

**Advisory Councils
Stakeholders**



Our Ref: C24.g/ACB/hgj

13 October 2014

Subject: Inviting Stakeholders to ICES Benchmark Workshops in 2015 and their preparation

Dear Stakeholders,

ICES invites stakeholders to contribute and be involved in the preparatory work of the benchmark workshops.

Since no assessment can be better than the available data, ICES welcomes additional input from stakeholders so we can assure that all relevant data are considered and reviewed. You are invited to contribute new datasets, including data from non-traditional sources.

ICES reformed its advice strategy in 2007 with a view to improving transparency and quality control. The annual advice on fishery management is based on 'update assessments' that are based on set methodology. This set methodology will be reviewed every 3–5 years at 'benchmark workshops'¹. Benchmarking is a technical review of the assessments to assure that these are based on all relevant data, and that the underlying population model and estimation procedure reflects best science. ICES benchmarking is a science process that aims for consensus among the scientists on how best to assess a specific fish stock, taking into account the level of knowledge on the population dynamics, available data and estimation procedure.

Benchmark meetings typically consist of a data compilation workshop (DCWK) and the actual benchmark. New, relevant time-series of data can improve the perception of fish stocks. These will be considered during the DCWKs. You are welcome to contact the ICES chair of the benchmark if you have new dataseries to present at this meeting. The ICES chair can inform you of the relevance of your dataset (based on length of dataseries for example) and forward it to the stock experts.

International Council for the
Exploration of the Sea

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¹ Annex 1: Benchmarks at ICES.

The meetings will be chaired by an internal ICES chair as well as an external chair from the team of external reviewers. External experts are recruited from outside ICES circles to broaden the scope and give objective feedback on the methodologies and settings used.

If you would like to participate or have practical questions, please direct such queries to Helle Gjeding Jørgensen hgj@ices.dk clearly stating which benchmark you are interested in attending. Due to constraints in size of the meetings we ask each organisation to limit the number of participants to a maximum of three persons.

Kind regards,



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Cc: Benchmark Coordinators
ACOM
Council

ICES plans to hold six benchmark workshops in 2015:

	DCWK dates and venue	Benchmark dates and venue	Stocks to be Benchmarked	ICES Chair (External chairs tbc.)
WKARCT	4–6 November 2014 in Murmansk, Russia	ICES Headquarters 26–30 January 2015 back to back with WKICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northeast Arctic cod • Norwegian coastal waters cod • Barents Sea capelin • Northeast Arctic haddock 	Bjarte Bogstad, Norway
WKICE	4–6 November 2014 in Reykjavik, Iceland	ICES Headquarters 26–30 January 2015 back to back with WKARCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capelin in Subareas V and XIV and Division IIa west of 5°W (Iceland–East Greenland–Jan Mayen area) • Greenland cod • Icelandic cod 	Gudmundur Thordarsen, Iceland
WKNSEA	10–12 November 2014 at ICES	ICES HQ, Copenhagen, Denmark 2–6 February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cod in the North Sea, Eastern Channel and Skagerrak • Witch in the North Sea, Skagerrak–Kattegat and Eastern Channel • Striped red mullet in the North Sea, Eastern English Channel and Skagerrak–Kattegat • Sole in the North Sea 	Alexandre Kempf, Germany
WKPLE	15–17 December 2014 at ICES	ICES HQ, Denmark 23–27 February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plaice in Division VIIId (Eastern Channel) • Plaice in Subdivision 20 (Skagerrak) • Plaice in Subdivisions 21–23 (Kattegat, Belts and Sound) • Baltic Sea plaice (Subdivisions 24–32) 	Jesper Boje, Denmark

	DCWK dates and venue	Benchmark dates and venue	Stocks to be Benchmarked	ICES Chair (External chairs tbc.)
WKWEST	18-20 November 2014 in Dublin, Ireland	Dublin, Ireland 2-6 February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herring in Divisions VIIa (South of 52°30'N) and VIIg, h, j, k (Celtic Sea and South of Ireland) • Herring in Divisions VIa (South) and VIIb,c • Herring in Division VIa (North) 	Richard Nash, Norway
WKBALTCOD	none	Venue tbd. 2-6 March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern Baltic cod stock in Subdivisions 25-32 • Western Baltic cod stock in Subdivision 22-24 	Tbc.

Annex 1: Benchmarks at ICES

An **ICES Benchmark Workshop** is an intense process for evaluating the current data and assessment methodology and proposed improvements outside of the annual assessment environment. It should include experts and stakeholders from outside the ICES community to broaden the idea and data pool to improve assessment quality and enhance credibility.

The **aim of a benchmark** is consensus agreement on an assessment methodology that is to be used in future update assessments, laid down in a stock annex. This assessment methodology can be an analytical assessment, but can also be non-analytical, for instance based on trends in an assessment or in a selected set of (survey) indicators, with or without forecasts. The result will be the 'best available' method that ICES advice can be based on.

The **Stock Annex** describes the methodology agreed by the benchmark workshop and the assumptions on which this is based. If an expert group finds that assumptions are no longer valid, or that new data or methods available might improve the assessment, experts are asked to put forward proposals for changes in the methodology and a renewed benchmark. Typically, a stock should be benchmarked every 3–5 years to keep pace with changing situations.

In order to be flexible to changing situations an **Intermediate Benchmark Protocol** was set up to deal with short-term adaptations in assessment methodology. IBPs generally deal with the review of earlier work, or concluding work that started off at earlier benchmarks.

Benchmark proposals can come from ICES working groups, and will be decided on by ACOM approximately 1.5 years before the workshop takes place to allow for enough preparation time. Expert groups are asked to make a schedule of future benchmarks in order to bring proposals to the table in good time.