



▶ Pelagic AC

Working Group I meeting
11 July 2017
10:00-11:45 hrs
Parkhotel
Molenstraat 53
The Hague
The Netherlands

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Participants

1	Esben Sverdrup-Jensen, chair	Danish Pelagic Producers Organisation
2	Alex Wiseman	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association
3	Aukje Coers	Cornelis Vrolijk
4	Charles Berkow	The Fisheries Secretariat
5	Christine Absil	Seas at Risk
6	Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn	Danish Pelagic Producers Organisation
7	Gerard van Balsfoort	Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association
8	Gersom Costas	Instituto Español de Oceanografía
9	Ghislain Chouinard	ICES
10	Goncalo Carvalho	Sciaena
11	Hugo Mendes	Instituto Português do Mar e da Atmosfera
12	Ian Gatt	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association
13	Irene Kingma	Dutch Elasmobranch Society
14	Jerome Nouis	Union des armateurs a la pêche de France
15	Jesper Raakjær	University of Aalborg
16	Jessica Demblon	EBCD
17	John Ward	Irish Fish PO
18	Jonas Sorensen	EU Fishmeal
19	José Beltran	OPLUGO
20	Justyna Zajchowska	The Pew Charitable Trusts
21	Leon Bouts	EFCA
22	Lesley Duthie	North Sea Women's Network
23	Line Groth-Rasmussen	European Commission- DG MARE
24	Ludmilla van der Meer	Pelagic AC
25	Mads Larsson	AIPCE
26	Manuela Azevedo	Instituto Português do Mar e da Atmosfera
27	Miguel Cunha	ADAPI
28	Mikkel Stage	The Danish AgriFish Agency
29	Reine Johansson	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
30	Rob Banning	Parlevliet & van der Plas
31	Romain Soisson	From Nord
32	Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
33	Sheila O'Neil	Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine, Ireland



34 Steven Mackinson
35 Uwe Richter
36 Verena Ohms

Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association
Deutscher Hochseefischerei-Verband/ Seefrostvertrieb
Pelagic AC

1. Opening of the meeting by the chairman, Esben Sverdrup-Jensen

The chairman opened the meeting at 10:05 and provided practical information in regards to interpretation etc. A tour de table followed.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without amendments.

3. Follow-up on action items

The first action item was in relation to sharing the results of the acoustic studies carried out in the Bay of Biscay once available. So far, no further information has been received on those studies and the chairman decided to therefore keep the action item on the list.

The second action item was to arrange a blue whiting focus group meeting which took place on the 6th of June. Another focus group meeting was planned for the following day. The chairman also explained that the group was in the process of hiring Dankert Skagen to do some additional work building on the modelling he provided in 2012.

The next action item was to informally talk to Mark Dickey-Collas about how ICES intends to use non-quantifiable stakeholder information for its ecosystem assessment. However, the result of the informal conversation was that the Pelagic AC had to go through a more formal channel if it wants to get a response from ICES. In general it seemed a difficult issue for ICES to work with stakeholder information, especially when dealing with the advice sheets. The chairman invited comments on how to proceed with this issue.

Sean O'Donoghue said that the issue would be discussed in more detail during Working Group II, particular in regards to non-quantifiable information. He suggested writing formally to ICES to inquire whether the ecosystem advice could be utilized to include stakeholder information. At the last MIACO meeting he got the impression that that should be possible.

Ghislain Chouinard said that in regards to ecosystem assessments there could be some possibilities coming up, e.g. WKIRISH about which the ACs will be contacted later this fall. The plan is to look at some ecosystem models in the Irish Sea that consider all species together, i.e. cod, plaice, whiting, sole and herring. Stakeholders will be engaged in the process to see what kind of scenarios could be looked at and also some ecosystem information could be considered at the workshop. The modelling exercise is planned for early 2018. There might also be some discussion around the advice sheets. He recalled that the Pelagic AC had recently sent a letter to ICES about information that has not been included in the advice sheet and a response from ICES was sent last week. He explained that any information relevant to the stock assessment will be included in the advice sheet. However, the advice sheets are ICES documents that have to be approved by ACOM and ACOM felt that the text regarding the use of the management strategy rather than MSY was advocating one position over another and had no relevance for the assessment. Therefore, ACOM decided not to include this information. In regards to multi-species work Ghislain Chouinard said that work on mixed fishery analysis is ongoing for the North Sea.



Steven Mackinson pointed out that he has previously been involved in evaluating the North Sea multi-species plan using a multispecies model. In that plan all stocks were included that had reference points. So far the work has taken seven years and he was currently writing a paper on it. He hoped that the paper would be available shortly as it will be relevant to the discussion.

Sean O'Donoghue considered it important to separate the two issues mentioned. The action item related to non-quantifiable stakeholder information and in that regard he wanted the Pelagic AC to be actively involved in WKIRISH and said he would make sure to participate in the workshop. The other issue was about stakeholder information in the ICES advice and he suggested to leave that discussion to Working Group II.

The chairman agreed. The next action item was to arrange the MCRS workshop on the 6th of June which had been done. The chairman thanked everyone who participated in the workshop and said that there had been excellent presentations providing different views on MCRS in relation to history, gear technology etc. The conclusion from the workshop was that MCRS should be approached on a stock by stock basis and that the Management Team should discuss the way forward. The chairman planned to discuss the issue later today with the Management Team and to report back at the Executive Committee meeting tomorrow.

Another action item was the issue about wanted versus unwanted catch, especially regarding North Sea horse mackerel. The chairman explained that a letter has been drafted and will be sent out as soon as possible. He hoped to receive a response before the October meeting.

Irene Kingma was interested in seeing the letter since she was not an Executive Committee member.

The chairman replied that all communication is made available on the Pelagic AC website and once the letter has been sent it will be uploaded to the website.

The final action item was in relation to genetics and horse mackerel. Gerard van Balsfoort pointed out that he had just received a proposal by Edward Farrell on a horse mackerel genetics project which was briefly discussed by the Northern Pelagic Working Group on the previous day. There was a deadline of one week to either agree on the proposal or request changes.

The chairman wanted to know how people viewed the role of the Pelagic AC in that project given that funding was provided entirely by the industry.

Sean O'Donoghue foresaw a similar role as for the herring genetics project where the Pelagic AC supports the project, but not financially. He hoped that the Pelagic AC would also endorse the horse mackerel genetics project.

The chairman concluded that once a research plan was in place it would be circulated within the Pelagic AC to seek endorsement.

4. Fishing opportunities 2017: presentation of ICES advice by Ghislain Chouinard (information)

Ghislain Chouinard provided some basic information on how ICES produces its advice. If a management plan is available that has been agreed by all competent authorities as basis for the advice and if the plan is precautionary, then ICES follows the plan. Otherwise it uses the ICES MSY approach, and if that is not available, ICES follows the precautionary approach.

He also explained that there are different stock categories depending on the amount of information available. Category 1 stocks are stocks with an accepted analytical assessment and forecast. This means that the ICES advice for these stocks is either based on a management plan or MSY. Category 2 stocks have an analytical assessment and forecast accepted for trends only. Advice for these stocks is provided based on MSY. Category 3 and 4 stocks are those stocks for which there are abundance or

biomass indices indicative of trends or reliable catch and biological data. At the moment ICES bases its advice for those stocks on the precautionary approach, but is busy developing an MSY approach. Category 5 and 6 stocks only have landing information available with category 6 stocks being largely discarded. For those categories ICES follows the precautionary approach.

The ICES MSY approach aims at maximizing long term average yield and safeguarding against low SSB. If the SSB is above a certain trigger point (=MSY $B_{trigger}$) fishing mortality will be set equal to F_{msy} . If the stock falls below that trigger, then fishing mortality is progressively being reduced, so the stock can grow back to levels above MSY $B_{trigger}$. If the stock falls below B_{lim} ICES assesses whether the stock will be below or above B_{lim} in the TAC year. If it seems that the stock will be below B_{lim} , then ICES will advise zero catch.

All advice can be found on the ICES website: <http://www.ices.dk/Pages/default.aspx>

- **North Sea autumn spawning herring**

Ghislain Chouinard explained that there is a partial overlap of North Sea herring and Western Baltic spring spawning (WBSS) herring in area 3a where both stocks are being caught. The ICES advice for North Sea herring for 2018 follows the EU-Norway management strategy which implies catches of no more than 517 891 tonnes including 491 355 tonnes for the A-fleet. F has been below F_{msy} since 1996 and recruitment has been high in 2014, but is estimated to be lower in more recent years. This lower recruitment means that people should expect a decrease in stock size down the line. SSB has been above MSY $B_{trigger}$ since 2009. Catch in 2016 was 563 611 tonnes.

Ghislain Chouinard also explained that each assessment revises stock estimates due to new information coming in. Sometimes stock perception changes a lot, but ICES always hoped that the revisions would be fairly consistent. For North Sea herring the assessment this year has been fairly consistent with the assessment in the previous years. One change is that recruitment has been revised upwards. In terms of assumptions a catch constraint in 2017 was used and advice was provided with 0 and 50% TAC transfer flexibility for the management strategy option. The forecast expects lower recruitment in the coming years as well as some reduction in SSB. However, this is normal because all stocks fluctuate and recent year classes have been lower compared to the 2014 year class. It was important to notice that the catch options for North Sea herring are set in tandem with WBSS herring, because some fleets catch both stocks. Ghislain Chouinard also pointed out that F_{msy} had been reassessed in the previous year.

The chairman said that last year there had been a discussion on the reassessed reference points and the Pelagic AC suggested to update the existing management plan to include the new reference points. As far as he was aware this has not been done yet. This was confirmed by Ghislain Chouinard.

The chairman wanted to know whether there were any plans to update the management plan to include the new reference points.

Ian Gatt replied that at the ADG it was pointed out that there will be a benchmark next year when all reference points will be re-evaluated and scientists would not welcome a request to look at reference points prior to the benchmark.

Rob Banning said that in 2019 the fishery on brown shrimp will come under the landing obligation. He wanted to know whether ICES had any information on herring bycatch in the brown shrimp fishery.

Ghislain Chouinard responded that he had no information on this, but he promised to check with ICES and to report back to the Pelagic AC.



- **Western Baltic spring spawning herring**

The catch advice for WBSS herring is considerably lower for 2018 compared to 2017. Following the MSY approach ICES advised that catches should be no more than 34 618 tonnes. This advice applies to the catch of western Baltic spring spawners in subdivisions 20–24 and the eastern part of Subarea 4. In this year's assessment fishing mortality is perceived to have increased in 2015 and 2016 and is now above F_{msy} . Recruitment was the lowest in the time series in 2015 and 2016. SSB is now perceived to have been between $Blim$ and $MSY B_{trigger}$ since 2012. The catch in 2016 was 51 297 tonnes. While the previous assessment indicated that the stock was increasing, the new assessment with new indicators included, now shows that SSB has remained flat since 2012 and the F is somewhat higher than previously estimated while recruitment is lower. This change in perception resulted in a 39% lower catch advice for 2018. Ghislain Chouinard subsequently presented an overview of the catch options for the various fleets involved in the fishery if the EU-Norway management rule is followed.

Gerard van Balsfoort found it difficult to understand why the TAC for the A-fleet for both North Sea herring and WBSS herring would go up if there was a 50% transfer.

Aukje Coers clarified that the numbers he was looking at referred to expected catch, not TAC.

Ghislain Chouinard added that while with a 50% transfer the expected catch for the A-fleet would increase for both stocks, the total catch of WBSS herring would decrease.

5. Discussion of ICES advice

The chairman thanked Ghislain Chouinard for the presentation and concluded that these two stocks are probably the two most complicated stocks to advise on given the amount of fleets involved. Rather than agreeing on a final advice today he suggested to discuss the options today, but to agree on the Pelagic AC advice at the October meeting. Regarding WBSS herring he pointed out that some decisions are made by the Baltic Sea AC. Regarding the management plan for North Sea herring he recalled that the plan had still not been updated with the latest reference points. Following the current plan would lead to a 2% TAC increase in the A-fleet in 2018 whereas following the MSY approach would lead to a 25% increase. However, it could also be an option to advise according to the management plan with updated reference points. This would result in a TAC increase of 15% given the TAC constraint that is included in the plan. These were the three options the chairman considered worth discussing. He also reminded the meeting participants that last year the Pelagic AC had recommended to update the management plan with the new reference points. However, this has not been done yet and he understood that ICES wanted to postpone this until after the benchmark in early 2018. Last year the TAC was based on MSY which was at the high end of what the Pelagic AC had advised. Given that the management plan had still not been updated, the chairman suggested to repeat last year's advice, but he was open for other suggestions.

Gerard van Balsfoort thought that it would be logical to advise updating the management plan with the new reference points despite ICES not being keen on doing so prior to the benchmark.

Justyna Zajchowska also supported to continue with this approach and to repeat last year's advice.

The chairman decided to circulate a draft advice prior to the October meeting, so that it could be approved at the meeting.

The chairman then moved on to WBSS herring which has a very complicated management rule. The Pelagic AC deals with herring in 3a and the fishery in that area while the ICES advice for WBSS herring covers several components. The TAC in 3a is determined by 41% of the MSY advice for WBSS herring plus 5.7% of the A-fleet TAC for North Sea herring. That means that the TAC for 3a herring will depend on the TAC set for North Sea herring for which three options have been discussed just now. Last year



the Pelagic AC recommended to follow the management strategy agreed by the EU and Norway, but to revise the TAC setting mechanism taking into account the revision of the EU-Norway management strategy for North Sea herring as recommended. The chairman suggested repeating this advice.

Justyna Zajchowska thought that following the MSY approach was missing from the options presented by the chairman. Given that the stock is now below MSY $B_{trigger}$ and F above F_{msy} she wanted to follow MSY.

The chairman explained that option two corresponded to the MSY approach and that the confusion arose because the ICES advice is for WBSS herring while the Pelagic AC advice is for 3a herring.

Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn explained that the TAC in 3a is set as 41% of the MSY advice for WBSS herring and 5.7% of the A-fleet TAC for North Sea herring. That means that once a decision has been made on the TAC for the A-fleet targeting North Sea herring, an advice will automatically be generated for 3a herring, unless people did not want to follow the TAC setting procedure agreed by the EU and Norway.

The chairman also explained that the F_{msy} value in his presentation referred to the ICES MSY approach.

Reine Johansson supported the advice given previously to the EU and Norway.

Ian Gatt said that the stock size is close to B_{lim} and he wanted to know whether ICES will automatically advise zero catch if the stock falls below B_{lim} .

Ghislain Chouinard replied that if there was no hope for the stock to recover in the advice year, then ICES would indeed recommend zero catch.

Ian Gatt asked the meeting to put some thought into this issue before the October meeting. He wanted to make sure that the stock will not fall below B_{lim} and thought that pressure on the stock had to be reduced.

Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn pointed out that the TAC in 3a would still be above zero even if WBSS herring had a zero catch advice, because part of the TAC is from the North Sea component. He also said that people should keep in mind that there will be a benchmark next year.

Ghislain Chouinard added that the benchmark would have to take place in January or February 2018 for the results to be taken into account in the stock assessment.

The chairman said that he would ensure participation of the Pelagic AC in the benchmark and the data collection workshop preceding the benchmark. He also concluded that the basis for discussion at the October meeting will be the advice from last year.

6. AOB

Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn pointed out that there are different ways of calculating F_{msy} , e.g. using a flat HCR, the ICES HCR etc. and he said that it would be helpful if ICES was more specific in explaining how it calculates F_{msy} , e.g. whether it is capped based on the precautionary approach.

Ghislain Chouinard explained that this year's advice has a section called technical guidelines and he was wondering whether the information asked for could be found in that section.

Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn replied that that section provided of course some background information. However, he sometimes found it tricky to understand what the values are based on, e.g. stochastic simulations or whether they are capped by the precautionary approach.

The chairman said that the fisheries advice was also new and he was interested in the process of generating that advice. He wanted to know how often the document is being updated and how people can engage in the process.



Ghislain Chouinard confirmed that the fisheries overview has recently been published. These overviews are general documents that describe the fisheries. They are being developed for various eco-regions and describe e.g. the gears used in the fisheries etc. They also provide some indications on how the stocks are doing in general. Those documents are being developed by the Working Groups and reviewed by the Advice Drafting Groups. The idea is to update them every few years and as ICES is automating a lot of things the information will be in databases that can be updated fairly easily. Nevertheless, producing these documents was still a lot of work and any comments were welcome. ICES' intention was to make them as useful as possible.

The chairman thanked Ghislain Chouinard for the explanation and decided to put the fisheries overview on the agenda of the next AC meeting to provide some feedback on how the documents could be improved.

7. End of meeting

The chairman closed the meeting at 11:30.



Action items:

- Share results of acoustic studies carried out in the Bay of Biscay once available (Jerome Jourdain)
- Circulate draft advice for North Sea herring and 3a herring for discussion at October meeting (chairman, secretariat)
- Participate in WKIRISH (interested Working Group members)
- Circulate research plan for genetics project on horse mackerel once available and seek endorsement from the Executive Committee (chairman, secretariat)
- Check with ICES whether there is any information on herring bycatch in the brown shrimp fishery (Ghislain Chouinard)
- Participate in herring benchmark and preceding data collection workshop (interested Working Group members)
- Discuss fisheries overview at October meeting and provide feedback to ICES (Working Group)

