



▶ Pelagic AC

Western horse mackerel Focus
Group
22 June 2016
11:00 – 12:00 hrs, CET
WebEx

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Participants

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|----|---------------------------|---|
| 1 | Sean O'Donoghue, chairman | Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation |
| 2 | Andres Uriatre | AZTI |
| 3 | Ed Farrell | University College Dublin |
| 4 | Goncalo Carvalho | Pew Charitable Trusts |
| 5 | Ian Gatt | Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association |
| 6 | Inge van der Knaap | Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association |
| 7 | José De Oliveira | CEFAS |
| 8 | Martin Pastoors | Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association |
| 9 | Patrick Murphy | Irish South and West Producers Organisation |
| 10 | Verena Ohms | Pelagic AC |

1. Opening & objectives of the meeting

The chairman explained that the main purpose of today's meeting was to prepare for the upcoming Pelagic AC meeting in Peterhead and to see if there are any issues that have to be dealt with prior to the meeting.

2. Follow-up on action items of the last meeting on 18 February 2016

The first action item was in relation to submitting a request to the ICES mailbox regarding genetic sampling. This has not been completed yet, but will be done before the Peterhead meeting.

The next two action items were to check whether Norwegians caught horse mackerel in area IVa and if there was horse mackerel bycatch in the mackerel fishery in IVa. Gerard van Balsfoort was supposed to follow-up on these action items, but was currently on holiday. Martin Pastoors promised to check with him before the meeting in Peterhead.

Ian Gatt said that over the last two years there was horse mackerel bycatch in the mackerel fishery, both in the North Sea and in Faroese waters.

Ed Farrell explained that a sample of any of those would suffice as long as it was known where the fish was caught as to best of his knowledge there was no spawning in area VIa. The samples could also be frozen. The time of the year did not matter.



However, José De Oliveira pointed out that for the purpose of the assessment quarter 1 and 2 catches in ICES Divisions IVa and IIIa are attributed to the North Sea stock whereas the quarter 3 and 4 catches in these areas are attributed to the Western stock. Therefore it would be necessary to also know when the fish was caught.

The following action item was in relation to asking the benchmark to define short, medium and long term. This will have to be done by September.

Martin Pastoors was not sure if the benchmark has already been agreed and he promised to check with the ICES secretariat.

The chairman said that if the benchmark has not been scheduled yet it will be necessary to request it again. Once he and the secretariat have drafted the request on defining short, medium and long term it will be circulated to the focus group for comments.

The next action items were in relation to acoustic surveys of boarfish and northwestern herring. However, given the response received from ICES the chairman thought that this was a dead end and there was no point in asking Andy Campbell to follow-up on this issue. It was his understanding anyway that Andy Campbell mainly uses groundfish surveys for his modelling work.

In regards to the retrospective analysis of the southern acoustic surveys the chairman pointed out that the area is very small and if it cannot be combined with the other areas then it is probably not very useful to carry out a retrospective analysis of the southern acoustic surveys.

Andres Uriatre said that no progress has been made so far in regards to retrospectively analyzing the southern acoustic surveys. However, he agreed with the chairman that if the other surveys cannot be taken into account then the usefulness of the southern acoustic surveys is indeed doubtful.

The chairman hence suggested to take these points off the action items list.

In regards to CPR data Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn has submitted a written update, based on discussions with Mark Payne, which concluded that the CPR data was not a viable option for use as fishery independent information for the annual stock assessment update of WHOM.

José De Oliveira added that the price for analyzing 10 years of CPR data (2006-2015) would be approximately 110.000 pounds. This could be considered a lot of money, particularly given the risk that such data would not be useful as fishery-independent information in the stock assessment.

The chairman agreed and decided to take all action items in relation to CPR data off the list at this stage.

In relation to the very high value for unexplained mortality in the EwE model José De Oliveira said that he talked to Steve Mackinson and it turned out that the value used for Z was 0.9 instead of 0.58. However, José De Oliveira still had some questions about the 0.58 value which came from North Sea horse mackerel and which was the combined value of F and M and used as upper limit in the EwE model. Subsequently various estimates were provided taking into account things like predation etc. Whatever could not be explained was then termed unexplained mortality and that value was quite high. José De Oliveira still had a problem with the F value used, because it is close to F_{crash} and it is not clear to him why they used that value. He is awaiting a response from Steve Mackinson in this regard. In conclusion he thought that the value coming out of EwE should not be used at this stage and further clarification was needed.¹

¹ After the meeting it was confirmed that the F value used to derive the $Z=0.58$ was also an error (the wrong value was picked up for the WG report), and in the end, it seems like the predation mortalities (M_2) coming out of EwE are consistent with $M=0.15$ (they are all below this value), which indicates that the current assumption in the assessment of $M=0.15$ is a reasonable one for horse mackerel.

The chairman wanted to know whether this issue will be raised at the benchmark and if yes what exactly will be discussed and who will present data?

José De Oliveira explained that the ICES Working Group draws up a list with issues it considers important. This could be on that issues list. People have been talking about mortality estimates for North Sea horse mackerel. This is not necessarily relevant for Western horse mackerel, although part of the Western stock comes into the North Sea. So, while the estimates provided by Steve Mackinson were relevant for the horse mackerel in the North Sea he was not sure what the status is for the Western horse mackerel stock (only part of which occurs in the North Sea in the latter half of the year), but he was certain that the values have not been published like they have for horse mackerel in the North Sea.

The chairman concluded that this was not an issue for the July meeting, however, he wondered if the Pelagic AC could request that this will be added to the list of issues to be addressed at the benchmark.

José De Oliveira was positive that this could be done.

3. Update ground fish survey work (Andy Campbell in writing)

The chairman pointed out that Andy Campbell could not participate in the WebEx meeting, but he provided a written update on his work and he will also give a presentation in Peterhead. Looking at the document provided by Andy Campbell the chairman concluded that the data look very promising. He was able to add some more surveys and to include depth and latitude as well which makes a big difference in pelagic fisheries. He furthermore noticed that the modelling work picked up signals that indicate decent recruitment in the last couple of years, an observation corroborated by skippers, but which does not show up in catch at age data. He was hopeful that a new index could be developed based on this work and be put forward at the benchmark.

4. Update on genetics project (Ed Farrell)

Ed Farrell said that he will be able to present a lot more details in Peterhead. Next week he will also have a meeting with the PFA and Imares to go over everything. He recently received the final results from the second sequencing run. He had developed 100 new satellite markers and analyzed 96 North Sea and 96 Western horse mackerel samples. He is now analyzing the sequencing results and there seems to be a bit of a sequencing error, so the quality might not be as high as it should have been. However, he thought that there are still enough good results. He has not encountered the same problem before and therefore thinks that it might have to do with the sequencing run. He will contact the technician who was in charge of that to make sure that everything was done correctly. He hoped that the sequencing will not have to be re-run, but he was not sure yet.

He furthermore confirmed that at least one set of Southern horse mackerel samples has also been collected now. He did not yet have the samples in his possession though and the current project is focusing on discriminating between North Sea and Western horse mackerel samples and the Southern samples might be included in a future project.

Martin Pastoors said that if people were interested in joining the meeting with Ed Farrell and Imares they should let him know. He did not circulate an invitation for the meeting since it will be a very technical meeting and most people will likely not be interested.

Patrick Murphy wondered if the error detection did not demonstrate the high quality of the project which is carried out very thoroughly and hence allowed for the error to be detected.

Ed Farrell agreed that there are a lot of quality check points and it was good that he caught the error. However, he would have preferred if there had been no error. Personally he thought that something went wrong during sequencing. He hoped that he will nevertheless get enough information to differentiate between North Sea and Western horse mackerel.

5. Preparation PELAC meeting 12 July

The chairman said that the work currently carried out by Martin Pastoors and Inge van der Knaap will be presented at the July meeting. He asked Martin Pastoors to give a brief update to the focus group.

Martin Pastoors thought that the work done by Andy Campbell could fit very nicely with the work done by Inge van der Knaap. She has now collected information from individual freezer-trawler catch histories dating back to the 1980ies. This data provides a lot of insight into the development of the fishery and maybe can be transferred into stock indicators. She also collected data from Irish vessels, but is still looking into how to operationalize that. In general she got a lot of good information and for a long time span too. Martin Pastoors hoped that this new data could be put into the benchmark.

The chairman wanted to know who is doing the chemical analysis and what exactly is being done.

Martin Pastoors replied that Imares is trying to find out whether North Sea and Western horse mackerel can be differentiated based on their chemical composition. However, he was not too optimistic about that.

The chairman asked Martin Pastoors to include the chemical analysis in his presentation on 12 July. He emphasized that time on that day is very limited. In addition he also wanted to present the focus group's conclusion on CPR data and the mortality data from EwE.

6. Preparation benchmark 2017

The chairman said that first it has to be ensured that the benchmark will take place. Once this has been confirmed a list of issues has to be prepared to be addressed by the benchmark. He asked whether Martin Pastoors, José De Oliveira and Ed Farrell could provide some draft text on the issues that should be taken up by the benchmark.

Martin Pastoors promised to send out the list of issues already compiled by the ICES WG so that this list could be used for discussion at the next meeting.

The chairman wondered if a management plan evaluation could be added to that list. However, José De Oliveira pointed out that this is usually not part of a benchmark, because a benchmark is meant to focus on the assessment, on reference points and on data going into the assessment.

The chairman concluded that Martin Pastoors will coordinate preparing a list of issues for the benchmark which can be discussed at the October meeting. He also wanted to include the definition for short, medium and long term on that list, but José De Oliveira explained that this related more to management plans and might therefore not be relevant or suitable for the benchmark.

Martin Pastoors agreed with José De Oliveira. Defining short, medium and long term is relevant for management plan evaluations. While these definitions are not random, they are not well standardized either. A benchmark is for addressing data, the assessment and reference points.

The chairman then wanted to know how suggesting a new management plan could fit into the system.

Martin Pastoors explained that such a request normally comes from the ICES clients. It is not automatically picked up at a benchmark. He suggested adding the definition of short, medium and long term to the agenda of the next MIACO meeting. The chairman agreed.

7. Development of a new management strategy

The chairman said that at this stage he will simply keep the development of a new management strategy on the agenda until the other issues have been resolved.

José De Oliveira confirmed that before a new management plan can be developed it will be necessary to look at the assessment and to incorporate new data coming in.

8. AOB

The chairman decided to have another WebEx meeting in September in advance of the October meeting. The secretariat will send out a doodle to find a suitable date sometime in the middle of September. He thanked participants for joining the meeting and for their contributions.

Action items

- Send request to ICES mailbox regarding genetic sampling and ask ICES to distribute the request to all relevant working groups before Peterhead meeting (chairman, secretariat)
- Find out if Norwegians caught horse mackerel in area IVa and if samples are available (Martin Pastoors)
- Check if there was horse mackerel bycatch in the mackerel fishery in IVa and if samples are available (Martin Pastoors)
- Check with the ICES secretariat if the benchmark has already been agreed (Martin Pastoors) and if not, submit a request to ICES to schedule a benchmark (chairman, secretariat)
- Provide list of issues, including mortality estimates, to be addressed by the benchmark (focus group, lead: Martin Pastoors)
- Present ground fish survey modelling work at PELAC July meeting (Andy Campbell)
- Present results of genetic analysis at PELAC July meeting (Ed Farrell)
- Present work carried out by Inge van der Knaap and chemical analysis at PELAC July meeting (Martin Pastoors)
- Present focus group's conclusion on CPR data, acoustic data and mortality estimates from EWE to WG II (chairman)
- Add the definition of short, medium and long term to the agenda of the next MIACO meeting (chairman, secretariat)
- Develop a new management strategy once the assessment and additional data issues have been resolved (focus group)
- Arrange next WebEx meeting in September 2016 (secretariat)

