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

Date: 4 October 2012

Start time: 10 am

End time: 2.50 pm

More info: see www.pelagic-rac.org

Participants:

Sean O'Donoghue (chairman), Alex Wiseman, Almudena Gomez, Anne-Marie Kats, Audun Maråk, Bill Steward, Carmen Fernandez, Carl Jesper Hermansen, Christian Olesen, Christien Absil, Ciaran O'Donnell, Eibhlin O'Sullivan, Eric Roeleveld, Esben Sverdrup, Frank Minck, Frederik Schutyser, Fuensanta Candela, Gerard van Balsfoort, Henk Offringa, Iain MacSween, Ian Gatt, Ignacio Fontaneda López, Jean-Marie Robert, Jerome Nousis, Jesper Juul Larsen, John Ward, Jose Beltran, Karin Victorin, Lesley Duthie, Miren Garmendia, Niels Hintzen, Nils Christian Jensen, Otto Gregussen, Reine J. Johansson, Remi Mejeceze, Rob Banning, Sarunas Zableckis, Stewart Harper, Uwe Richter, Verena Ohms

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

The chairman opened the meeting at 10 am. He reminded the participants that it is important to register with the secretariat well in advance of any meeting to allow a proper organization. A short introduction round of all participants followed.

(2) Approval of the agenda

A small change was made to the agenda by presenting the boarfish acoustic survey after discussing the Pelagic RAC's recommendation for this stock for 2013.

(3) Approval of the minutes from 11 July 2012

The minutes were approved without amendments. Furthermore the chairman suggested including an action plan as annex to the minutes in the future. This had been done a couple of years ago and should be done again. He subsequently reminded the meeting that the ICES advice for Southern horse mackerel had been issued one day after the last Working Group II meeting. For the record he noted that ICES suggested landings of no more than 26.000 tons, based on no assessment while the Pelagic RAC has recommended a TAC of 30.000 tons.

He also asked Gerard van Balsfoort and Jose Beltran if there was any progress on developing management plans for the other mackerel stocks. Gerard van Balsfoort replied that he had not done anything yet, but he and Christian Olesen would get together to start working on this for North Sea horse mackerel. Jose Beltran explained that the Spanish members had not been able to work on developing a management plan either due to some problems, but they started looking into it. However, he pointed out that the Spanish administration together with the industry has managed to control the quota for southern horse mackerel very well, which is distributed quarterly to the different fleets. The chairman thanked Gerard van Balsfoort and Jose Beltran for the update and said that he would come back to it later, but that the main points of the current meeting were the presentation of the

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ICES advice and forming the Pelagic RAC's recommendations and he quickly wanted to move on to this.

(4) Fishing opportunities 2013: presentation of ICES advice by Carmen Fernandez

Carmen Fernandez thanked the Pelagic RAC for the opportunity to present the ICES advice. She first gave an introduction into the advisory process as she has done in the previous meeting (see minutes of Working Group I meeting from 11 July 2012) and which is also explained in the document "General context to ICES advice" that can be downloaded from the ICES website.

- **Blue whiting**

Carmen Fernandez continued with the advice for blue whiting which is a widely distributed stock that covers almost the complete North Atlantic. It spawns west of the British Isles and the juveniles are widely distributed. The main nursing areas are in the Norwegian Sea, the Bay of Biscay and Iberian waters. The main fishery in 2011 took place south of the Faroe Islands, west of Scotland and on the Porcupine bank. This stock feeds in the same areas as herring and mackerel and is an important part of the ecosystem. There has been a benchmark in 2012 and a new assessment model, but stock perception has not changed noteworthy. The survey in 2012 went very well, but there are no juvenile indices for inclusion in the assessment which leads to uncertainty in estimating recent recruitment. Carmen Fernandez explained that ICES used the management plan as basis for the advice according to which catches should not exceed 643,000 tons. Recruitment had been very low in the second part of the 2000s, but in the last two years recruitment increased while F was very low, especially in 2011. This caused an increase in SSB which is above Btrigger and Blim. Discards are considered minor for blue whiting. There has been a NEAFC request recently to evaluate an alternative management plan. This process has been delayed and the outcome is expected in 2013. Compared to 2012 there is a 64% TAC increase in 2013.

The chairman thanked Carmen Fernandez and remarked that this year the industry is in a lucky position, but that it seems like there have been massive jumps in the assessment over the last 10 years. He claimed that until this year ICES said every year that SSB is decreasing and he did not believe that the recent increase can solely be attributed to a low fishing mortality. He thought that assessments and surveys did not pick up recruitment very well and he wondered if there could be another massive reduction next year.

Carmen Fernandez replied that the biomass signal has not changed a lot and that the assessment looks similar to last year's assessment, but that there has been some improvement. She said that recruitment is better now and that fishing mortality has been very much reduced. Therefore, SSB is naturally increasing. However, if fishing

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mortality increases, SSB will soon decrease again. She also pointed out that the new assessment is still uncertain which has to be taken into account and that the survey only provides information about age 3 and older. However, if different indices all point into the same direction ICES can be more certain about recruitment. She also said that the management plan does not have a TAC constraint which partly causes the jumps in the TAC advice.

The chairman replied that the Pelagic RAC has dealt a lot with the stability issue together with Dankert Skagen, but it turned out that a TAC constraint would not work very well in this case. He also said that an increase of 1 Mio tons is rather significant even if ICES might consider it small and therefore he was wondering if the assessment is really reliable.

Gerard van Balsfoort noted that recruitment, real and assessed, in hindsight has been very close until 2010, while afterwards there is a huge discrepancy. If this continued, then TACs will also continue to go up and down each year.

- **North Sea horse mackerel**

Carmen Fernandez explained that this is a data limited stock and that the catch in 2013 should not exceed 25,500 tons. There is insufficient information to evaluate F and SSB and the only information comes from the IBTS Q3 survey which suggests a decrease in SSB since the early 2000s. However, this survey is a bottom trawl survey, but young horse mackerel are distributed higher up and hence the survey is not reliable. The stock is fished for human consumption, but there is also some by-catch in the industrial fishery. Discards are considered negligible. The ICES advice is based on a precautionary reduction of 20% and should remain in place for the next three years unless new information or analyses indicate a new situation.

Gerard van Balsfoort remarked that last year there has been a huge discussion with the Commission which wanted to reduce the catch for data limited stocks by 25%. The ministers convinced the Commission to move away from this suggestion. However, Gerard van Balsfoort was surprised that suddenly ICES comes up with the same approach, only this time it is a 20% reduction. He wanted to know if this decision was initiated by the Commission or by ICES itself. He also pointed out that the southern North Sea is a very important area, and that since 2010 the EU TAC for the North Sea has included divisions IVb,c and VIId while before 2010 VIId was not considered in the North Sea TAC regulation area. The assessment area for North Sea horse mackerel, however, also includes catches from division IVa which is part of a different management area. Therefore the previous situation of this stock cannot easily be compared with the current situation due to different areas. If catches suddenly go down this might be due to decreasing stock size, but could also be a result of fishers having to adapt to the new alignment. Gerard van Balsfoort argues that it would not be correct to take the average of the last 3 years to calculate the new TAC while 2 of these years have been under a different regime.

Carmen Fernandez explained that North Sea horse mackerel is the only stock in

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this meeting for which ICES advises a 20% catch reduction. In other data limited stocks where more indices and/or an F_{msy} proxy are available the 20% reduction is not applied if F_{msy} can be reached until 2015. She said that the 20% reduction only applies to stocks for which very little information is available and ICES has no idea what is going on with the stock.

According to Henk Offringa the Dutch member state very much welcomes the new ICES approach to data limited stocks. However, he wanted to know why this approach is applied to catches and not TACs.

Carmen Fernandez explained that catches decide what happens with a stock and therefore ICES advises on catches only. TACs have to be decided by managers.

Stewart Harper remarked that the 20% catch reduction is a very arbitrary decision which the industry is very disappointed about. He wondered why the 2012 catch has not been suggested again and why ICES was in such a rush to reduce the TAC.

Carmen Fernandez replied that the catch data for 2012 are not available yet and therefore cannot be used. In general ICES has very little information about this stock and averaging over a few years filters out noise.

Stewart Harper, however, proposed to wait for this year's numbers and then decide what to do next year in order to use up-to-date information.

Carmen Fernandez countered that the impact on the stock is not immediate. If catches are reduced now it will only become visible in a few years. Therefore, taking an average over the past three years make sense and is more realistic.

Gerard van Balsfoort agreed with Henk Offringa that the realignment of catch area could have an effect on catches and therefore the advice should be on TACs, not catches.

Fuensanta Candela pointed out that the 2012 TAC is a roll-over from 2011 and she wanted to know why some data are preliminary and when they become final.

According to Carmen Fernandez this happens mostly for minor stocks and therefore she does not think that in this case data are considered preliminary. Usually after one year data can be considered final.

Esben Sverdrup understood that ICES suggested a roll-over TAC for North Sea sprat which is also a data limited stock, and that the Commission said a roll-over TAC should be the principle. However, Carmen Fernandez replied that ICES works on the basis of catches and that this roll-over TAC must be coming from the RAC.

- **Western horse mackerel**

Carmen Fernandez explained that the western horse mackerel stock covers a large area from the north of Norway all the way to Iberia. ICES advised based on the MSY approach that catches in 2013 should be no more than 126,000 tons. Fishing mortality increased above F_{msy} in recent years and since 2004 there has been a very low recruitment. SSB is continuing to decrease and getting closer to the lowest point in the time series. In 2007 the Pelagic RAC had suggested a long term management plan (LTMP) which ICES considered precautionary in the short term, but the long term situation was unclear. Therefore ICES

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suggested in 2012 that the LTMP needs to be fully reviewed and re-evaluated. ICES did not advise according to the LTMP, because Norway objects the plan. Carmen Fernandez furthermore illustrated that horse mackerel produces infrequently very large year classes. Furthermore this stock exhibits indeterminate fecundity and therefore the egg survey index has to be related to SSB through fecundity parameters, which increases uncertainty. She pointed out that the assessment is only based on catch at age data and the triennial egg survey. In 2012 the assumed catch is 183,000 tons while SSB is decreasing. Therefore ICES recommends, based on the MSY framework, to decrease the TAC by 31%. If the LTMP was followed there would be no change in TAC.

The chairman uttered his dissatisfaction with ICES giving a presentation to the European Parliament (EP) in June where it supported the LTMP, but now bases its advice on MSY because of an objection by Norway. He requested ICES to follow scientific and not political strategies. He also worried that the blue whiting situation might repeat itself within horse mackerel where MSY provides absolutely no stability whereas the LTMP does.

Carmen Fernandez reminded the meeting that ICES always followed the MSY approach for this stock. Last year this approach gave a higher TAC than the LTMP and this year it gives a lower TAC. She pointed out that the LTMP gives stability in TAC, but not in F. She promised to inform ACOM about the comment related to the objection by Norway, but also emphasized that ICES' position has not changed. A LTMP is only used as basis for advice if it is considered precautionary and has been agreed upon by all parties. On top of that ICES had recommended evaluating the LTMP which did not happen. Apart from that she understood that the presentation to the EP in June was done by an independent scientist who in this moment did not represent ICES.

However, the chairman disagreed as he was certain that David Miller gave his presentation to the EP as chair of WGWIDE.

[Having checked after the PRAC meeting, Carmen Fernandez confirmed that David Miller gave his presentation at the European Parliament in representation of ICES.]

Fuensanta Candela wanted to know whether the advice evolved so rapidly due to a recent survey and if not why ICES suggested such a dramatic change. She asked whether stock perception changed. In relation to the LTMP she said that the TAC had been applied for three consecutive years now, 2010, 2011 and 2012, but not before. She wondered whether it was enough to have a plan for only three years or if it was better to follow it a bit longer in order to thoroughly evaluate it. In her view three years is not enough to evaluate a plan especially since the survey is only done every three years. She favoured applying it a bit longer and then performing a sound evaluation.

Carmen Fernandez said that the egg survey will be next year and that significant revisions will result from that. She said that the 2001 year class was very strong, but that it is now disappearing because it has been caught for a long time. Ever since there has been no good year class anymore and the situation of the stock is getting worse. Therefore F should be reduced if MSY is to be followed. Regarding the revision of the LTMP she said that ICES would probably not insist on a new evaluation if the first one had been done thoroughly. At the time the plan was evaluated the strong 2001 year class was still present and it made sense to follow the LTMP. However, now that recruitment is very poor and the stock is doing less well, a re-evaluation of the plan is necessary.

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Sarunas Zableckis said that SSB will decrease even if there is no fishing at all. He also worried about unknown environmental influences which might be bad for the stock.

The chairman argued that horse mackerel cannot be assessed in the same way as other stocks due to pulse recruitment. He admitted that Sarunas Zableckis would be right if the current trend continued, but he also emphasized that usually after a phase of poor horse mackerel recruitment a strong year class will occur again. The problem is that it cannot be detected immediately, but only a few years later. Therefore the Pelagic RAC has put so much effort into developing this LTMP together with scientists.

Carmen Fernandez confirmed that in horse mackerel pulse recruitment events occur. At the moment, however, there is no evidence for a strong year class, but she hopes that the stock will increase again in the future. Unfortunately the only thing that goes into the assessment is the triennial egg survey which will take place again next year and then she promised to gain more information on this stock.

Henk Offringa was very surprised that ICES put so much weight on Norway's opinion although this is not a jointly managed stock. He also wondered why ICES used MSY for its advice and not the transition to MSY.

Carmen Fernandez explained that the difference would only be small and last year F_{msy} has already been used. Therefore it would be strange not to use it this year.

Ian Gatt pointed out that if looking at the recruitment figure in the advice sheet one might get the impression that there was no recruitment in the last year while the table clearly shows that there was some recruitment in recent years.

Carmen Fernandez agreed that the graphical illustration is distorted due to one extremely large recruitment event and therefore this is probably not the best way of illustrating what is going on.

The chairman asked Carmen Fernandez to inform ACOM that the Pelagic RAC would like to receive an explanation on how ICES operates in terms of objections. He announced that he will also raise this issue during the MIRAC meeting.

- **Boarfish**

Carmen Fernandez told the participants that the boarfish fishery developed very recently and that ICES advises a catch of no more than 82,000 tons in 2013. She said that the stock is doing well and is not being overexploited. A LTMP has been proposed by the Pelagic RAC, but not yet been evaluated. She furthermore explained that the ICES advice for 2013 is based on an MSY proxy and the 2012 acoustic survey. Although there was an attempt to perform an analytical assessment this has not been successful yet as there is currently not much information available on this stock. ICES decided to give a conservative advice and to follow FAO guidelines.

The chairman wanted to know if the difficulties with the analytical assessment will be sorted out next year. He emphasized that there is an enormous effort put into this stock and the survey.

Carmen Fernandez replied that there was put an enormous effort into the analytical

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assessment too, but it is very difficult to come up with one soon, because the data time series is very short and there is no information available on how the stock reacts to the fishery. She estimated that it will take a few more years before an analytical assessment can be used.

The chairman thanked Carmen Fernandez for her presentation.

(5) Recommendations Pelagic RAC 2013

The chairman explained that it was time to have a debate on the different stocks taking into account the presentation by Carmen Fernandez and to agree on a common recommendation.

- **Blue whiting**

The chairman recapitulated that ICES recommended following the LTMP and he suggested doing the same although personally he would rather follow the new LTMP if only it had been evaluated.

Ian Gatt wanted to raise the issue of Russian catches in the Pelagic RAC's recommendation. He said that Russia did not suffer as much in TAC reduction as other countries did and that NEAFC is not fulfilling its role properly.

The chairman pointed out that Russia never agreed to the NEAFC plan, but that indeed the Commission should be made aware of this issue.

- **North Sea horse mackerel**

The chairman said that last year it was advised to follow the precautionary approach and the official TAC in 2012 was 44,180 tons. He emphasized the need for a LTMP for this stock, but for now it had to be agreed on a TAC for 2013. He presented several different options including a roll-over TAC, an average of the last three years' TACs, an average of the last three years' landings, an arbitrary reduction of 20%, following the ICES advice and providing no advice.

Stewart Harper said that as the ICES advice seemed to be arbitrary the Pelagic RAC should try to give a reasonable, non-arbitrary advice. He was convinced that the area realignment had an effect and if there had to be a reduction it should be no higher than 20%.

Rob Banning urged for being consistent. As there was no new scientific knowledge a roll-over TAC should be advised.

Christien Absil argued that indeed the Pelagic RAC should be consistent, but in her view this consistency was provided by following management plans. As there is no management plan for this stock the ICES advice should be followed and it should be recommended to develop a LTMP.

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Esben Sverdrup agreed with Christien Absil on the need for developing and evaluating a LTMP.

The chairman pointed out that last year there was a scientific advice too, but that this year it was more quantitative. Last year the Pelagic RAC decided on a roll-over TAC because people felt that the stock was doing ok. He understood Christien Absil's position and fully agreed that a management plan had to be developed. In the meantime he wondered if there was an option which she could accept as a compromise.

Christien Absil replied that there was not really any good choice and everything was arbitrary. She said that the NGOs will not give any specific advice as long as it is not according to a LTMP.

Eibhlin O'Sullivan reminded the meeting that whatever the TAC in 2013 will be it is likely to remain at this value for the next three years even though it is arbitrary. She, too, emphasized the urgent need for a LTMP.

Gerard van Balsfoort remarked that the Commission is forcing the RACs to develop LTMPs and so far the Pelagic RAC has done tremendous work to develop and/or revise LTMPs. He said that the reason for not having one for horse mackerel yet is because there was a precautionary approach which changed with MSY. It is obvious that a LTMP has to be developed, but it will likely be the industry developing it together with scientists. For this scientists have to be hired and paid. It is a complex process which requires a lot of time and the industry cannot do this alone all the time. Therefore he suggested not to follow the ICES advice for the moment, but to have a roll-over TAC and to use 2013 to develop a LTMP so that from 2014 onwards good decisions can be made regarding this stock.

Sarunas Zableckis noted that WWF wants to follow the ICES advice. Gerard van Balsfoort countered that he encourages NGOs to join the industry in their effort to develop LTMPs. He said that it is easy to follow the ICES advice, but that it would be better to help the industry develop management plans. Up until now the NGOs in the Pelagic RAC have not helped in coming up with management plans.

Christien Absil replied that the NGOs would love to take part in developing management plans, but due to a lack of capacity this is not possible at the moment. She also pointed out that Member States should be stronger involved in that process as they have a responsibility too. She added that in the future there will hopefully be funding available for this under the EMFF.

The chairman explained that this year's advice should consist of two parts. In the first part the development of a LTMP has to be emphasized. In the second part either an arbitrary advice should be given or no advice, whereby he emphasized that the ICES advice is arbitrary too.

Christian Olesen noted that if no advice is given he will want to present the industry background information nevertheless. Christien Absil informed the participants that during the Inter RAC meeting the Commission emphasized that, although it might be desirable to have a unanimous advice, it is also appreciated to hear dissenting views as all opinions will be useful for the Commission.

The chairman thanked Christien Absil for this information, but also said that if the Pelagic RAC is to be operational it should provide a unanimous recommendation.

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Furthermore he did not want to follow an arbitrary number even if this number was provided by ICES.

Fuentsanta Candela uttered her opinion that the most important decision is to invest into a LTMP even though this means a lot work. Once it becomes clear what the plan will look like it will be possible to anticipate what the TAC under such a LTMP would be and this TAC could be advised next year. For now she suggested finding a compromise by reducing the TAC, but to do it gradually over the next three years. She pointed out that catches are so low compared to the TAC that there is room to find a compromise.

In the end it was decided to develop a LTMP and to try including the Member States in this process. In the current absence of a LTMP there will be a reduction in TAC which is a compromise in the roll-over TAC and the ICES advice. The difference between both is ca. 19,000 tons and this difference shall be divided by three. The TAC shall then be reduced each year by 6,300 tons over the next three years. If in the meantime a LTMP is developed, this LTMP will supersede the current advice.

- **Western horse mackerel**

The chairman recapitulated that before the existence of the LTMP TACs were all over the place, but thanks to the LTMP catches are stable now. With MSY the TACs would have increased in 2010 and 2011, but will decrease in 2012. Following the LTMP provided the same TACs in all three years. The industry had decided to forgo the increases it could have gotten, because it was agreed that the stability provided by the LTMP is worth it. He reminded everybody that the Pelagic RAC has collectively defended the LTMP several times and he argued for doing so again in 2013. Therefore he suggested advising a TAC of 183,000 tons according to the LTMP.

Christien Absil said it was unfortunate that the chairman did not present recruitment figures to the EP as this would have been useful information. She generally agreed that following LTMPs is much better than following MSY. However, it has been stated clearly that the current LTMP is considered precautionary only in the short term and the NGOs do not consider it precautionary at this state anymore, because it has not been tested recently. Therefore she was against advising according to the LTMP. She furthermore pointed out that SSB is clearly decreasing and would be in an even worse situation now if MSY had been followed in the past few years.

The chairman replied that Christien Absil's comment regarding recruitment was not correct, because during the development of the LTMP large recruitments have not been used as a basis. He added that ICES did show recruitment figures to the EP and concluded that the LTMP would likely be precautionary also in the future.

Gerard van Balsfoort agreed on sticking to the LTMP. He had been at the Dublin meeting where many precautionary scenarios were presented with this LTMP. He emphasized that this plan has been developed and supported by all members of the Pelagic RAC and therefore it should be defended equally by all members. It has been sitting with Parliament and Council for three years now and has been supported by the Commission. He worried that by not giving a consensus advice this year a bad signal would be sent to all

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managers and all the effort put into this plan would be annihilated. He reminded the meeting that after the egg survey in the coming year there will be a lot more information available and the LTMP will then show whether the TAC has to be changed.

Sarunas Zableckis said that from the discussion earlier it seemed that the stock is not in a good condition and everybody is waiting for a new strong year class, but nobody can tell if and when that will occur. As scientific advice is available this is the key for WWF.

The chairman pointed out that the position of the NGOs is inconsistent, because last year they did not suggest following the ICES advice which suggested an increase in TAC.

Christien Absil replied that she always is in favour of following a LTMP as long as this plan is in accordance with the precautionary approach which, however, it is not in the case of Western horse mackerel.

Fuensanta Candela ensured the Commission being very happy to taking the request back to ICES to have the LTMP re-evaluated. Despite all the Commission's effort there is still no agreement between the Parliament and the Council. Within the Commission the advice has not yet been discussed and therefore she could not give any indication for a possible solution. However, she said that the Commission will do everything to have ICES look into this as soon as possible. She suggested as a compromise to emphasize that a rapid revision of the plan is needed and to further enhance it with rules that better ensure precautionarity if recruitment is low.

Christien Absil agreed that this could be a compromise providing consistency of the Pelagic RAC's advice while at the same time urging ICES to test the LTMP under low recruitment regimes as soon as possible.

The chairman noted that the plan has been tested for low recruitment, just not in the long run, but that this could be done. He suggested supporting the existing plan, while having it being re-evaluated immediately and in case the outcome indicates the plan not to be precautionary it shall not be followed. Finally it was agreed to preliminary recommend a TAC of 183,000 tons according to the LTMP, which is subject to an immediate evaluation by ICES. If this can be done before the end of 2012 or early in 2013 and turns out to be precautionary the LTMP will continue to be followed. If the evaluation shows a significant revision (either upwards or downwards) then the Pelagic RAC will advise an in year revision of the TAC from the 183,000 tons already advised.

- **Boarfish**

Christian Olesen remarked that the LTMP for boarfish does not include the stabilizing mechanism which was initially in the plan. He urged for an immediate evaluation of the plan including the stabilizing mechanism.

The chairman explained that the stabilizer had not been discussed during the last Working Group II meeting and therefore was taken out of the plan, but he did not object putting it back in.

Other than that the meeting agreed on a TAC of 82,000 tons.

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It was pointed out that all advice provided and agreed upon by the Working Group had to be presented to the Executive Committee for approval. Only the Executive Committee of the Pelagic RAC has the power to officially adopt recommendations which then will be submitted to the Commission.

(6) Boarfish acoustic survey

Ciaran O'Donnell from the Marine Institute in Ireland gave a presentation on the 2012 boarfish acoustic survey. He explained that in 2012 the survey only took place during light which gave a much better picture of the behaviour of the fish and provided more reliable results. It was based on the 2011 survey design and one of its main objectives was to identify the eastern boundary of the stock distribution. Ciaran O'Donnell also said that the behaviour of the fish varies between southern and western regions regarding swimming behaviour and sometimes it mixes with horse mackerel. There also seems to be a clear trend in length distribution between North and South. He also announced that the survey in 2013 will try to reallocate the survey effort from peripheral areas into core spawning areas and to increase transect resolution in the western and southern region.

The chairman thanked Ciaran O'Donnell for his presentation and asked Fuensanta Candela if the Commission can make sure that boarfish will be included in the data collection framework in 2013. Fuensanta Candela replied that this has been requested, but that she could not guarantee it.

(7) Management plans update blue whiting, boarfish and horse mackerel

Gerard van Balsfoort said that so far nobody has really thought about developing a LTMP for North Sea horse mackerel, but there has been some contact with IMARES about this. He hoped that it would be possible to use the boarfish plan as an example and follow the same approach. He announced arranging a meeting with researchers soon to discuss the possibilities. The chairman wanted to know whether establishing a focus group dealing with this issue would be useful and Gerard van Balsfoort replied that if the budget allowed having a focus group this would be worthwhile.

The chairman then turned to Jose Beltran and asked him what the Pelagic RAC would have to do to facilitate developing a LTMP for southern horse mackerel.

Jose Beltran replied that due to problems with the administration a LTMP for southern horse mackerel has been neglected for a while, but it will soon be picked up again. He said that the idea was not to draw a special management plan, but to manage the quota allocated to Spain properly. This quota has been distributed to different stakeholders based on historic allocation. The total quota has been divided over four temporal periods and each time the used quota was analysed. If after the first period too much quota had been taken it was subtracted from the second quota. If not enough had been taken there was a roll-over TAC to the second quota. For the time being this allows overcoming problems with the

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catches until a detailed management plan will be available.

The chairman uttered his worries that next year ICES will classify this stock as data limited and the result would be a huge reduction in TAC. Therefore he urged Spanish members to progress with a detailed LTMP as soon as possible. Jose Beltran added that the data which have been collected from landings and ships might not be comparable between years and there has to be a more standardized way of collecting and presenting data. Furthermore he said that the Pelagic RAC has to bear in mind that while some stocks are given priority over others, some stocks might become more sensitive and yet others might not be fished enough and could even negatively affect the survival of stocks on which they prey.

Regarding boarfish Fuensanta Candela explained that the Commission did receive the request for evaluating the LTMP and tried to get it into WGWISE, but unfortunately WGWISE did not accept the request due to time constraints. The Commission is currently discussing how to proceed and is drafting another request to ICES in which the Commission determines the terms of reference and ICES is expected to provide a quote. The chairman remarked that it would be useful if this could still be dealt with in 2012, but certainly before the next Working Group II meeting in February 2013.

The chairman also informed the meeting that the NEAFC request regarding the management plan of blue whiting has been submitted to ICES. However, ICES will not be able to deal with the request before next year and hence there will be no advice on the management plan available during the Coastal States meeting.

He also said that there has been no progress with the western horse mackerel situation since the last meeting between Parliament and Council and that this issue might end up at the European Court, because the deadlock has still not been solved.

(8) AOB

Gerard van Balsfoort announced that he would give a presentation on a discard ban during the Executive Committee meeting on the following day.

Rob Banning wanted to know what the follow up on the identification of western horse mackerel stock components will be and if another genetic analysis is planned.

The chairman said that the Irish and Dutch industry will have to work out a plan on how to get genetic samples. Gerard van Balsfoort replied that sampling is easy, but it has to be decided how the genetic analysis will be paid for and of course Norwegian samples are needed too.

(9) End of meeting

The chairman closed the meeting at 2.50 pm.

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

Date: 4 October 2012

Start time: 10 am

End time: 2.50 pm

More info: see www.pelagic-rac.org

Annex I: Action list

- Propose WG II recommendations on fishing opportunities 2013 to ExCom for approval (Sean O'Donoghue).
- Inquire how ICES operates in terms of objections raised to LTMPs during the MIRAC meeting 2013 (Sean O'Donoghue).
- Arrange meeting with IMARES researchers to explore possibilities on developing a LTMP for North Sea horse mackerel (Gerard van Balsfoort, Christian Olesen, Esben Sverdrup).
- Develop LTMP for southern horse mackerel and investigate more standardized ways of data collection/presentation (Jose Beltran together with other Spanish members)
- Collect and analyse genetic samples of western horse mackerel including Norwegian samples (Sean O'Donoghue and Gerard van Balsfoort)