
Location: West-Indisch Huis, Amsterdam, NL (Herenmarkt 99, Tel: +31 20 625 7528)

Date: 11 July 2012

Start time: 13:30

End time: 18:00

More info: see www.pelagic-rac.org

Participants

Sean O'Donoghue (chair), Fredrik Arrhenius, Rob Banning, Jose Beltran, Maurice Clarke, Ramon de la Figuera, Antoine Dhellemmes, Lesley Duthie, Carmen Fernandez, Miren Garmendia, Ian Gatt, Almudena Gomez, Piebe Hotsma, Brian Isbister, Nils Christian Jensen, Reine J. Johansson, Anne-Marie Kats, Fredrik Lindberg, Iain MacSween, Audun Maråk, Stefano Mariani, Alan McCulla, David Miller, Fernando Nieto, Jerome Nouis, Francis O'Donnell, Verena Ohms, Christian Olesen, Eibhlin O'Sullivan, Jesper Raakjaer, Eric Roeleveld, Bill Steward, Gerard van Balsfoort, John Ward

(1) Opening of WG II meeting by the chairman, Sean O'Donoghue

The chairman opened the meeting at 13.45 and welcomed the attendees. He explained that there were many issues to be discussed, but that he nevertheless would try to finish by 17:00. If too much time was spent on one item it would have to be dropped and postponed to the next meeting.

(2) Approval of the agenda

Jose Beltran suggested switching points 6 and 7. The meeting agreed.

(3) Approval of the minutes of WG II meeting on 4 June 2012

The minutes were approved without amendments.

(4) Recommendations for fishing opportunities 2013 presented by Carmen Fernandez (ICES)

The chairman explained that the ICES advice on horse mackerel would not be published before the afternoon of 12 July. He nevertheless hoped that the PRAC would be able to finalize a recommendation after hearing Carmen Fernandez's presentation.

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- **Southern horse mackerel (Division IXa)**

The chairman gave the floor to Carmen Fernandez. She explained that she had asked ACOM beforehand what to present during this meeting and it had been agreed that it would be possible to present the results of the ICES work.

No assessment has been performed in 2012. The Spanish data from 2011 were not considered consistent with previous years' data and therefore the advice for 2013 will be based on projections for two years. Furthermore no reference points exist for this stock. Landings, fishing mortality and SSB are relatively stable, but there is a high uncertainty associated with the numbers. Recruitment occasionally exhibits large peaks like in 2010.

There are good indications that the stock is not over exploited and the fishing mortality values have been quite flat over the last years. Carmen Fernandez furthermore explained that while she could not present the F_{pa} or F_{msy} advice, she could present a table indicating ranges of where the actual advice could lie. She said that the current F of 0.09 is below per-recruit reference points and does not seem detrimental to the stock.

The chairman thanked Carmen Fernandez for her presentation and asked if anybody had any comments. He remarked that it would seem to him that this year's advice would probably be around the current values.

Carmen replied that the current F , which is not detrimental, is indeed taken into account. However, due to the large uncertainty she thinks that the advice might not be overly optimistic.

Gerard van Balsfoort said that if the proxy for F_{msy} was defined as 0.14, continuing with 0.09 would be rather pre-cautionary. He therefore suggested recommending $F=0.11$.

The chairman agreed to this being a good idea and asked the attendees if anybody had more questions to Carmen Fernandez.

Miren Garmendia wanted to know which changes have occurred compared to previous years.

According to Carmen Fernandez, the landings data were derived and supplied this year by a different organization than in previous years. These data were submitted very late and the assessment working group members did not have time to check them before the group met. However, they checked them during the working group meeting, and found them inconsistent on various aspects with respect to previous years. Total landings had changed considerably and other aspects of the data, when explored in a more disaggregated form, also seemed quite different from earlier years (e.g. across gears, probably resulting in a different composition of the catch by age). A more detailed explanation can be found in the assessment working group report.

The chairman expected that ICES will likely recommend a TAC reduction due to the poor quality of the data. Last year ICES recommended following the pre-cautionary approach and he assumed that $F=0.09$ will be the status quo suggested by ICES. Therefore he preferred to advise the same TAC as last year.

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Jose Beltran agreed. He pointed out that although there is some uncertainty, the stock seems to be in a rather good condition and he would at least want to continue with the same TAC as last year.

It was decided that the PRAC would recommend a TAC of 30.000 tons. On top of that it shall be included in the advice that the data situation has to be resolved as it would likely be possible to advise a much higher TAC if sufficient data were available.

(5) Blue Whiting

- **Blue whiting international acoustic survey 2012 and target strength measurements**

The chairman gave the floor to Maurice Clarke who presented the outcome of the acoustic survey on behalf of Ciaran O'Donnell.

The survey design had been improved this year and a large area has been covered. The vessels' data collection has been overlapping and good weather conditions facilitated the survey. There is a denser stock estimate this year and blue whiting can especially be found along the shelf. Compared to last year TSB is estimated to be 38% higher in 2012 while SSB is estimated to be even 47% higher. Furthermore the survey estimate indicates that 2009 is a strong year class.

Maurice Clarke then presented the new target strength which is 68% lower than before and based on high-quality *in-situ* measurements of blue whiting. The new target strength is also more closely aligned with catch data and therefore more realistic. Maurice Clarke stressed that although the target strength has changed this does not necessarily mean that the perception of the stock will change.

- **Summary of results of focus group**

The chairman explained that the work of the blue whiting focus group has recently been completed and that therefore it was time to inform the Working Group of the outcome. The reason behind establishing the focus group has been that the ICES advice had been extremely variable over the years and the PRAC decided to get stability and sustainability into this fishery.

The focus group met several times over the last two years and the chairman briefly presented the initial objectives of this group.

The first objective was to examine all available data on blue whiting and identify gaps in the data. The focus group has successfully acquired a blue whiting information base, and not only identified the gaps, but also found solutions.

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Secondly, the focus group has examined the survey and associated data and identified problems regarding the survey. It was decided in the benchmark not to use recruitment in the assessment and hence this issue has been resolved on the short term.

Regarding the matter of different stock components the benchmark decided that there is not sufficient evidence for separate stock components.

The fourth term of reference was dealing with the incorporation and use of existing industry data. Unfortunately the focus group was not fully successful with respect to this matter. However, representatives of the PRAC attend advice drafting groups as observers and provide fishing industry information. Regarding the management plan and related issues the focus group has set an example of how collaboration with scientists and non EU stakeholders can result in the successful development of a management plan unanimously agreed upon by numerous different parties.

It had also been agreed in the terms of reference to determine the possible influence of the sub polar gyre. Although the benchmark did not directly take this into account, it did advocate that it be used as a useful guide in planning the geographical extend of the international acoustic survey.

The last term of reference set the goal to establish a common understanding between stakeholders and scientists on the state of the blue whiting stock. This goal has undoubtedly been achieved and is underlined by the recently submitted PRAC recommendation to the European Commission on a new harvest control rule for blue whiting.

- **PRAC recommendation blue whiting management plan and outcome coastal states meeting London, 13 & 14 June 2012**

The chairman explained that after the last Working Group I meeting on 4 June he and the secretariat had formulated a request to the European Commission to ask ICES to evaluate a new harvest control rule for blue whiting developed by the focus group. This request had been approved by the Executive Committee through written procedure and was submitted to the Commission just in time for the coastal states meeting in London on 13 & 14 June. Following the PRAC's submission it was jointly decided by the EU, Norway, the Faroe Islands and Iceland during this meeting to submit an appropriate request to ICES.

- **Evaluating the new HCR on blue whiting**

During the last Working Group I meeting on 4 June it was agreed that SSB simulations should be carried out in addition to TSB simulations. Therefore Dankert Skagen has run more simulations and produced an additional document about the outcomes. As he could

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not attend the current Working Group I meeting, David Miller presented the results and some additional considerations instead.

According to David Miller the blue whiting focus group was very useful from a scientific point of view as several scientists from different countries were closely involved in the process and collaborated with each other and with the industry.

He explained that when re-evaluating Dankert Skagen's calculations it turned out that there was an error in the conditioning of the noise which resulted in the assessment uncertainty being too low. In other words the model was too good at estimating the numbers of young fish which means that the knowledge of TSB was assumed to be better than it really is. Therefore the rule parameters had to be adjusted in a way that the performance of the rule in terms of risk remained acceptable. Overall the results did not change, but with a higher uncertainty the average catch must decrease in order to keep the risk low.

Regarding the use of SSB versus TSB David Miller explained that SSB is the more conventional measure of stock size and less sensitive to the uncertainty in the assessment of the youngest ages. At the same time it is assumed to react slower to changes in stock size than does TSB. However, with the uncertainties applied in Dankert Skagen's model the time delay was marginal and TSB did not really allow reacting much quicker.

David Miller then informed the meeting that there has been a request by the EU, Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands to ICES to evaluate new reference points for the current management plan as well as the new harvest control rule suggested by the PRAC. He noted that the request was very vague and basically asked ICES to find best numbers for all parameters in relation to stability and MSY on a long-term basis. ICES has decided to use Dankert Skagen's platform and another one as double-check to assess the new harvest control rule. He gave an indication of the timeline for this process starting with a meeting by the scientists in July to discuss the current PRAC simulations. In August WG WIDE will review and revise, if necessary, the reference points and in September a re-run of the simulations is planned incorporating input from WG WIDE. The deadline for this process is 1 October 2012, so that hopefully in October there will be a new advice available.

The chairman thanked David Miller for his presentation and remarked that he was concerned about getting Dankert Skagen's platform into the evaluation system, but that he understood from David Miller's presentation that this should not be an issue.

David Miller asked Carmen Fernandez if she knew whether the Commission would have to approve the platform first, but according to her ICES can use any platform it wants.

Gerard van Balsfoort agreed that the request to ICES is indeed very vague and he wondered how ICES is going to deal with this.

David Miller clarified that a lot of this will have to be discussed during the July meeting and that Dankert Skagen has already proposed a way of how to go through the process. First it will be decided if TSB or SSB should be used and subsequently which rule. After that a broad range of parameters will be investigated.

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Christian Olesen wanted to know if stakeholders would get a chance to participate in the process of the ICES evaluation.

David Miller responded that stakeholders will be invited to a final meeting, but it is not clear yet if this will be a physical or a webex meeting.

Christian Olesen said that stakeholders should also be present during the scoping meeting in July, but David Miller explained that this will be a very technical meeting about the underlying modelling and hence not suitable for stakeholders to follow. However, he expressed his willingness to have stakeholders being present at the beginning of the meeting, but certainly not during the whole time.

The chairman asked if there was something that the PRAC should request or if it was going to be involved anyway.

Carmen Fernandez offered to communicate to ACOM the request for stakeholder participation. She also remembered that the TAC for blue whiting has been very low a few years ago because there were no TAC constraints. She wondered if having a TAC constraint might be a good idea.

David Miller pointed out that Dankert Skagen has explored different rules and also the option of having a TAC constraint. However, the outcome showed that a TAC constraint would cause problems and therefore it was decided against it.

The chairman emphasized that by adopting a TAC rule the TAC will be stable along a wide range of SSB and he asked Audun Maråk what he thought about this.

Audun Maråk replied that the Norwegian industry has not yet agreed on a strategy. He argued that stability has a cost and it might well be that the new plan stipulates too much stability. Therefore he wants to look at different models next to each other and to know the exact costs of the stability before making a decision.

The chairman explained that the trigger points in the current model are those used by Dankert Skagen, but that a smaller gap between the trigger points would accommodate Audun Maråk's wishes. He therefore inquired if ICES would be looking at different trigger points.

David Miller reaffirmed that the additional planned simulations will also evaluate alternative trigger points. At the end a small set of candidates illustrating the best options will be selected and compared with each other in terms of costs of stability.

Gerard van Balsfoort agreed with Audun Maråk, but emphasized that the trigger points will have to be set by ICES and that the industry can afterwards make up its mind about the different options.

Jerome Nouis mentioned that a shift in recruitment regimes can only be seen three years later if relying on SSB which he thinks is too late. However, at the benchmark meeting it was decided not to take a recruitment index into account because none can be found. Nevertheless he was wondering whether it might be worth trying to find a new recruitment index.

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David Miller elucidated that the problem with the blue whiting stock is that it is a very large stock with data from very distinct areas. It has been tried to combine all data, but the inconsistency of the data types made that impossible. It is also unlikely that having a recruitment index would change the perception of the stock and therefore there would be no direct benefit of having a recruitment index. However, he did not exclude this possibility for the future.

The chairman concluded that thanks to the open approach ICES is taking towards evaluating the new harvest control rule proposed by the PRAC, it is not necessary to put forward any more information. Even if stakeholders could not participate in the evaluation process, David Miller knows the concerns of the PRAC and will be able to address those.

Gerard van Balsfoort thanked the chairman for the effort he has put into developing a new harvest control rule for blue whiting and complimented him on the fruitful results.

The chairman noted that the success of the process also depended on the excellent collaboration with the scientists and industrial representatives from non-EU countries.

(6) Horse Mackerel

- **Presentation on 20 June to the EP Fisheries Committee**

The chairman recapitulated a presentation he had given to the European Parliament Fisheries Committee about the western horse mackerel management plan developed by the PRAC in 2007. During this presentation he emphasized the advantages of the management plan which is sustainable on the one hand and provides stability to the pelagic industry on the other hand. Furthermore this plan is supported by STECF and accepted by ICES as pre-cautionary at least in the short term. Although this plan has not been adopted yet due to the deadlock between the Council and the Parliament the Commission has followed the plan.

David Miller remarked that he has given a presentation too on the same day to the same audience in which he explained that the shortage of data makes it difficult to assess the horse mackerel stock. He concluded that it would indeed be better to use the harvest control rule developed by the PRAC instead of MSY which fluctuates every year.

The chairman hoped for the debate between the Council and the Parliament being resolved soon.

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- **Presentation research stock components (G. van Balsfoort, Dr. Stefano Mariani)**

Gerard van Balsfoort introduced Dr. Stefano Mariani who is currently working at the University of Salford, UK and who has been the ICES chair of the Stock Identification Methods Working Group since 2008. Gerard van Balsfoort explained that some fishers in his organization believe that there are two stocks of horse mackerel in ICES areas IVa and VII, but a previous study could not verify this belief. Therefore his organization had decided to take DNA samples itself for three years in a row and asked Stefano Mariani to analyse these samples. At the moment the Western horse mackerel stock is shared and the intention to jointly manage and share the stock remains. However, if it turns out that there are different stock components, managers might have to reconsider their intention for joint management.

Stefano Mariani gave a presentation on the work he has done for the Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association and the conclusions that can be drawn from the results. He pointed out that he has never worked on horse mackerel before and is therefore objective. He referred to the HOMSIR project, a multidisciplinary study which used genetic markers and biological tags to shed light on the horse mackerel stock structure. However, unlike HOMSIR which used only 4 microsatellite loci in its genetic analysis and was therefore inadequate to provide a reliable genetic assessment, the study carried out by Stefano Mariani's lab analysed 13 microsatellite loci from a total of 339 samples from 3 consecutive years which made the results of this study more reliable.

Stefano Mariani explained that there are two on-going mechanisms that take place in every generation and determine the genetic identity of a population. One of these mechanisms is called *natural selection*, the other one *genetic drift*.

Natural selection is the process in which some individuals in a population produce more offspring than others due to selection advantages. This means that if a certain individual within e.g. a fish stock is better adapted to its environment this individual will likely produce more offspring which in turn is also better adapted to the environment and will again have a higher reproductive success. Therefore the genes of these better adapted individuals will spread through the population and increase in numbers. This process depends both on time and fitness while population size is not as important. Furthermore, if something in the environment changes, selection pressures will also change and hence the fitness of the individuals. It is important to understand that natural selection, unlike genetic drift, is not a random process.

Genetic drift on the other hand is a random process in which a random sample of individuals of a population is isolated from the rest. This means that in the next generation of this smaller sample of individuals some genetic traits will have been lost while others will have increased. If this process is repeated for many generations a different gene pool will develop which can be separated from other gene pools. This process is faster if the population is small.

Stefano Mariani then explained that as a measure of genetic variance he has calculated so-called F_{ST} values and compared them over all loci and populations and also

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generated them for each pairwise comparison. The results of this analysis show that genetically speaking fish from area VII cluster more closely together than do fish from area IVa. This indicates that the constitution of this stock is rather stable whereas fish from area IVa exhibit temporal differences. Those fish caught in area IVa in 2009 appear closer related to fish from area VII than to fish also caught in area IVa in 2010 and 2011.

From the results of the current study Stefano Mariani concluded that there is more than one spawning unit of horse mackerel. Whereas the area VII harbours a stable unit stock there is a puzzling situation in subarea IVa with strong indications that in this region fish from more than one spawning stock co-occur. At the same time this study raises more questions, e.g. where the spawning areas and what the life history circuits are.

The chairman thanked Stefano Mariani for his presentation and asked the audience if anybody had any questions.

Christian Olesen wondered if three consecutive years was long enough to establish a good knowledge about the existence of different stock components.

Stefano Mariani explained that in order to analyse the evolutionary history of horse mackerel, three years would not be enough. However, the study he performed does not deal with long-term evolution, but only aims at identifying different stock components within the investigated areas. For this, one year of sampling would theoretically have been sufficient. However, collecting samples in three consecutive years ensured that sampling errors or other problems in one of the years would be detected and hence only served as a methodological quality control.

Gerard van Balsfoort expressed his satisfaction with Stefano Mariani having presented the results of this study. He called on other interested Working Group II members to consider participating in continuing with the study. He pointed out that the current analysis raises doubts about HOMSIR and he hoped that one day the new insights gained will be a part of the discussion between the EU and Norway.

Stefano Mariani also informed the meeting that he is momentarily drafting a scientific paper on the outcomes of his analysis and that he will also include the study in ICES discussions.

Maurice Clarke said that, although he was not directly involved in horse mackerel, more research on this topic is needed and careful considerations about the EU-Norway arena are advisable as it is not yet clear if we are dealing with a shared stock or not.

The chairman added that it would also be necessary to have a look at spawning times and other factors. If there are two stocks this will raise new questions about the management of these stocks. He asked Gerard van Balsfoort if he was willing to continue with this research.

Gerard van Balsfoort responded that he would have to discuss the results within the Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association first before he can decide whether to continue the research or not. He pointed out that if the research was going to be continued he would like to discuss this between the Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association and the Killybegs Fishermens' Organisation. He said that if this stock has to be shared then this will have

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consequences for TACs. Furthermore it would be important to prove what the real situation of this stock is and DNA analysis provides a comparably cheap way of finding this out.

Stefano Mariani wanted to know how difficult it would be to gain access to fish during spawning time and Gerard van Balsfoort explained that usually no fishing takes place during spawning season and sending a commercial vessel solely for that purpose would be very costly. He emphasized that continuing this study should be based on a collaborative process with several stakeholders involved.

Stefano Mariani said that scientific surveys might help to collect samples and Maurice Clarke noticed that there is a survey on herring right now which theoretically could collect some horse mackerel samples.

David Miller reminded the meeting that in 2013 will be the egg survey which covers a huge area.

According to Audun Maråk there were significant quantities of horse mackerels in Norwegian waters in 2009, but not in 2010 and 2011. He wondered what the explanation for this observation could be and if there are some horse mackerels that always remain in Norwegian waters while others do not.

Stefano Mariani considered this a very interesting observation as 2009 was the year in which the study found individuals from both areas in Norwegian waters.

The chairman concluded that in the October meeting a report on how to put forward the sampling should be discussed.

- **Outcome WKWHMMP on 23 November 2011 and update western horse mackerel management plan**

The chairman asked David Miller if he could provide an update on the outcome of the WKWHMMP meeting in November 2011.

David Miller reminded the meeting that the Commission had made a special request to ICES regarding the constant factor for a final TAC increase in the new harvest control rule. Currently this factor is set at 1.07 and ICES was requested to reassess the factor with regard to the short-term and long-term risk of SSB falling below the reference SSB and to evaluate the performance of the harvest control rule if the constant factor is set 5 percentage points higher or 5 percentage points lower. The result of the WKWHMMP meeting showed that ultimately the current value is still optimal in many aspects of the performance of the management plan and is now accepted by ICES.

The chairman concluded that although changing the constant factor in the simulations did not make a big difference, the meeting was nevertheless useful. He also emphasized hoping that the deadlock between the Parliament and Council will be resolved in September and that the 5% variation explored during the WKWHMMP workshop might be a good compromise and offer a solution.

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Fernando Nieto informed the Working Group of the Commission's intention to use the proposed management plan by the PRAC as the basis for their TACs and quotas proposals for 2013.

• Progress report management plans North Sea (IVbc & VIId) and Southern (IXa)

Gerard van Balsfoort informed the meeting that there has been no progress yet because he wants to share the role with the Danish stakeholders as they have the largest interest in this stock.

Christian Olesen is currently trying to get new members who are interested in fishing horse mackerel and if he manages to find new members he will encourage them to join the work.

The chairman said that he hopes to receive a progress report at the next meeting.

Jose Beltran explained that he has passed this issue on to the Spanish PRAC members, but that he did not receive any news.

Ramon de la Figuera said that he does not have any information on this topic either, but he will try to find out what the state of affairs is after returning to Madrid and provide the PRAC with an update.

Carmen Fernandez informed the attendees that following from the workshop in Dublin (WKWHMMP) ICES had produced a response to the request from the Commission, which is available on the advice section of the ICES webpage. She said that the ranges David Miller was talking about earlier have been investigated and that, because the simulation settings used now were the same as those in the past, ICES (as happened in the past) could not unequivocally conclude that the plan is precautionary in the long term.

The chairman mentioned that the original plan had a review clause in it which had been taken out in the Commission's proposal. ICES considered that this should be reinserted into the plan. Fernando Nieto said that he would have to wait for the final evaluation by ICES before he can say something official.

(7) Boar fish

The chairman informed the meeting that a management plan for boarfish has been drafted by the Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation (DPPO) and the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO) together with Maurice Clarke from the Marine Institute (Ireland) and DTU Aqua (Denmark) to be presented at today's meeting. He asked Maurice Clarke to further elaborate on the plan.

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- **Draft management plan**

Maurice Clarke started his presentation by emphasizing that a management plan for boarfish is urgently needed in order to guarantee a sustainable fishery for this species. He also pointed out that using caution and the UN FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation) guidelines will be necessary.

He showed a table providing an overview of the catches in 2011 and explained that in 2011 ICES has for the first time given advice for boarfish. This advice was based on pre-cautionary considerations and stated that catches in 2012 should not be allowed to increase. Furthermore ICES said that although boarfish did not seem to be overfished in the years 2008-2010 there has been a rapid increase in landings. The latest information on the stock status based on the international bottom trawl survey shows an increase in total biomass since 1990 with some fluctuations. The harvest ratio has also increased considerably after 2006. Given the uncertainties about the stock status and the rather new fishery, the management plan should take into account the guidelines on how to deal with new and developing fisheries provided by the UN FAO. Maurice Clarke then presented the objectives of a possible management plan which should regulate the fishery no matter how much information is available on the stock. The plan must be judged by ICES to be pre-cautionary and should deliver MSY. It should also contain one or more harvest control rules and be regarded as an interim management plan only since not enough years of data on this stock are available at the moment. He explained that the current draft management plan followed the example for Southeast Australian whitefish in which a decision rule sets the TAC based on the information available. This means that the more information is available the more generous the TAC can be set whereas the less information is available the higher the uncertainty becomes and therefore the more restricted the TAC would have to be.

Subsequently Maurice Clarke presented the different points of the draft management plan with special emphasis on points 1.1, 1.6 and 2. Point 1.1 stated that if reliable estimates of SSB and F are available the TAC shall be set according to recent advice. If no information is available the TAC shall be fixed at 33.000 t (point 1.6) and if the stock is in danger of collapse the ICES advice shall be followed (point 2). The other points of the draft management plan represent intermediate steps in which the TAC will be set according to the amount and quality of information available.

Furthermore he explained the rules for closed areas and seasons in the management plan to avoid by-catch of other species like herring and mackerel.

Another matter to take into account is the ICES approach to data poor situations which says that if the average of the last two years surveys is different from the previous 3 years the TAC will be adjusted by that factor.

The chairman thanked Maurice Clarke for his presentation and encouraged questions from the audience.

Gerard van Balsfoort wanted to know how fishing mortality is calculated and whether discards are taken into account. He also wondered if the considerations for closed areas and seasons are only intended to apply to boarfish and if the same is true for moving

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on procedures. He wanted to know if these rules only relate to directed boarfish fisheries. Furthermore he was concerned that soon boarfish might be included in the discard ban which would create a problem.

The chairman replied that point 3 in the management plan as well as closed areas and seasons only apply to directed boarfish fisheries and that this will have to be added to the draft.

Maurice Clarke pointed out that the F estimates are only based on landings and that the Spanish and Portuguese landings are not very significant. Therefore it will be necessary to gain estimates from other vessels too. He also said that it is not clear yet how to handle F if a discard ban will be introduced and that the F reference points he showed in his presentation are for illustration purposes only as ICES will develop its own.

The chairman remarked that point 3 in the plan will be amended as to refer only to directed fisheries. He also stated that the preamble will be changed, so that the PRAC will take on ownership for this plan instead of two specific organizations. He asked for approval to submit this plan to the Commission so that the Commission will be able to submit a request to WGWIDE at the end of August.

No objections were raised and hence it was decided that the draft management plan will be submitted to the Commission as a recommendation.

Nils Christian Jensen thanked the chairman for the effort put into the development of the plan.

• 2012 acoustic survey and target strength measurement

Maurice Clarke explained that for obtaining boarfish target strength measurements sophisticated high-tech methods have been used, including X-ray and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). The target strength is a measure of the echo reflected from a single fish. In the case of boarfish the swim bladder is short and fat and therefore backscatters at high frequencies. That means that the target strength for boarfish is about 1.5 dB higher than for gadoids.

The chairman thanked Maurice Clarke for his presentation and emphasized that this was the first time that MRI has been used to obtain target strength measurements.

Ian Gatt wanted to know if the chairman and Christian Olesen are going to collect additional data for the survey.

The chairman told him that this was the plan and furthermore that he would like him to participate in the data collection too. Ian Gatt promised to see what he can do.

The chairman pointed out that the European Commission acknowledged that boarfish should be included in the data framework directive. Fernando Nieto confirmed that the Commission is trying to include boarfish for next year and he is optimistic about that.

Location: West-Indisch Huis, Amsterdam, NL (Herenmarkt 99, Tel: +31 20 625 7528)

Date: 11 July 2012

Start time: 13:30

End time: 18:00

More info: see www.pelagic-rac.org

(8) Pelagic discards (Commission, Council and Parliament)

Gerard van Balsfoort explained that despite resistance in the end the Council has decided to propose the implementation of a discard ban in its framework document. For pelagic stocks it is proposed from the 1st of January 2014 onwards. He suggested that there was little point in further discussing this at the PRAC as it was highly unlikely that the PRAC will reach consensus.

Reine Johansson considered it crucial to discuss how to handle this issue in the future, e.g. together with Norway. He has no doubts that there will be a discard ban in the future, but the important question is how to implement and control it.

Sean O'Donoghue agreed that the PRAC will have to look at the implementation of a discard ban if it happens, but at the moment this is a highly political matter and he proposed waiting until the final outcome will be known after the Trialogue meeting which is likely to be in the first half of next year.

(9) A.O.B.

Christian Olesen remarked that in the minutes of 8 February 2012 it is said that boarfish already was included in the data framework, but that member states do not collect data yet.

However, Fernando Nieto corrected him and said that it is indeed the plan to include boarfish, but that this has not happened yet.

(10) End of WG II meeting

The chairman closed the meeting at 17.36 and thanked the participants for their attendance and contributions.