

**Minutes of the Working Groups 1 and 2 meeting of the Pelagic RAC
Monday February 13th 2006 in hotel Eurovillage, Brussels**

WG chairmen: Christian Olesen and Sean O'Donoghue
Secretariat Pelagic RAC: Ingvild Harkes and Rob Banning
The meeting was attended by 38 people, plus 4 interpreters (see annex 1).

Chairman: Christian Olesen.

Opening of the meeting

The meeting is opened at 13.30 hours by the chairman.

Approval of the minutes of the WG meeting 4 November 2005

The minutes are approved with the following amendment on page 1: Clyde herring is used by commercial fishermen.

A working paper for the WG1 meeting was distributed.
In the paper the ICES advice, the recommendations from the WG and the results in terms of TAC and changes to management plans were listed.

Discussion on RAC recommendations and actual TACs and quota

1. Norwegian Spring-Spawning herring (Atlantoscandian Herring) IIa

Norway supported by the Commission said that in the bilateral agreement for 2006 no reference is made to a TAC.

The attendants underlined the need that the coastal states must agree on a TAC in order to manage the stock properly.

The Commission asked why the words overly conservative were used. The chairman explained that this referred to B_{lim} and B_{pa} and promised to come back on this.

The WG reiterated its recommendation, that the management plan should be amended to include a TAC constraint of +/-15% and a year-to-year flexibility of +/-10%.

2. Herring in subdivision 22-24 and Division IIIa (Spring Spawners)

At the first meeting the ICES advice for this stock was criticised for being unclear. However, it is more correct to say that the advice is clear – from a scientific point of view – but unclear from managers and industry perspective.

It was agreed that a management plan should be drafted including the TAC constraint of +/-15% and a year-to-year flexibility of +/- 10% with a maximum of 2 years.

Swedish Fishermen's Federation stressed the necessity to look into the model.

3. Herring in Subarea IV, Division VIId and Division IIIa (Autumn Spawners)

The WG reiterated its recommendation that the management plan should be amended to include a year-to-year flexibility of +/-10%.

4. Herring in Division VIa (North)

The WG welcomed the fact that the TAC was set in accordance with the new HCR that was proposed by ICES and recommended by the WG. However, the WG asked for a concrete management plan.

The Commission said that it is working on a management plan, based on ICES-advice. The ICES-advice for 2006 was supported by the Pelagic RAC. Control and inspection will be included in this management plan.

The WG reiterated its recommendation, that a management plan should also include a TAC constraint of +/-15% and a year-to-year flexibility of +/-10%.

5. Herring (Division VIa South and VIIb,c)

KFO said that the reference points should be re-evaluated and it stressed the importance for a management plan for this stock.

The Commission responded that the scientific basis for this stock is weaker than the scientific basis for the Division VIa (North) stock, which makes it difficult to prepare a management plan for the Division VIa South, VIIb,c stock.

6. Clyde herring (Division VIa)

The Commission said that the TAC for this stock for 2006 was reduced with 20% to get rid of paper fish quota.

The chairman said that this rule, if applied, should work both ways in order to be consistent; TACs that are fully utilised should be increased by 20%. Since this, however, is not feasible, the rule should not be used at all.

Instead a management plan, incorporating a TAC constraint of +/-15% and a year-to-year flexibility of +/-10% should be made.

7. Irish Sea herring (Division VIIa)

No comments.

8. Celtic Sea and Division VIIj herring

No comments.

9. Northeast Atlantic Mackerel (combined Southern, Western and North Sea spawning components)

KFO said that a mechanism is required to allow for the Pelagic RAC to be consulted prior to the annual consultations with the coastal states.

A working paper for the WG2 meeting was distributed.

In the paper the ICES advice, the recommendations from the WG and the results in terms of TAC and changes to management plans were listed.

1. Blue Whiting Combined Stock (sub areas I-IX, XII and XIV)

KFO expressed their disappointment that the year-to-year flexibility and the possibility of quota swaps were not included in the coastal states agreement on the blue whiting. Moreover, the importance to address the fishing on juvenile blue whiting issue was stressed.

UAPF, supported by Spain, expressed its concern on the 61% reciprocity, due to the fact that the blue whiting stock consists of different components. This gives the Norwegians the opportunity to catch much more blue whiting (of the southern component) in EU-waters, while the EU will hardly fish any blue whiting (of the northern component) in Norwegian waters. We should rethink the reciprocity for 2007. The reciprocity will increase the pressure on the blue whiting stock in EU-waters.

UAPF also said that the mesh sizes should also be harmonized (= increase in 16 mm mesh size of industrial fishing).

KFO said that research into the component issue is part of the advice of the Pelagic RAC. The reciprocity is part of the bilateral agreement.

Norway said that the reciprocity is only one element of the total bilateral agreement on blue whiting and that it is better for the stock if the Norwegians catch blue whiting in EU-waters (fishery on adults).

The Commission replied on UAPF that the blue whiting is part of a total balance with Norway, which includes a lot of species.

2. North Sea Horse Mackerel (IIIa,IVbc,VIId)

No comments.

3. Southern Horse Mackerel (VIIIc and IXa)

No comments

4. Western Horse Mackerel (IIa, IVa,Vb,VIa,VIIa-c, e-k,VIIIa,b,d,e)

KFO said that the scientific knowledge on this species is poor and that the industry needs to interact with the scientists to get a better evaluation of the stock. Irish fishermen see a lot of horse mackerel on the fishing grounds.

The chairman stressed the importance to have management plans for all pelagic stocks. It was also suggested to have the next meeting of the working groups in June

The Commission answered that a gradual approach is foreseen concerning the management plans. Appropriate scientific advice is needed to draft management plans. Moreover, the Commission is working on a system to bring the decision-making process on the fixing of fishing possibilities forward (front loading). This could also apply for the species where ACFM advice is given in June.

Presentation Korsager about toxins

The Commission said that new legislation on dioxins was published at the beginning of February. This subject is a very sensitive political issue. The limits for most species are based on product weight and are stricter for feed ingredients than food. The content of dioxins in

blue whiting differs for the different seasons. New limits for blue whiting could possibly be set measured on a product weight base in stead of a fat weight base. It can not be excluded that, due to new regulations, in the future blue whiting can only be used for human consumption purposes and not any longer for the production of fishmeal and fish oil.

The Spanish delegation said that health issues like dioxins should be treated by the Pelagic RAC. KFO replied that Working Group 2 will take this subject on board.

Outstanding issues for various stocks

See under discussion on RAC recommendations and actual TACs and quota.

Chairman: Sean O'Donoghue

Discussion on papers:

MSY

The Commission introduced this subject. There is a political commitment on MSY (and biodiversity). Most pelagic stocks are harvested in line with the MSY approach and the existing management plans on pelagic stocks are in accordance with the MSY-approach. The focus will be on fishing mortality instead of spawning stock biomass. F0.1 will be a good starting point. The emphasis in demersal fisheries will be on an effort management system (annex II model of the TAC and quota regulation for 2006) and in pelagic fisheries on the TAC/quota system. The introduction of MSY will be a developing and learning process. The Commission will publish a working document on MSY next month.

Danmarks Pelagiske PO asked if a TAC constraint of +/- 15% and a year-to-year flexibility of +/- 10% could be part of the MSY approach. The Commission answered that the Community is sharing most of the pelagic stocks with third countries. These third countries might have different management systems. The scientific basis of the advices (data collection) must also be improved in order to include this for all stocks. There is much uncertainty on the state of different fish stocks. However, the Commission continues to work on a solution.

The Spanish said that the Pelagic RAC needs the input of scientific experts in order to answer the questions raised in the discussion paper Pelagic RAC and MSY. There is also concern about the socio-economic consequences of the MSY approach. The Commission replied that MSY is a biological concept and is aware of the socio-economic consequences and will undertake socio-economic studies.

SPFA wondered why the current system should be changed as most pelagic stocks are healthy.

Norway is concerned about the relationship between the MSY and precautionary approach. The Commission answered that ACFM will continue to give advice based on the precautionary approach, but the MSY element could be included in the advice. The idea is that MSY moves us away from the area where the precautionary approach has to be invoked.

Shetland Fishermen's Association said that more time is needed to discuss this subject. It is too early to sign up to the principle of MSY.

The secretariat and the chairmen of the working groups will prepare a document on the MSY.

Technical measures

The Commission said that a second non-paper will be presented this spring. Consultations will take place during the summer. A new proposal for the technical measures is scheduled for spring 2007. At this stage The Commission is asking for a general opinion.

The secretariat and the chairmen of the working groups will prepare a document on the technical measures within 2 weeks. The Commission will receive the reaction of the Pelagic RAC within 4 weeks.

Simplification

The Commission stated that a brief is planned for 6th April 2006. The consultation phase is now. The general purpose is to improve legislation. Purpose of the consultation is to work together on simplification of the CFP and decide which road to take and which instruments to apply.

It is the first sectoral initiative under the Austrian Presidency. The subject is highly political.

The method is to focus on priority areas: conservation (TACs, technical measures, management process and data), and legal structures.

The reform is based on proportionality: reorganise, at the proper level, and at the right moment.

The second action consists of assessments of the socio-economic and environmental aspects for all policies and an impact analysis.

Consultation RACs:

- Begin December asked for advice from RACs
- Brief on 6 april 2006
- Final proposal/ multi-annual action plan 24 april 2006

RAC are asked to react mainly on the methods and principles.

KFO expresses its concern about whether it will really become simpler and that we need to go step by step, per component. The outcome is uncertain, it is only an action plan.

The Pelagic RAC will respond to the Commission in 4 weeks time, by the end of March.