secretariats will prepare a joint paper for this meeting, addressing the following points:

- Legal clarification required and desired flexibility on the functioning of ACs
- AC structure/set up; business as usual during transition vs. advice on negotiations
- Reciprocity on consultations EU-UK and vice versa (define/extent of topics)

MISCELLANEOUS

NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The Pelagic AC has a new Executive Secretary: Anne-Marie Kats. Anne-Marie started the post on November 19th, 2018. She holds a Master's degree in 'Aquaculture and Fisheries' from Wageningen University, has previously worked for the Dutch fish trade and processing industry and for the Aquaculture Stewardship Council.

Contact details:

E-mail: a.kats@pelagic-ac.org

Mobile: +31 6 28207317



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.

<http://www.pelagic-ac.org/media/pdf/Rules%20of%20Procedure%20Pelagic%20AC%20-%202014%20November.pdf>

CHRISTMAS BREAK

The secretariat will be closed on 31 December 2018 until January 2nd 2019. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year! We are looking forward to continue working with you in 2019!



UPCOMING MEETINGS

MIRAC AND MIACO MEETINGS (17-18 JANUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

During the MIACO and MIRAC meetings the different ACs will discuss their experiences this past year working with ICES. This year the MIRAC (new name for the pre-meeting between ICES and Advisory Councils) will be organized by the PELAC.

WORKING GROUP I AND II, AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (28 FEBRUARY 2019, COPENHAGEN)

The next Pelagic AC meeting will take place on 28 February 2019 in Copenhagen. As usual this meeting will focus on a review of the AC's impact over the past year and address ongoing issues, such as the development of management strategies and rebuilding plans and the implementation of the landing obligation.

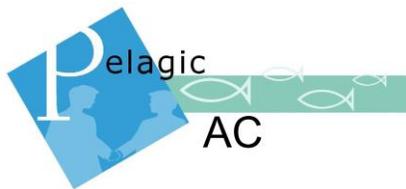
For more information please visit our website:

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pelagic Advisory Council

Louis Braillelaan 80
2719 EK Zoetermeer
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)6 3375 6324
Email: info@pelagic-ac.org
www.pelagic-ac.org



The Pelagic Advisory Council receives Union financial assistance as a body pursuing an aim of general European interest. This newsletter reflects only the author's view and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.