



▶ Pelagic AC

Working Group II meeting

21 April 2016

15:00-16:10 hrs

Parkhotel Den Haag, Netherlands

Louis Braillelaan 80

2719 EK Zoetermeer

The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0)63 375 6324

E-mail: info@pelagic-ac.org

Website: www.pelagic-ac.org

Participants

1	Sean O'Donoghue, chairman	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
2	Alex Wiseman	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
3	Aukje Coers	Cornelis Vrolijk
4	Carl Jesper Hermansen	Danmarks Fiskeriforening
5	Christine Absil	Seas at Risk
6	Claus Reedtz Sparrevohn	Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation
7	Eric Roeleveld	Jaczon
8	Esben Sverdrup-Jensen	Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation
9	Fredrik Lindberg	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
10	Frederik Schutyser	European Commission: DG MARE
11	Gerard van Balsfoort	Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association
12	Goncalo Carvalho	Pew Charitable Trusts
13	Ian Gatt	Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association
14	Ignacio Fontaneda Lopez	Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente
15	Inge van der Knaap	Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association
16	Irene Kingma	Dutch Elasmobranch Society
17	Jerome Nouis	From Nord
18	Jesper Juul Larsen	Danmarks Fiskeriforening
19	Jesper Raakjær	AIPCE
20	John Anderson	Scottish Fishermen's Organisation
21	John Ward	Irish Fish PO
22	José Beltran	OPLUGO
23	Kees Taal	Van der Zwan
24	Lesley Duthie	North Sea Women's Network
25	Lotte Worsøe Clausen	DTU Aqua
26	Ludmilla van der Meer	Pelagic AC
27	Maria Aira Martin	Shetland Fishermen's Association
28	Martin Pastoors	Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association
29	Matthew Cox	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation
30	Miren Garmendia	Federacion de Cofradias de Pescadores de Guipuzcoa
31	Norman Graham	European Commission: DG MARE
32	Patrick Murphy	Irish South & West PO
33	Reine Johansson	Swedish Fishermen's Federation
34	Rob Banning	Parlevliet & Van der Plas B.V.
35	Søren Anker Pedersen	Marine Ingredients Denmark
36	Stella Nemecky	WWF



1. Opening of the meeting by the chairman, Sean O'Donoghue

The chairman opened the meeting at 15.00 and hoped to finish by 17.00 at the latest.

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 raising the issue of non-quantitative stakeholder information with ICES at the 2017 MIACO meeting. The chairman intended to deal with this issue during the first part of the meeting which will be reserved exclusively for ICES and the ACs. He also said that ICES intends to write to all ACs in the following week asking them if they wish to have WebEx meetings prior to expert group meetings. However, this will not cover the idea of non-quantitative information.

The next two action items, i.e. circulating the corrected boarfish management plan and uploading the Coastal States draft management strategy to the Pelagic AC website, have been completed.

The fourth action item has not been actioned, because in the meantime the Commission has published its new Technical Measures proposal and this document foresees an alignment of minimum conservation reference sizes for mackerel. Hence, sending a letter to ICES on this issue was in essence superseded by what the Commission put in its proposal.

In relation to Southern horse mackerel José Beltran explained that there has been a meeting in Portugal with representatives from the Portuguese and Spanish industry that is most dependent on this stock and with Portuguese and Spanish scientists. Manuela Azevedo gave a splendid presentation on the work carried out so far and also showed some initial simulation results in order to propose ceilings as references for managing Southern horse mackerel. Before the July meeting all interested parties will meet again to look at data obtained by then which are expected to be more specific and precise. He was optimistic that a draft management strategy can be presented at the next Pelagic AC meeting and he promised to keep the secretariat informed.

The chairman was very pleased about the progress made and said that he was looking forward to reading the draft management strategy.

In relation to the quota for Western horse mackerel Frederik Schutyser pointed out that there had indeed been an error in the TAC and Quota Regulation which has now been corrected in the first amendment to the Regulation.

The next action item regarding Western horse mackerel was for Andrew Campbell to give a presentation on his ground fish surveys modelling work at the July meeting. Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn will already provide a brief update today. So far the results look very promising, but a lot still has to be done.

Likewise Ed Farrell will present his genetics work in July. He provided a few slides for another brief update today and his results might draw some new light on the HOMSIR project.

The focus group on Western horse mackerel will also continue working on additional data sources and prepare for the next benchmark. The chairman said that he will arrange another focus group WebEx meeting in June at which Andrew Campbell will present his results on the groundfish data.

The genetics project on VIa and VIIb,c herring is well up and running and Martin Pastoors will present an update on the mini-surveys.

Irish Sea herring has been a longstanding issue and it is the last stock for which no management strategy is available now that Southern horse mackerel is well on its way. Alan McCulla unfortunately did not attend today's meeting and it was not known if the meeting he referred to in February took place or not. The only thing that can be done is for the secretariat to try to get an update from Alan McCulla on the status of the work.

In regards to the closures in the boarfish management strategy Frederik Schutyser said that he discussed this issue with colleagues in Brussels. The TAC and Quota Regulation is not the right place to include these closures, and when looking at the Basic Regulation he and his colleagues concluded that the measure could go into a discard plan or into the Technical Measures Regulation. Given that the closures do not seem to be controversial he suggested that including them in the discard plan for pelagic stocks could be a way forward.

The chairman agreed that this sounded like a good suggestion. However, he pointed out that the NWW regional group, which is responsible for boarfish, has not considered any amendments to the pelagic discard plan whereas the Scheveningen Group has. He asked the Commission to talk to the NWW regional group as well and suggest that the closures should be included in the discard plan. The Pelagic AC will send a letter to the NWW regional group too.

Frederik Schutyser noted that closure has shifted back 15 days and said that normally this should be supported by science.

The chairman explained that the reason for this change is purely commercial and that the fishery ends at the end of March. Nobody fishes between 17 and 31 March because of a national closure in Ireland. He said that there is significant mixing of boarfish with mackerel and horse mackerel in April, May and June and shifting the closure back was for pragmatic reasons. He wondered whether the Marine Institute could do some sampling to show the effects. The main thing was to get the closures in place, because at the moment they are being implemented nationally only.

The chairman said that he has spoken to the Marine Institute about the boarfish assessment model. The scientists there have looked at changing to an age-based model, but that seemed to cause significant problems, and they reverted back to look at an old model. The chairman was not confident that the work will be completed in time, but he promised to keep in touch with the Marine Institute. He was anxious to get back to a category 1 assessment, but that seemed unlikely to happen before the WG WIDE meeting.

4. Herring in VIa and VIIb,c

The chairman pointed out that a lot of work is being carried out on herring in area VI and VIIb,c. Before providing an update on the different projects he wanted to know whether the Commission has taken the VIa herring genetics project into account in its work program for next year.

Frederik Schutyser replied that his unit has put in a request and that in general funding is available. He did not foresee any problems listing the herring genetics project as priority. However, the work program will only be approved in the fall and the earliest moment to start the tender procedure will be in January or February and from that moment onwards it will take several more weeks before a contract can be signed.

The chairman was concerned about the timing. He pointed out that Ed Farrell's present contract will run out at the end of February next year and he wanted to know whether it would be possible to get the tender process done in the first two months.

Frederik Schutyser did not think that that would be possible. He said that all the Commission can do to ensure a speedy process is to have everything ready for publication by the end of this year and publish the call for proposals as soon as legally possible in 2017.

The chairman concluded that it might be June before the contract could be awarded.

Frederik Schutyser said that it could be a bit earlier, but he was not sure. However, he pointed out that he would check whether the contract could still cover the entire project.

Gerard van Balsfoort understood previously that the Commission cannot recover costs made in the past and that the work could only start once the contract is in place.

Frederik Schutyser confirmed that this was correct. He said that someone might have to bridge the gap until the project can start, but that once it has started it can run longer.

The chairman concluded that it will be crucial to have a bridging mechanism in place, because if Ed Farrell does not get paid for three months he will not stick around for the project. He hoped to receive a definitive answer from the Commission in July and then decide on the bridging mechanism.

- **Update genetics project**

The chairman has received a couple of slides from Ed Farrell, who could not attend the meeting himself, providing a brief update on the genetics project. Ed Farrell has extracted DNA from 1300 herring samples that have been collected from spawning fish from all areas. A high throughput protocol has been developed which is now ready for inclusion in the screening step. He has also re-analyzed the 91 markers used in the pilot study and removed or redesigned those that had scoring issues. He also redesigned and added 23 markers from previous herring studies. A revised panel of 100 microsatellite markers is now ready and sample screening will start in May. The exciting part of the project is the development of an application for automating genotyping. This part will be done by an external contractor. The first results are expected to be available in June and Ed Farrell will participate in the July meeting to present the outcomes.

- **Update Commission's proposal on 2016 TAC**

The chairman summarized that the Commission has sent a special request to ICES asking for advice on a potential fishery in area VIa and VIIb,c. ICES was requested to specifically address the relevant timeframe for each stock and its fishery, the approximate geographical area where the fishery should take place and the level of catches that would minimize impact on the stock, but would be sufficient to allow collection of fisheries dependent data in the two management areas.

Frederik Schutyser said that the advice was due by 29 April. HAWG has previously looked at the issue and the request had also been sent to STECF. However, STECF thought that ICES would be better suited to deal with the request. He hoped that all the information the Commission will need to make a proposal will be included in the ICES response. Shortly after release of the advice there will be an amendment to the TAC and Quota Regulation. He said that the Commission acknowledged that there are still two stocks and that it will keep two TACs. The STECF plenary report will also be published soon which has a few issues to be included in the amendment. He hoped that the Commission will submit the amendment to the Council in May.

- **Update mini-survey plan (Martin Pastoors)**

Martin Pastoors said that these surveys are no longer referred to as mini-surveys, but are called industry surveys now. There have been a couple of meetings at which an approach has been agreed. Yesterday this approach was presented to WGFAST and feedback was also obtained from people doing the same type of surveys in Canada and New Zealand. In general the feedback received was very positive. However, it has not yet been agreed to actually carry out the surveys, because people are still waiting on information on whether a TAC will be set or not. If yes, one survey will take place in September in area VIa North and one in December in area VIa South. The plan is to start a new time series and to collect information on otoliths, genetics and other measurements that can help separate the stocks again. Some ICES experts have been asked how to ensure that the surveys will get accepted by ICES. They said that people should talk to the survey planning group whose chairman is Sascha Fässler who also happens to be a very active member of the herring focus group. The work is based on work done in Canada and foresees a two week survey at most in VIa North and VIa South with a limited number of vessels doing predefined transects using calibrated echosounders. There will be at least one scientist onboard, but preferably more. The results should be ready for the next HAWG meeting in March 2017. When planning the survey the focus group will also make sure that there is input from skippers on the timing of the survey. The next step will be to organize a meeting with all people who indicated that they want to be involved in the project. He was optimistic that things were moving in the right direction.

The chairman thanked Martin Pastoors for his summary and emphasized the importance of having ICES support the protocol and methodology. Martin Pastoors had mentioned the survey planning group, but the chairman wanted to know if ACOM will also get to have a look at the survey design.

Martin Pastoors explained that HAWG has looked at the survey design and decided to support it. It is the report of HAWG that then feeds into ACOM. However, in order to use the information in the assessment it will have to go through a benchmark process.

The chairman said that the next benchmark is scheduled for February next year. He also asked Martin Pastoors to give a more specific update again in July.

5. Western horse mackerel

- **Utilization of ground fish surveys to calculate a juvenile index**

Claus Reedtz-Sparrevojn said that Andrew Campbell could not attend today's meeting, but he will come to Peterhead to give a presentation. The horse mackerel assessment is based on the triennial egg survey which makes it very unstable and unreliable. Therefore the focus group has asked for other surveys that could inform the assessment. One option are groundfish surveys. The first results look quite promising. First of all, Andrew Campbell has been able to identify the strong year classes in the groundfish survey. So, these surveys do pick up cohort signals. Hopefully he will be able to provide a juvenile index with this information. If that turns out to be successful it can be used immediately, because the time series is already available.

The chairman thanked Claus Reedtz-Sparrevojn for this short summary. He said that a more comprehensive presentation will be given in July. From all the additional data sources looked at only the groundfish surveys seem promising. He hoped that this work will have a positive effect on the assessment.

- **Update stock ID pilot study**

The chairman announced that Ed Farrell will present more information in regards to the stock ID pilot study on horse mackerel at the July meeting, but he had sent the chairman a few slides on the current status. Samples have been collected from the Western and the North Sea stock in 2015 and DNA has been extracted from 96 fish from each sample. 96 novel microsatellite markers have been identified and primers have been designed for all 96 novel markers. In addition he uses four extra microsatellite markers from the HOMSIR project. The sample screening is underway and will be presented in July.

Martin Pastoors suggested talking about all the outcomes of the projects done on horse mackerel at the July meeting. However, he was very concerned about the available time slots.

The chairman was aware that the July meeting will require more time than usual and will coordinate the agenda with the secretariat and the other chairmen.

Goncalo Carvalho wanted to know if the chairman intended to have another WebEx call on Western horse mackerel before the July meeting.

The chairman said that he indeed planned to have another WebEx meeting, likely in June.

6. Update management plans

- **Northeast Atlantic mackerel**

The chairman understood that the management plan agreed by the three Coastal States parties has been submitted to ICES for evaluation. He presumed that the plan will be dealt with at WGWIDE.

Martin Pastoors said that he has been informed that the request will possibly be dealt with at WGWIDE. However, it still has to be confirmed that ICES will take up the request. There are still some negotiations on how the request will be handled.

The chairman concluded to add following up on this issue to the list of action items.

- **Southern horse mackerel**

The chairman said that José Beltran has already provided a good update on this stock and he was looking forward to seeing the outcome at the July meeting.

- **Boarfish**

The chairman summarized that the Commission already has provided guidance on how to implement the closures in the boarfish management plan which has been added to the list of action items.

- **Irish Sea herring**

The chairman said that he will contact Alan McCulla to find out about the status of a potential management plan for this stock.

7. AOB

There was no other business.

8. End of meeting

The chairman closed the meeting at 16.10 and wished participants safe travels home.

Action items

General

- Raise the issue of non-quantitative stakeholder information with ICES at the 2017 MIACO meeting (chairman)

Herring in VIa and VIIb,c

- Present update on genetics project at July meeting (Ed Farrell)
- Provide update on industry surveys at July meeting (Martin Pastoors)

Western horse mackerel

- Present modelling work on groundfish surveys aiming at developing a juvenile index at July meeting (Andrew Campbell)
- Present update on genetic stock ID study at July meeting (Ed Farrell)
- Arrange focus group WebEx meeting in June (chairman, secretariat)

Northeast Atlantic mackerel

- Follow-up on developments in regards to Coastal States draft management strategy (chairman, secretariat)

Southern horse mackerel

- Present draft management strategy at July meeting for approval by the Working Group (José Beltran, Manuela Azevedo, Gersom Costas, António Cunha)

Boarfish

- Request North Western Waters regional group to implement boarfish closures through an amendment to the pelagic discard plan (chairman, secretariat)
- Keep in touch with the Marine Institute in regards to the boarfish assessment model (chairman)

Irish Sea herring

- Contact Alan McCulla and inquire about the status of a potential management plan (chairman)