



PELAGIC REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

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April-June 2014



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PRAC MEETINGS APRIL-JUNE 2014

DISCARD MEETING (10 APRIL, THE HAGUE)

On 10 April the final discard meeting took place in The Hague. In a joint effort Working Group I and II aimed at finalizing advice regarding the implementation of the landing obligation in pelagic fisheries. Efforts therefor started in April 2013 and after a year of collecting information and intense discussions a set of draft recommendations was presented at the meeting. At the end of the day the Working Group members agreed on a number of changes to the draft recommendations which were subsequently presented to the Executive Committee. Like previous discard meetings this one drew a lot of attention from Member States and the Commission as well as observers from PEW Charitable Trusts and the Dutch Elasmobranch Society.

FOCUS GROUP SURVIVAL (23 MAY, WEBEX)

A small number of Pelagic RAC members including industry and NGO representatives, scientists and an external consultant hold a first webex meeting dealing with survival in purse-seine fisheries. Three terms of reference (ToR) were defined. The first one being a literature review of available scientific information that would be the foundation for formulating a release rule, the second ToR was to provide an explanation regarding the reason for formulating a release rule in the first place and the third ToR concerned the identification of future research needs. Discussions within the focus group also led to the invitation of Maria Tenningen from the University of Bergen to the upcoming Executive Committee meeting where she will present her research on slipping mortality in purse-seine fisheries. More information can be found on the Pelagic RAC website.

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VARIOUS MEETINGS OF MEMBER STATE REGIONAL GROUPS OF THE NORTH SEA, THE NORTH WESTERN WATERS AND THE SOUTH WESTERN WATERS

The Working Group chairmen Esben Sverdrup-Jensen and Sean O'Donoghue accompanied by Verena Ohms have participated in several Member State regional group meetings to advocate the document produced by the Pelagic RAC on the implementation of the landing obligation. It became clear at these meetings that individual Member States and regional groups differ widely in their opinion on how to implement the landing obligation and the different measures to be determined in a discard plan. The intention to split the management of the widely distributed stocks, such as Northeast Atlantic mackerel, Western horse mackerel and blue whiting, among different Member State groups has caused great concern. Splitting up the stocks according to Member State regions while neglecting their biology can have impacts on stock status and lead to confusing rules for fishermen. The Pelagic RAC has therefore strongly advocated the position that the widely distributed pelagic stocks should be dealt with by a Member State subgroup taking into account the nature of the stocks.

ADG BALTIC SEA (6-9 MAY, COPENHAGEN)

Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn and Ian Gatt participated as observers in the ADG Baltic Sea which dealt with both North Sea autumn spawning and Western Baltic spring spawning herring given that these stocks interact and mix at certain times of the year. At the start of this meeting ICES staff explained the internal discussion that had taken place in relation to providing advice in context of the new CFP requirements under the landing obligation. ADGs must decide if catch advice can be given based on discard proportions and therefore, should classify respective fisheries as either quantitatively, where catch and landings advice can be given, or qualitatively, where landings advice can be given, with at most an order of magnitude of discards. ADGs need to distinguish between the two categories based on the framework set out by ACOM. Following extensive debate it was decided that catch advice could be given for North Sea herring and "wanted catch" advice for IIIa herring. "Wanted catch" is used to describe fish that would be landed in the absence of the EU landing obligation. "Unwanted catch" refers to the component that was previously discarded.

The advice for Western Baltic spring spawning herring is based on the MSY framework stating that the wanted catch should be no more than 44,439 tonnes. This represents a 7% TAC increase compared to the advice given in 2013. Unsurprisingly the debate among scientists in regard to the difficulty in providing advice for this stock given mixing issues with both North Sea and central Baltic Sea herring stocks wasn't too dissimilar to the discussion at the Pelagic RAC meetings. ICES had been unable to provide advice on the management strategy for TAC setting agreed by the EU and Norway during March 2014 prior to the commencement of ADG Baltic.

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However, ICES re-affirmed in the advice the need to develop a long-term management plan for this stock.

The advice for North Sea herring is based on the current long term management plan agreed in 2008 which states that catches should be no more than 461,664 tonnes, including 429,797 tonnes for the A fleet. Advice couldn't be provided on the basis of the revised plan agreed by EU-Norway during March as an evaluation exercise had still to be undertaken. However, TAC advice is given for the revised plan in the catch options table. A spirited debate ensued on whether ICES should continue to provide advice warning against the negative impact of bottom disturbing impacts on herrings spawning habitats. Pelagic AC representatives underlined the importance of maintaining this advice given the rapid development of renewable energy projects across the North Sea basin and elsewhere. This advice is retained for 2015 but will surely be debated again next year. ICES still consider the stock to be in a low productivity phase, although it's not clear why this continues to be the case. Survey information on the 2013 recruiting year class is currently under investigation, the values are apparently quite high which could be an anomaly, so are therefore discounted for use in this year's advice. Forecasting on the basis of both the 2008 and 2014 management plans indicate SSB will decline further in 2015.

MAREFRAME: LAUNCHING OF THE NORTH SEA CASE STUDY (14 MAY, LONDON)

In February 2014 the kick-off meeting of the MareFrame project in which the Pelagic RAC is a partner took place in Iceland. At this meeting it was decided that the case study most interesting for the Pelagic RAC is the North Sea case study. Therefore representatives of both the Pelagic and the North Sea RAC were invited to the case study launching on 14 May in London. Gerard van Balsfoort, Claus Reedtz-Sparrevojn and Verena Ohms attended the meeting as Pelagic RAC representatives. One of the main pillars of MareFrame is "co-creation", a tool developed by businesses to get customers to define what they really want. Stakeholders are central in this process and therefore the content of the case study was determined together with stakeholders. After an initial brainstorming session in which ideas were collected on potential topics of interest all focusing on the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, it was decided to focus on the North Sea multispecies commercial system in which the pelagics as a subset might then be treated in more detail than the main model. For more information please have a look at the meeting summary in Annex I.

MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING CONFERENCE: SHIPPING (6 JUNE, ATHENS)

On 6 June Tim Peute participated in the third workshop of a series of workshops organized by DG MARE dealing with the implementation of the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive which enters into force in 2014. This conference discussed how to implement security in marine spatial planning, how ports interact with the directive, what possible solutions of marine spatial

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planning there can be and the coexistence between shipping and other activities such as fishing. In general, a number of subjects discussed at the conference are of relevance for the Pelagic RAC. However, there was limited focus on fisheries and more on larger container vessels and the general usage of the sea even though fisheries are considered an important activity.

In the opening speech it was explained that the MSP Directive consists of three pillars: economic, social and environmental. All three aspects have to be implemented by the different Member States (MS). It is also their responsibility to cooperate in order to fully integrate the MSPD. DG Mare mentioned that the MS plans have to be finalized by 2016 and the measures by 2021. The MSPD also wants a cross-border and cross-sector approach and takes land-sea interaction into account although international coastal management is not a part of MSP. The MSPD is also directed at 'blue growth' and regulating the sea since it is becoming a more and more important economic source for the EU. The Directive takes a strategic and long-term planning approach. Unique about the MSPD is the environmental approach they (partly) take, which has not been included in previous regulations.

On a global level, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) already has a lot of policy and regulation on marine spatial planning. The MSPD should complement this and not take over IMO's role. It is important that the Directive does not undermine IMO's rules. IMO's role is to allocate the space among different users, but it does not take a specific environmental approach for example. It is also 'just' a body for developing guidelines, as the representative of the IMO mentioned. The MSPD does take an explicit environmental approach. IMO, however, does have an ecological aspect in the sense that specific areas are regulated on an ecosystem, historical, biological, scientific and/or recreational basis.

The representative of a French energy company, described a case in France where the marine coastal area was used by different sectors simultaneously. After a lot of negotiating between partners, different stakeholders now use the area in agreement. Among others, there is a wind park and fishing vessels are allowed to fish there as well. The increased usage of the Baltic Sea in the past few years was also mentioned and it was explained that MSP is highly complex in the Baltic Sea due to environmental dangers and the high amount of different stakeholders in the area. Some participants discussed the situation in the UK and were more critical on MSP. They stressed the importance of implementation due to the confusion between stakeholders and the lack of authority or responsibility. Their message was that it had to be made sure that different stakeholders know what is coming at them.

Finally, a number of solutions were proposed. The representative of the World Ocean Council (WOC), stressed the importance of corporate responsibility and the role of business leaders. She also mentioned the role of WOC as a platform for society and industry to come together and discuss sustainable development of the oceans. And last but not least, a new monitoring technique by using satellites to further develop MSP programs was explained. This could

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contribute to the current, most used, AIS system and give a more detailed account of vessels as well as the protection of MPAs.

Overall, the conference was an interesting combination of speakers and subjects. However, the problems mentioned at the beginning, regarding closing the gap between different governance levels and how MSP can be integrated both politically and socially, have not been clearly addressed and a general MSP approach remains vague.

ADG CELTIC SEA (9-13 JUNE, COPENHAGEN)

Alex Wiseman participated as observer in the ADG Celtic Sea. The opening presentation by the ICES Secretariat outlined the guidelines for presenting catch advice in relation to the forthcoming Landings Obligation Regulation. Following consideration of a series of questions relating to availability and accuracy of data on catch, landings and discards, advice would be presented as:

O - Advise on Catch

A - Advise on Catch, except with survival rate

B – Advise “Catch unknown, landings no more than ...”

Regarding herring in ICES area VIa South and VIIb,c HAWG indicated that all approaches showed a depleted stock and that based on the precautionary approach there should be no catches. Discards are thought not to occur and there is some evidence to support this. Alex Wiseman pointed out that this did not reflect the perception of the fishermen of this stock and STECF had reported that the management plan submitted by the Pelagic RAC could be used to rebuild the stock, but there was a need to address trans-boundary issues. ICES had not yet evaluated the plan. Following prolonged discussion on layout of information it was agreed that it would be beneficial to display reference point values as well as relative values.

In terms of Celtic Sea and South of Ireland herring SSB has fallen to $MSY_{trigger}$. For this stock it was noted that the as the management plan proposed by the Pelagic RAC had not yet been signed off by all three European institutions, advice would be based on the MSY approach, resulting in a significant reduction in TAC. However, this is also very much in line with the advice derived from the management plan. Further discussion noted that following the MSY approach would result in SSB being below $MSY_{trigger}$ in 2015. It was agreed that the options table should be increased to include an option for SSB at MP target (unconstrained).

For Irish Sea herring the basis for the assessment and advice has not changed from last year. Following the MSY approach, advice results in a modest decrease in TAC. No specific management plan was known to ICES but it was noted that work is underway by the Pelagic RAC under the auspices of GAP 2 to develop a management plan.

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Regarding herring in Division VIa North fishing mortality has fluctuated around F_{MSY} in recent years. Recruitment is lower than the historical average and SSB remains at low levels compared with 20 years ago. On the basis of the agreed West of Scotland herring management plan, advice is for a reduced catch. Discussions resulted in amendment of the text to indicate that catches were well sampled (except for quarter 1 where only small catch was recorded). It was also agreed that text relating to misreporting being a problem in the past should be removed. It was recognized that revision to the management plan was still consistent with the precautionary approach but as yet still required formal acceptance. However, with a Benchmark Workshop scheduled for 2015 it was felt that there were more pressing matters to address in the meantime. Further work was identified to recalculate figures in the outlook table for consistency of presentation.

MAREFRAME: CO-CREATING ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS: MEETING WITH THE ADVISORY COUNCILS (10 JUNE, BRUSSELS)

The RAC secretaries were invited to a MareFrame workshop aiming to explore possibilities of how the RACs can become more involved in the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management. Next to Verena Ohms the secretaries of the North Sea, the North Western Waters and the Mediterranean RAC participated in this workshop as well as Poul Degenbol from ICES and the work package 1 leaders of the MareFrame project. A number of constraints were identified at the meeting and suggestions on how these could be overcome were provided. For more information please see the summary of the meeting in Annex II.

COFASP WORKSHOP (16-19 JUNE, ROME)

Verena Ohms was invited to participate in a COFASP workshop which used a foresight analysis to build a future research agenda for fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processing. COFASP is an era-net and part of the Europe 2020 strategy. Its objectives is to strengthen cooperation and synergies between major European funding agencies that support research on sustainable exploitation of marine renewable resources. For more information please visit the COFASP website: <http://www.cofasp.eu/node/22>

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GAP2 ANNUAL MEETING (23-25 JUNE, ROME)

During the annual GAP2 meeting in Rome progress on the case studies (CS) was reported from the case study leaders. The Pelagic RAC is mainly involved in the CS on Western Baltic spring spawning herring (WBSS) which aims at formulating a management plan for this stock. Over the last year a lot of progress has been made in this CS. There is a better biological understanding of the migration patterns of WBSS on the basis of the now corrected data derived from information from the stakeholders (no misreported catches used as indicators of stock distribution). The recent EU-Norway agreement on TAC sharing has been successfully evaluated by the CS as being the most optimal given the current assessment modelling set-up and its limitations. Getting a full multi-stock assessment model including a prediction module and thus enabling management strategy evaluations (MSEs) where the full dynamics of North Sea herring and WBSS are included is now thought to be beyond what can realistically be achieved by the CS. The CS will now focus on the more technical parts of running MSEs using single stock modelling, including the prediction of stock shares. The CS has also learned that it is not trivial to get all stakeholders around the table, especially when third countries are involved. However, the CS has managed to shorten the distance between EU policy makers and EU stakeholders by ensuring that the stakeholders' views are known to the policy makers.

Other issues discussed at the annual meeting included preparation of the final symposium at the end of the research project. The date for this conference has been set to the week of 23 February 2015, most likely in Barcelona.

The GAP2 movie featuring the red shrimp CS was presented. It is a professionally made movie explaining the idea behind the GAP2 project of bridging the GAP between science, stakeholders and policy. It can be viewed on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7onuKT2ag6E>

RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPLEMENTING THE LANDING OBLIGATION IN PELAGIC FISHERIES

Two weeks after the discard meeting the Executive Committee unanimously endorsed the document referred to above. In summary, this document provides an overview of the fishing operations on freezer-tractors, RSW vessels and the French and Spanish artisanal fleets. It also accounts for the Pelagic RAC's interpretation of Articles 15 and 16 of the new CFP and presents arguments for de minimis exemptions in certain fisheries on the grounds that increases in selectivity are difficult to achieve with the technology currently available. In relation to high survival it is recommended that ICES and STECF analyze existing scientific evidence of survival in purse-seine fisheries initially focusing on mackerel and herring. In addition the Pelagic RAC will set up a focus group dealing with this issue as well. Based on the outcome a release rule taking into account species, gear, size of catch, crowding density and duration could possibly be formulated. Furthermore the document presents advice regarding the implementation of the 9% inter-species flexibility and recommends adhering to the 10% inter-annual flexibility as well as minimum conservation reference sizes. In terms of monitoring, control and enforcement it stresses the need for a level-playing field and lists several measures that can be used to ensure high compliance. It is also pointed out that the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund provides ample opportunities to assist and comply with the landing obligation. The need for continuous close cooperation with stakeholders is emphasized.

SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS

GAP 2

As mentioned previously in this newsletter the Pelagic RAC is involved in the GAP2 research project which tries to demonstrate the value of stakeholder driven science within the context of fisheries governance. There are a total of 13 CS in the GAP2 project, with the one on Western Baltic spring spawning herring being the most relevant for the Pelagic RAC. For more information on the GAP2 project please visit the following website: <http://gap2.eu/>

MAREFRAME

Another research project in which the Pelagic RAC is involved is called MareFrame. This project seeks to remove the barriers preventing more widespread use of the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management. This entails development of new tools and technologies, development and extension of ecosystem models and assessment methods, and development of a decision support framework that can highlight alternatives and consequences. Most importantly the removal of barriers depends not only on collaboration with stakeholders in general, but on close integration and co-creation with stakeholders in all development phases, to ensure that ownership lies with them and to increase the chance of acceptance and uptake of the project outcomes. If you want to find out more about MareFrame please visit the project's website: <http://www.mareframe-fp7.org/>

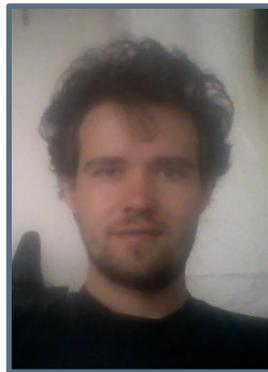
INVOLVED

In February 2014 our member Jesper Raakjær has presented ideas for a research project answering the Commission call on gradually eliminating discards in EU fisheries. After his presentation the Pelagic RAC decided to join the consortium and become a partner in the project. The final choice regarding which project proposals will be awarded the grant still has to be made, but the INVOLVED project has proceeded to the second round. More information will be provided once available.

MISCELLANEOUS

STUDENT INTERN

On 15 April Tim Peute, a bachelor student majoring in political science at the University of Amsterdam, has started an internship with the Pelagic RAC. His project is focusing on the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in different Member States and possible consequences for pelagic fisheries. Some of you have already been in close contact with Tim, but if anybody else would like to contact him and provide comments or remarks please send him an email: timpeute@gmail.com



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

NEW FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

A new framework agreement will have to be signed with the Commission before the start of the new Pelagic AC year. The provisions in the new framework agreement differ in several points from the current framework agreement which will have some implications for internal procedures. More information will be provided in advance of the General Assembly meeting in October.

NEW CHAIRMEN AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Every three years a new Executive Committee and chairmen will be elected. The next elections will take place in October 2014. Therefore the participation of all General Assembly members will be very important. Detailed information on the procedure will be provided over the summer.

REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL COSTS

Please remember that the secretariat has to receive your reimbursement claims within one month after the corresponding meeting by post or email including copies of all receipts. Reimbursement sheets received after the deadline will not be taken into account.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

WORKING GROUP I AND II MEETING (9 JULY, THE HAGUE)

On 9 July the next Pelagic RAC Working Group I and II meetings take place at Parkhotel Den Haag (<http://www.parkhotelden Haag.nl/>). Registration deadline was on the 26th of June. As usual the ICES advice for herring stocks in the North Sea and Celtic Sea will be the central topic discussed at the Working Group meetings. We are happy that once again Carmen Fernandez, vice-chair of the ICES Advisory Committee, has expressed her willingness to present the advice. Furthermore Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn will give a presentation on the new assessment for Northeast Atlantic mackerel and an update on implementing the landing obligation will be provided. More information can be found on the Pelagic RAC's website.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (10 JULY, THE HAGUE)

Following the Working Group meetings the Executive Committee will meet a day later. Next to administrative issues in relation to e.g. the financial report for 2013-2014 there will be a presentation by Maria Tenningen (IMR) on quantification and mitigation of slipping mortality in purse-seine fisheries. On request of several members we will also discuss the Commission proposal on an EU wide ban of driftnets.

For more information please visit the Pelagic RAC website: www.pelagic-rac.org

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