Pelagic AC

Executive Committee meeting

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10:00 – 12:30 hrs
Edinburgh Castle, Scotland, UK

Pelagic AC

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Participants

1	Ian Gatt, chairman	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association
2	Anaïs Mourtada	Pelagic AC
3	Andrew Bowie	Parliamentary assistant to MEP Ian Duncan
4	Anna O'Sullivan	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland
5	Aukje Coers	Rederij Vrolijk
6	Ben Dipper	Marine Scotland
7	Bengt Kåmark	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management
8	Bent Pallisgaard	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Denmark
9	Brian Isbister	Shetland's Fishermen Association
10	Christian Olesen	Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation
11	Christine Absil	Seas at Risk
12	Claus Reedtz Sparrevohn	Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation
13	David Hutchison	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
14	Eibhlin O'Sullivan	Irish South and West FPO
15	Emilien Segret	Pelagic AC
16	Eric Roeleveld	Jaczon
17	Esben Sverdrup-Jensen	Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation
18	Fredrik Lindberg	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
19	Frederik Schutyser	DG MARE
20	Gerard van Balsfoort	Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association
21	Goncalo Carvalho	Pew Charitable Trusts
22	Ignacio Fontaneda Lopez	Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente
23	Irene Kingma	Dutch Elasmobranch Society
24	Jerome Nouis	From Nord
25	Jesper Juul Larsen	Danmarks Fiskeriforening
26	Jesper Raakjær	AIPCE
27	John Anderson	Scottish Fishermen's Organisation
28	John Ward	Irish Fish PO
29	José Beltran	OPLUGO
30	Justyna Zajchowska	Pew Charitable Trusts
31	Kees Taal	Van der Zwan
32	Konstantinos Kokosis	EBCD
33	Laurent Markovic	DG MARE
34	Lena Mutschler	WWF
35	Lesley Duthie	North Sea Women's Network
36	Matthew Cox	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation

37	Miren Garmendia	Federación de Cofradias de Pescadores de Guipuzcoa
38	Reine Johansson	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
39	Sascha Fässler	IMARES
40	Sean O´Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
41	Søren Anker Pedersen	Marine Ingredients Denmark
42	Stella Nemecky	WWF
43	Steve Mackinson	CEFAS
44	Tony Andrews	Atlantic Salmon Trust
45	Verena Ohms	Pelagic AC
46	Wietze Kampen	European Transport Worker's Federation
47	William Stewart	European Fisheries Control Agency

1. Opening of the meeting by the chairman, Ian Gatt

The chairman opened the meeting at 10:00 hrs and welcomed Mr. Richard Lochhead, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment who was shadow minister prior to his time as cabinet secretary and hence knows the fishing industry inside out. He thanked Richard Lochhead and Ben Dipper from Marine Scotland for the possibility to hold the current meeting at Edinburgh Castle. A tour de table followed.

2. Welcome speech by Scottish Fisheries Minister Richard Lochhead

Richard Lochhead welcomed the participants and considered it a privilege to host the meeting at Edinburgh Castle which has been a focal point for much of Scottish history. He also considered it a privilege to have worked with many of the attendants over many years and to see the developments in the fishing sector as well as recognize the challenges people are facing. Even though Scotland is a small country, about 4 tonnes of fish are caught on each Scottish nautical square mile, indicating the importance of the fishing industry for the Scottish economy and culture. He therefore considered it very important that Scotland plays a role in managing the stocks and implementing the CFP. He thanked the pelagic sector for its contribution to implementing the landing obligation which is one of the major tasks under the regionalization process. He pointed out that one of the key issues for Scotland and for himself as minister is to establish a level playing field in terms of control and enforcement and emphasised that must also include third country vessels fishing in EU waters.

One of the challenges the fishing sector is currently facing is the Russian import ban and he hoped that other markets have been secured. He has also discussed with the industry how banking flexibility could help mitigate the situation.

The ICES advice for pelagic stocks indicates major challenges for some of these stocks, e.g. mackerel and blue whiting, but also herring in area VIa. It is therefore even more important to have good data and thoroughly carried out surveys. At the same time he underlined the importance to get the stocks back under internationally agreed management plans and deeply regretted that some countries are setting unilateral quotas.

He furthermore pointed out that both scientific and stakeholder advice is invaluable in helping formulate positions at Council meetings. The process of arriving at the advice is thereby equally important.

He concluded his speech by congratulating Ian Gatt on his role as chairman of the Pelagic AC and wished the Pelagic AC best of luck in helping sustain a viable pelagic sector in Europe.

The chairman thanked Richard Lochhead for his speech and was glad to hear that Scotland's objectives are broadly the same as the objectives of the Pelagic AC.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without amendments.

4. Follow-up on action items

The first action item was in relation to the draft MoU with the Member States. The Pelagic AC had submitted the MoU to all relevant regional groups, but all three of them replied that they have their own internal MoU in which the role of the Pelagic AC is recognized. None of them, however, indicated that they would be willing to sign a separate MoU with the Pelagic AC. The chairman therefore suggested keeping this issue as a long-term objective and on the short term try to invigorate the relations with the Member States. In this regard he tried setting up a meeting with the control experts of the regional groups. The SWW group promised to invite the Pelagic AC to a meeting, but never did. The NWW group did invite the Pelagic AC to a meeting and a few days before the meeting canceled the invitation and the Scheveningen Group announced to invite the Pelagic AC to a meeting in November, but nothing concrete has happened yet. Both the NWW group and the Scheveningen Group have produced reports on control issues and the chairman expected that both groups will request input from the Pelagic AC soon.

Gerard van Balsfoort had heard that the NWW group has reached agreement to formally ask the Pelagic AC for advice on their control report and he expected to receive the request shortly. This could be a good moment to start rejuvenating the relationship with the group.

Sean O'Donoghue agreed with the proposal, but also wanted to pursue a meeting together with all three regional groups given that some of the stocks are distributed in all three areas while the rules are different in each of the areas.

The chairman said that he intended to suggest under AOB to set up a focus group on control to deal with the recommendations from the Member States, but also a foreseen Commission consultation on the new control regulation. He was not aware of specific dates yet, but wanted to agree on establishing such a focus group in principle and writing down names of people interested in participating. He asked members to reflect on the issue and said he would return to it under AOB.

The third action item was in relation to the policy statement saying that VIa North herring was overfished. Given the different situation with this stock now the chairman suggested to drop the issue.

The fourth action item, i.e. submitting comments to the policy statement to the secretariat, had been done.

The next action item related back to discussing control more openly and accordingly sending a request to the regional groups. The only AC interested in supporting such a letter is the Baltic Sea AC and the letter is in production.

Another action item was for Irene Kingma to share the outcome of discussions in the North Sea AC on control. She explained that the North Sea AC has decided to set up a focus group on control and she was willing to communicate the results of that group. The first meeting was supposed to take place in November.

The final action item was to deal with the questions submitted to EDF on their discard manual. The chairman reported that Melanie Siggs had not forgotten about it. She did not have time to respond yet, but had promised to do so soon.

5. Report of the ecosystem focus group

Stella Nemecky thanked everyone who had contributed to the report of the ecosystem focus group. She said she would run quickly through the report and strongly encouraged all members to read it if they have not already done so. Those people who read the report will have noticed that it is based on the initial terms of references, but that it does not adhere to these, because throughout the process it became clear that the initial questions were not extensive enough and did not cover all items that people felt should be covered. The goal of the report is to help develop a strategic approach to ecosystem-based fisheries management (EAFM). Until now the report has mainly been a mapping exercise to identify practical factors and most relevant issues. Stella Nemecky emphasized that she hoped that the document will not just end up sitting on the shelf, but that the process will continue and that the current report will serve as a good starting point.

The introduction of the report provides an overview of different existing definitions of EAFM and why it should to be applied. The focus group chose to use the FAO definition, because it is the most comprehensive one and includes humans as part of the ecosystem best. The introduction also analyses how the MSFD and CFP deal with EAFM. Different legislations have different approaches and they are not really aligned, making the application of an EAFM even more difficult. Most scientists do not have a clear idea either how EAFM should be implemented. Paulina Ramirez from the University of Aalborg provided some suggestions on how the EAFM could be operationalized and identified what the challenges are. This has also been included in the introduction. At the same time she is involved in the MareFrame project and will continue collaborating with the Pelagic AC on the issue.

Chapters 2 and 3 of the report deal with descriptors 1 and 3 of the MSFD respectively. These chapters are not set in stone and can easily be extended, but at the moment cover those topics that people considered most relevant, e.g. ETP bycatch, natural mortality, reference points in a multi-species context etc.

Chapter 4 deals with food webs and the issue of forage fish which need to be managed differently and require some more thinking than demersal stocks.

Chapter 5 considers habitat deterioration and spatial management. At the moment the focus is mainly on herring spawning grounds as a pressing issue that already receives a lot of attention from the Pelagic AC. However, this can easily be extended in the future.

The conclusions deal with regionalization and the involvement of the Pelagic AC in the process and touches upon some past and current work of the Pelagic AC on the EAFM.

The annex includes some detailed information on e.g. reference points, MSC and MareFrame models to complete the chapters as they are at the moment.

Stella Nemecky pointed out that the current report is only the first step of identifying and raising relevant issues and that it is a living document that will evolve over time. The goal is to continue working on these issues in the future and she suggested focusing on those topics first that everyone can agree on. She called upon all people in the room to provide their input to the work.

The chairman thanked Stella Nemecky for providing an overview of the report and said that it can be downloaded from the website. He strongly encouraged people to have a look at it. He asked Esben-Sverdrup Jensen for clarification on how this work will continue.

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen also thanked Stella Nemecky for the presentation. He explained that the ecosystem focus group started under Working Group I and he was happy for it to continue under his supervision. At the same time he was very pleased that Stella Nemecky had taken over the responsibility to chair the focus group since she has done an excellent job. The report is far more comprehensive than he had imagined at the beginning and he felt that the group was in a good position to continue the work. He was aware that the Commission and Member States will have to work on these issues as well and his intention was to be ahead in the game. He suggested focusing on those issues where the AC can make a difference. He proposed continuing in the current format which functioned well and recognized the contributions from the various focus group members. Once the focus group is ready to provide some concrete recommendations he intended to bring them to the attention of the Executive Committee. The chairman agreed with this suggestion.

Sean O'Donoghue thanked Stella Nemecky for the comprehensive report. He pointed out that several EU projects are dealing with the EAFM and he suggested looking at the outcomes of those projects since they might be a source of relevant information, particularly those that cover pelagics. As of next year ICES will give ecosystem advice and he therefore thought it would be worthwhile to keep in touch with ICES on this. He said he would like to take the work from concept to practicalities although he realized that his was easier said than done.

Gerard van Balsfoort also thanked Stella Nemecky for her engagement. He had gone through the report quickly and felt that this was a useful document. At the same time he wanted to encourage the focus group to concentrate on those items that will be part of current or future policy making. Given the role of the Advisory Councils he said that the Pelagic AC should advise on concrete policy proposal, maybe even move straight to the MSFD. However, he also pointed out that it is very important to take into account the developments in ICES and he was confident that the focus group will take this onboard. He suggested presenting information on developments to the Executive Committee before the focus group reaches a final conclusion.

Stella Nemecky very much agreed with this suggestion and emphasized the importance of keeping all members involved in the topic. She stressed that each focus group member can act as a link between the focus group and the remaining members to make sure that their thoughts are fully integrated. She encouraged everyone to submit their ideas either to her directly, the secretariat or any other focus group member.

Tony Andrews said that the Atlantic Salmon Trust is looking at tracking salmon and sea trout in some of the very same areas where some of the focus group research is taking place. He thought that some of the data may be useful to integrate in the work of the focus group, e.g. information about prey species.

The chairman invited Tony Andrews to join the focus group given his expertise, which he gladly accepted.

6. Presentation of a multispecies model for the North Sea (Steve Mackinson)

Steve Mackinson had read the report of the ecosystem focus group and hoped that his presentation would nicely add to the report. He pointed out that there are several EU projects dealing with the EAFM that the Pelagic AC should look into in order to avoid re-inventing the wheel. There are also two relevant ICES groups, namely WGMIXFISH and WGSAM of which he is currently the chair. He said that people often confuse multi-species and mixed fisheries, but that it is important to clearly distinguish between the two. The take away messages of his talk in this regard are that multi-species means food web effects and models are used to capture these. Both the CFP and MSFD policy commitments, but also the ICES science strategy mean that multi-species impacts will become a

prominent feature of future advice. Multi-species issues are tightly connected with mixed fisheries issues, because fisheries are one predator competing with the other natural ones. Models help understand the ecological and fishery trade-offs and by that allow evaluation of the consequences of current management strategies and lay the science foundation for future strategies. When predators are abundant they can have a big impact on prey stocks by depressing them. This is called a top down effect. The reverse can also be true, i.e. if there is a high population of prey stocks they affect the abundance of predators, which is called a bottom up effect. In reality both effects happen all the time and there has been a long debate regarding what is more important and has stronger effects. These dynamics are at the forefront of multi-species considerations, but it is important to realize that everyone competes for food and a predator in one circumstance can be a prey in another. Mixed fisheries, on the other hand, could be considered to be the fleet web, not the food web. The effects of mixed fisheries take place over a shorter time frame, but can result in long-lasting effects in the food web, meaning the two are inter-connected. Food web models focus on the question of who eats who and how much and assess the direct effects of fisheries. More importantly, however, they try to assess the indirect effects, i.e. things happening down the food web that were not anticipated. Food web models are needed to handle this kind of complexity and to ask what-if questions. Given that it is not possible to carry out real experiments in a food web, these kind of questions have to be addressed with models. There is a strong drive to make these things operational under the new CFP. While a lot of research has been carried out on this over the past 30 years and delivered some great results, this kind of work sometimes was a bit ahead of time and people felt that they had the answers, but not the questions which is why there was so little uptake. This is changing now and the CFP commitment has been translated into the ICES strategy. WGMIXFISH and WGSAM have been created 25-30 years ago and thus are not new. There is a lot of work going on in these groups and researchers are asking the right questions. The terms of reference of WGSAM reflect some of the questions raised in the report of the ecosystem focus group, i.e. how to set reference points in a multi-species context. Standards and protocols are an important issue and researchers are trying to establish robust processes for multi-species models. An example for a multi-species model is the SMS model that was used to give draft advice in 2013 on the North Sea. This model illustrated the trade-offs of fishing one stock vs another. At the moment Ecopath with Ecosim is used to look at 65 different species in the North Sea. The model assesses the consequences of different harvest control rule options and provides a distribution of the likelihood of different outcomes. The key aspect of such considerations is that one scenario can be bad for a specific species, but highly beneficial for another species, i.e. there are winners (biomass increases) and losers (biomass decreases) of policies such as the CFP and MSFD. Steve Mackinson had been asked yesterday how well such models perform and he thought that in some cases the performance is quite good as are the predictions. However, this is not the case for all areas. In general multi-species models have revealed that F_{msy} estimates differ compared to single species models which has implications for the ranges that might be adopted in multiannual management plans. The abundance of top predators determines to a large extent the yield that can be taken from other species. In the short term feeding requirements of predators should be considered when setting TACs for forage fish species. While simulations of MSY in the North Sea predict increases in top predator abundance this leads to reduction of biomass of their prey species. Species that are relevant from a conservation perspective might benefit from reductions in fishing mortality, but might actually be more impacted by increases in their predator abundance. Multi-species models have also shown that it is impossible to fish all stocks at MSY. Some stocks will have to be fished above F_{msy} while others will have to be fished below F_{msy}. However, if F_{msy} ranges were routinely available from multi-species models, it would be possible to achieve greater congruence among species. Finally, simulations from both single species and multi-species models show that fishing between F_{msy} and the lower limit confers greater advantages for biomass, yield and reduced risk of depletion, than fishing between F_{msy} and the upper limit. Persistent fishing

at the upper limit of the F_{msy} range across a range of stocks increases the risk of stock depletion and may have broader ecosystem impacts.

The chairman thanked Steve Mackinson for his presentation and concluded that there are clearly a lot of knowledge gaps in the report of the ecosystem focus group, but that the information seems to be available. He wanted to know if anything has been done specifically on pelagic models.

Steve Mackinson replied that the same models he referred to can be used for pelagics and that there are several EU research projects that did this. Some of these projects took place before the new CFP, but the tools can still be used.

Stella Nemecky thought that this was a very interesting presentation. She understood that the fizzyfish model fits well with the historic data, but she wanted to know how important a new stomach content analysis would be given that most models are based on stomach analysis from the 1980ies.

Steve Mackinson confirmed that the stomach data largely come from data collected in the 1980ies and 1990ies. There have been some efforts to conduct a new stomach sampling survey, but this is really expensive and the question is whether such a new survey would yield a high benefit. There was a project that pulled together information on stomach data reaching back to the 19th century and that information is now available. The report of the ecosystem focus group mentioned industry gut sampling as an opportunity, but he was wondering how this would work in practice, i.e. who will perform the actual analysis. The manpower needed to gut a sufficiently large amount of fish and subsequently figure out what these fish eat together with the associated costs is enormous and he simply could not see who would be willing to pay for this.

Stella Nemecky said that she asked for the necessity, not the costs. She could see that data from the 19th century might be interesting for scientists, but considered them rather irrelevant in the current situation in which stocks are moving north and where changes in food webs are occurring.

Steve Mackinson explained that the value of such a long time series is in identifying the dynamics under different climate conditions. Based on these historic data it is possible to figure out how variable a situation is and this variability can be incorporated in the models.

Sean O'Donoghue had a rather bitter experience with stock assessment models. In the past years he has been told that the SAM model is the Holy Grail, but in reality this model is not performing well at all. Multi-species models are even more complex and he was worried that this would lead to an even higher uncertainty. He wanted to know how multi-species models take density dependency into account.

Steve Mackinson replied that models take density dependency into account mainly through stock-recruitment relationships. Density dependency is a major source of uncertainty in both single species and multi-species models, because it influences F_{msy} values.

As a follow-up question Sean O'Donoghue wanted to know how multi-species models handle density dependency when a stock is very large.

Steve Mackinson said there is increased cannibalism and reduced reproduction rates at high biomasses which could be taken into account. In general each model uses all data available and tries to replicate past observations. If this replication turns our relatively well, then there is some confidence in the predictive power of the model. However, this does not always hold and there is uncertainty around those predictions. Therefore, in a management plan evaluation there are thousands of model runs carried out to find out what the likeliness of the outcomes are and the associated risks.

Christine Absil wondered whether next generation sequencing would be helpful in reducing the costs of stomach sampling, but Steve Mackinson could not answer this question given that this was not his expertise.

Gerard van Balsfoort wanted to know what people were trying to achieve by using multi-species models in the North Sea, e.g. what the objectives were. Did they want to go back to a specific state of the ecosystem or was it more a political objective. He asked Steve Mackinson what he thought this work should lead to.

Steve Mackinson said that it is up to policy makers to decide what the objectives are. An example could be that catches should be optimized over all yields. If scientists are given a clear objective, they will be able to present different options.

Søren Anker Pedersen pointed out that spatial issues are also very important. He did not want to go into much detail, but asked Steve Mackinson to briefly explain how the models he presented deal with spatial issues.

Steve Mackinson explained that the models he presented do not deal with spatial issues, but there are spatial models available. These add another layer of complexity, but given that they are on the table this is also a key area for science. However, these models are not yet operational.

7. Presentation of PelAcoustic II project (Sascha Fässler)

Sascha Fässler explained that he had been invited to present work he did in the Netherlands with acoustic data collected by freezer-trawlers in the PelAcoustic II project. This project aimed at continuing acoustic data collection and fisheries simulator development, focusing on blue whiting and herring. Self-calibration by the crew was especially important to allow independent data collection and to increase data quantity. The calibration of the acoustic equipment was quite challenging. A small metal ball of a given size had to be brought into the acoustic beam of the vessel which would then show up on the picture from the echosounder. This was done on five freezer-trawlers, at first during dry runs in the harbor and later while fishing at sea. The echosounder from Simrad has a built-in calibrator, but not in the commercial version and hence the calibration software had to be developed too. The researchers also trained the crew to do the calibration, so that they could do it themselves while the researchers were watching remotely using team viewer. The project started early in 2013. At first the calibration mechanisms were developed, followed by calibration courses. Afterwards, towards the end of 2014 and throughout 2015, fishermen performed the calibrations themselves with remote assistance. A lot of echograms are collected in each fishing trip. Thereby it is important to know that these data are collected over a long time, which means that temporal aspects have to be taken into account, e.g. the migration of the fish. The data collected help to identify where the fish is going and provides information on possible interaction with other stocks. One of the issues is that calibration is not yet routine and it might be necessary to provide assisted calibration once a year and regular check-ups afterwards. It will also be necessary to develop automation procedures for data analysis. One potential application of acoustic data collection by the fishing industry is through mini-surveys that will provide biomass estimates. This is an area that is currently being explored and there are several initiatives outside Europe already using acoustic mini-surveys. Sascha Fässler was excited about the proposal to carry out mini-surveys for VIa herring. He pointed out that a vessel calibration group has been set up under WGFAST and that a session on this has been proposed for the next ICES Annual Science Conference.

The chairman thanked Sascha Fässler for his presentation and confirmed that the industry would indeed like to go forward with mini-surveys in VIa herring. It seemed to him that the right calibration

is absolutely crucial and he wondered whether it takes long and whether there are commercial companies involved in this or whether only scientific institutes can carry out the calibration.

Sascha Fässler replied that once the calibration has become a routine it can be done quite quickly within a few hours.

Christian Olesen noticed that the PelAcoustics project has been carried out on freezer-trawlers at sea. He wanted to know whether it would also be useful to use fresh fish vessels for data collection, which go out and come back quickly.

Sascha Fassler said that people in Scotland did trials on RSW vessels, but he personally has only worked with freezer-trawlers. To answer Christian Olesen's question he would first have to look into the results from the Scottish RSW vessels.

8. Advice from Working Group I

The chairman invited Esben Sverdrup-Jensen to present the stock advice from Working Group I.

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen hoped that the Executive Committee would approve the advice formulated by the Working Group. For blue whiting, the advice was to return to the original Pelagic AC management plan and to align it with the new CFP and reflecting the latest scientific advice. It was also suggested that the Coastal States should explore elements of this plan that could be incorporated in a future plan. The Executive Committee approved the recommendations.

Regarding Atlanto-Scandian herring it was recommended to follow the management plan and to delete article 20a of Council Regulation 850/1998 prohibiting catches of herring in Union waters of area IIa during the larger part of the year, or otherwise derogate from this provision. The Executive Committee approved the recommendation.

For North Sea horse mackerel it was recommended to follow the ICES advice and to support ongoing research on stock identification and developing abundance indices. The Executive Committee approved the recommendation.

9. Advice from Working Group II

The chairman invited Sean O'Donoghue to present the stock advice from Working Group II.

Regarding mackerel the Working Group recommended encouraging the Coastal States to adopt a long-term management plan as a matter of urgency. Furthermore the Pelagic AC will support the international egg survey through its industry members. A number of technical issues should also be pursued, namely the unstable assessment, the IESSNS survey, density dependent growth and RFID tagging. The Executive Committee approved the recommendation.

For Western horse mackerel it was recommended to follow the ICES advice, to try to finalize a new management strategy, to support the international egg survey in 2016 and to develop additional data sources. The Executive Committee approved the recommendation.

For Southern horse mackerel it was recommended to follow the ICES advice which was supported by the Executive Committee.

In regards to boarfish the Working Group suggested following the ICES advice and requesting that the revised management strategy will be taken up, especially in terms of incorporating closures into the TAC and quota regulation. Furthermore the assessment should be developed further. The Executive Committee approved the recommendation.

In terms of VIa and VIIb,c herring it was proposed to develop a rebuilding plan that contains next generation sequencing for stock separation, industry mini-surveys, the larval and genetics study proposed by IMR. It would also entail a small commercial fishery based on a very low F and the Pelagic AC should prepare for the benchmark in 2017.

Christine Absil was worried about how small the small commercial fishery would be and what F Sean O'Donoghue was thinking of. She said that during the Working Group II meeting there were mixed signals why a small commercial fishery would be needed. Some said it was necessary for calibration, others because no vessels would participate in data collections otherwise.

Sean O'Donoghue said that he did not suggest a concrete F, but he assured the meeting that he was foreseeing a very small F of not more than half of the existing F or less. During the focus group meetings on VIa herring all scientists had agreed that some catches of the stock are needed in order to continue the time series and to develop a rebuilding plan. However, he felt that it would not be appropriate to recommend a specific figure, but he emphasized that in terms of SSB the effect of a very small F would also be very small.

Christine Absil wanted to formulate the advice as a sentinel fishery rather than a commercial fishery, but Sean O'Donoghue wanted to know what her definition of a sentinel fishery is. He explained that there will be larger vessels involved as well to carry out the research and that is why he called it a small commercial fishery. He explained that nobody would be willing to go out exclusively for data collection.

Christine Absil said that it is in the interest of the industry to know how much can be caught, not in the interest of rebuilding. She said that the industry is keen on knowing how much it can fish, but she thought that it should also be in the industry's interest to fish as little as possible.

Sean O'Donoghue pointed out that the reason for the current situation is due the benchmark not being able to separate the two stocks anymore. Nevertheless, even the ICES advice accepts that there are two different stocks. At the July meeting HAWG made it very clear that there had to be a continuation of a small fishery for scientific reasons. The same has been done in other fisheries as well, e.g. sandeel in Denmark. He considered it impossible to develop a rebuilding plan without a small commercial fishery.

Christine Absil said that in Canada the term sentinel fishery has been used and she suggested doing the same.

Sean O'Donoghue was willing to agree to this, but only under the condition that a clarification would be included that sentinel fishery does not mean that the vessels have to be smaller than 10 meters.

Christine Absil said that it is fine if industry vessels support data collection, but she did not support a commercial fishery.

Sean O'Donoghue therefore suggested taking out the word commercial.

Christine Absil agreed, but only if the following would be added: "with the purpose of collecting scientific data".

Christian Olesen said that in the case of sandeel people call it "fishing on a monitoring TAC."

The Executive Committee agreed that this sounds like a good option.

For Celtic Sea herring it was suggested to revise the 2015 TAC in accordance with the ICES advice and to set the 2016 TAC on the management plan developed by the Pelagic AC. The Executive Committee approved the recommendation.

Regarding Irish Sea herring it was proposed to follow the ICES MSY advice and to develop a management strategy. The Executive Committee agreed.

10. AOB

The chairman asked the Pelagic AC members whether they have reflected on the idea of setting up a focus group on control. He has not identified a starting date yet, but wanted to agree on the idea in principle.

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen supported that idea, but wanted to add the work foreseen in regards to the technical measures regulation. He believed that the Commission is about to surface a new proposal.

The chairman agreed that this was a good suggestion and concluded that the focus group should deal with both control and technical measures. He invited interested members to notify the secretariat about their participation.

11. End of meeting

The chairman thanked people for their attendance and especially Ben Dipper and his team at Marine Scotland for offering to host the meeting. He wished people safe travels home.

Action items

- Rejuvenate relationship with regional groups (chairman, secretariat)
- Continue work on ecosystem focus group (focus group members)
- Submit stock recommendations to Commission (secretariat)
- Set-up focus group on control and technical measures (chairman, secretariat)
- Inform the secretariat about interest to participate in focus group on control and technical measures (interested members)