



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

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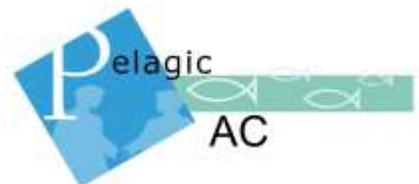


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

PELAC meetings	2
External meetings	6
Practical information	19
Upcoming meetings	20
Contact information	21

PELAC MEETINGS

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (4 MARCH 2020, THE HAGUE)

The meeting went over the different stocks covered by Working Group I on a stock by stock basis to evaluate the ICES and PELAC advice with the final outcome at December Council, as well as to set priorities for 2020.

There was some discussion over the follow-up on blue whiting, based on the surprising outcomes of the work on the two-tiered management approach carried out by the Focus Group. The work cast uncertainty whether the two-tiered approach is the best way forward. It was decided to invite the coordinator the blue whiting survey to a future PELAC meeting to discuss if there could be another way to look at the stock.

There was also some discussion on the final TAC of North Sea horse mackerel. The Working Group noted the final TAC outcome was significantly lower than both the ICES and the PELAC advice. A deduction had been applied but it was unclear on which figures this was based. The same applied to Western horse mackerel. Both Working Groups I and II therefore proposed to draft a letter to the Commission requesting clarification on the methodology applied to NS and Western horse mackerel to arrive at the final TACs for both stocks.

Working Group I also agreed to join forces with the BSAC and draft a letter to the Commission requesting to check with ICES on the usefulness of developing a rebuilding plan for Western Baltic spring spawning herring when there is no agreed EU-Norway management plan in place for this stock. Before going ahead with the rebuilding plan, it would be useful to know if it would be looked at by ICES.

Finally, the Working Group discussed next steps with regard to the Ecosystem Focus Group. The Pelagic AC secretariat has put more emphasis on the issue of plastics over the last months, and members agreed it would be an important topic to stay involved in. Climate change and impacts of offshore windfarms were also identified as key topics to be handled by the Ecosystem Focus Group. It was decided to set a date for a next meeting before the July PELAC meeting, and to draft a ToR to help define the agenda.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (4 MARCH 2020, THE HAGUE)

Working Group II also focused on evaluating the relevant stocks and setting priorities for 2020. For all stocks, it's an important priority to provide annual TAC advice in October 2020.

One of the main priorities is to follow-up on the recommendations regarding NEA mackerel, such as the evaluation of MCRS and the discrepancies in the egg surveys. It will also be a key priority to follow the development of the MSE and to follow-up on the issues with the tagging data.

A significant discussion was held on Southern horse mackerel. Following significant correspondence over this stock in the preceding months, delegates from the SWWAC and the Spanish government were invited to attend the meeting. IPMA provided a presentation to recall the process around the

PELAC MEETINGS

development of the management strategy for this stock, and to explain the reasons for the large difference in advised catches following the management plan vs. the MSY approach. It was agreed to hold a follow-up meeting with the scientists and relevant stakeholders to revisit certain aspects of the management plan, notably the choice for setting 2025 as a target to achieve MSY level catches. It was emphasized that SWWAC stakeholders should participate actively in this process.

For 6a 7bc herring, 2020 will be a defining year because it is when the EASME genetics project is expected to finalize. A benchmark will be sought for by end of 2020 which hopefully will be the start of the process to split the stock again. It was decided that the benchmark will be the time to revisit the gaps in the rebuilding plan.

Finally, a discussion was held on the revision of the pelagic discard plans, which are due to expire at the end of 2020. The regional groups are therefore seeking PELAC input before May 1st. It was agreed to resubmit previous recommendations already agreed to in the past on: Uniformity, pelagic sub group dealing exclusively with pelagic stocks, de minimis exemptions, de minimis % to apply upon **landing** the catch, classification of high risk vessels, monitor use of de minimis exemptions and record all data, include control elements in pelagic discard plans. It was also agreed and to include the following new recommendations:

- Support existing de minimis exemptions but point out the specific nature of the vessels and areas
- Include control and enforcement of de minimis exemptions into the discard plans
- Seek clarity for demersal and pelagic zero catch options
- Implications for 3 pelagic discard plans post Brexit

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (4 MARCH 2020, THE HAGUE)

The Executive Committee approved the mid-term report. It was furthermore agreed to draft several letters to the Commission:

- A joint PELAC/BSAC letter asking the Commission to check with ICES to what extent it would be worthwhile to work on a rebuilding plan for the WBSS herring when there is no agreed management in place for this stock.
- A letter asking the Commission to clarify the method applied to arrive at the current deductions in TAC for Westerns and North Sea horse mackerel.

Subsequently, the recommendations on the pelagic discard plans as proposed by Working Group II were adopted.

A presentation was held by Ment van der Zwan (representing Europêche) on labour conditions onboard pelagic vessels. He is active within the Social Dialogue, a partnership of organisations aiming to include fair labour conditions on the fisheries agenda. He outlined the different existing legislations and conventions setting international standards and good practices for fair labour conditions onboard fishing vessels. Treaties and conventions are difficult to ratify, so it remains a struggle to get these standards widely implemented. This is particularly difficult when existing legislation such as the CFP, contradicts these standards, such as on fishing capacity. The PELAC and

PELAC MEETINGS

the Social Dialogue discussed the potential for collaboration on this particular point: capacity ceilings in the CFP prevent the transition to greener energy innovations, requiring larger vessels, and to meet labour standards for larger cabin space onboard vessels.

All detailed meeting minutes can be downloaded from the PELAC website:
<https://www.pelagic-ac.org/2020>

JOINT PELAC-EFCA WORKSHOP: MONITORING, CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE LANDING OBLIGATION (5 MARCH 2020, THE HAGUE)

EFCA and the Pelagic AC co-organised a workshop aimed to evaluate the implementation and the controls of the landing obligation in relation to pelagic fisheries. The meeting included attendance of the NWW and NS control expert groups (CEGs) and was chaired by the two Presidencies.

EFCA presented its evaluation compliance with the landing obligation, and outlined its revised procedure for risk analysis (RA). EFCA analyses risk on the basis of limited resources, to help set priorities for the planning of control activities. In its RA methodology, EFCA determines the likelihood of discarding and the impact on the stock. In 'high risk' cases, fleet segment, fishing seasons and areas are identified where most activity takes place, and control activities are planned accordingly. According to the EFCA 2012-2015 evaluation of compliance report, mackerel was categorised as a 'high risk' stock, given its high likelihood of discarding. The evaluation further suggested the mackerel fishery has a low level of compliance with the landing obligation.

A lengthy discussion was held between PELAC members, EFCA and the control experts. The PELAC industry members had issues with EFCA's categorisation of risk on fleet segment level, as well as the identification of mackerel as 'high risk'. In addition, the PELAC was unhappy about the publication of the executive summary of the evaluation of compliance of the mackerel fishery, as well as EFCA's refusal to release the full document the analysis was based on. EFCA explained the report contained sensitive data not suitable to share externally and that the publication of the executive summary was a direct instruction by the HLG. The PELAC decided to send a letter the HLG requesting the urgent release of the full report.

Further discussions were held on some key points brought forward by the PELAC, such as the recommendation for the mandatory recording of gramme sizes as a RA tool for mackerel, and the conflicts between the catch composition rules of the Technical Measures regulation and the CFP rules of the landing obligation. On the gramme size, the PELAC couldn't understand why the tool was not being used by the control community since it would serve as an effective tool for identifying risk at vessel level. EFCA explained that the tool was tested a few years ago, but found that while it assisted risk assessment, it did not generate sufficient data. Therefore, it cannot be used by EFCA as an enforcement tool. On the catch composition rules, the CEG was asked to develop tables analysing the conflict in provisions between the TM and the LO from a control point of view. This is a work in

PELAC MEETINGS

progress, and the CEG plans to organise a dedicated meeting on this issue, but stressed that it was ultimately up to the Commission to resolve.

As a final point, the PELAC highlighted once more the importance of setting up an informal pelagic subgroup. This was regarded by the CEG as a management issue thus falling outside of the scope of the workshop. On controls, the CEG tries its best to operate over different groups.

The last portion of meeting was dedicated to REM. Upon request by the Commission, a Technical Working Group on REM has been set up to define guidelines for implementation. The aim was to come up with minimum requirements should there be a regulatory obligation to implement REM systems. The guidelines were finalised in March 2019 and published on the EFCA website. EFCA went through these guidelines during the workshop, explaining how the REM setup onboard fishing vessels could look like and how the data would be used and analysed.

The final presentation highlighted a pilot project conducted in Denmark where REM trial systems are currently set up on demersal fishing vessels on the basis of the EFCA guidelines. This project started in January 2020 and will consist of three phases, to be concluded in 2022.

A detailed report of the workshop can be downloaded on the PELAC website once available: <https://www.pelagic-ac.org/02168/>

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

ICES WKSHEAR WORKSHOP (15 JANUARY 2020, COPENHAGEN)

Mark Dickey-Collas welcomed the participants and introduced the workshop explaining that there is a long history for fisheries advice in ICES but there is now a new area of advices coming up that are conservation and climate related. Those specifically need quantification of uncertainty.

A first presentation by Ghislain Chouinard tackled the difference between uncertainty and risk. Uncertainty characterises a range of values within which the real one is asserted to lie with some level of confidence. Lots of different types of uncertainty can be identify from aleatoric (link to randomness of variables) to epistemic (link to the lack of knowledge). Risk is a state of uncertainty where some possible outcomes (probability) have undesired effects or create significant loss (impact). Therefore, it is relative to a person-organisation and dependent on context. A higher uncertainty leads to a higher risk, but risk might remain insignificant if the impact is low.

In ICES, this is translated by the following: When evaluating a HCR in relation to the precautionary approach, the situation to be avoided is when the biomass is under Blim (stock is so low that reproduction may be impaired and sustainability of the stock could be compromised) and the condition used by ICES to declare a plan precautionary is when there is less than 5% probability of SSB falling below Blim in the long-term. To estimate this risk, ICES conducts Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), conducting a large number of long-term simulations of the relevant fishery system (including assessment and management procedures) under the HCR and taking into account the uncertainties. The plan can be declared precautionary if SSB does not fall below Blim more than 5% of the times.

The following presentation by Eugene Nixon showed the different types of risks from acute to chronic, and how risk perception is not only about numbers but has a lot to do with context.

Colm Lordan then explained how ICES uses risk in its advice framework. He recalled the ICES reference points (Blim, Flim, Bpa, Fpa, Fcap -for short lived stocks, based on stochastic simulations with less 5% probability that SSB is under Bescapment-, Bescapment -for short lived species, similar to Blim plus additional biomass if needed-, FMSY, MSYBtrigger, MSY Ranges -delivering no more than 5% reduction in long term yields compared to MSY-). Finally, Colm Lordan presented the ICES approach to update MSYBtrigger values (either still as Bpa or as 5th percentile of Bfmsy or as the maximum of any of these two).

The way ICES considers cumulative effect was then presented. It includes a cumulative effect assessment of 4 steps and different feedback loops of communication and consultation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The topic of the timeline given to rebuild stock when below Blim was brought up. It will be addressed during the WKREBUILD workshop in February 2020. Alternative scenarios to a 0-catch advice will then be discussed in ACOM. Other areas like the United-States or New-Zealand could give ideas of other practises where when a stock is below the threshold, a defined rebuilding timeframe is put in place. Similarly, participants asked if a stock doesn't come from a healthy perspective, would it be possible to change the 5% probability range to get to Blim, for something that would be more

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

flexible. This seemed possible as it is just a choice of probability figure that is made. It is also the requester's demand.

Simon Jennings then presented the different perception of risk in natural resource management and biodiversity conservation. The convergence of fisheries management and biodiversity conservation can be explained by the influence of utilitarian conservation, the political agenda push (CBD, Regional seas conventions with RFMOs ...) and economic factors. The ecosystem approach helps bridging and blurring boundaries between "conservation first" and "management first". There are still some tensions around topics such as bottom trawling, bycatch issues, fisheries for forage fish, MPAs, CITES and IUCN lists. Challenges for bridging the two approaches remain in the coordination of the governance systems and management, the little institutional empowerment, and the multiple objectives of sustainable development potentially leading to weak trade-offs.

Colm Lordan presented the taking into account of risk in the ICES MSE. MSE have 3 main uses worldwide. First, they are used to develop management strategy for a fishery. Second, is to evaluate generic management strategies for data poor stocks (WKLIFE in ICES for instance). Third, they are used to identify management strategies that will not work and need to be eliminated (evaluate costs and trades-off of collecting data). In ICES, MSE takes place on a restricted scope, set by requester asking to develop a MS and to evaluate it in precise way. In recent years, MSE looked at trade-offs of fishing mortality target and biomass level, and risk to stock's health of new HCR, yields and stability of yields over time. Protocols for running an MSE are confirmed with reviewers and then goes to workshop where the MSE is carried out (preliminary results will be in the future presented back to the requestors), the results are reviewed, the transparent assessment framework is carried out and the results finally go through the usual approval process. It is also a collaborative process with stakeholder actively engaging.

MSEs typically are run on a twenty years window (long term), including medium term (10y), and short term (5y) points. The key input variables are recruitment, growth rate, maturity, fisheries selectivity. These are usually derived from past data, taking also trends into account. All data generated in the MSE should be sufficiently noisy (including patterns and correlations) to provide realism for the evaluation. Finally, an implementation error is included when relevant.

Risk could be measured in 3 different ways: (1) as the average probability that SSB is below Blim, where the average is taken across the ny years; (2) as the probability that SSB is below Blim at least once during the ny years, (3) as the maximum probability that SSB is below Blim, where the maximum of the annual probabilities is taken over the ny years. ICES has chosen to use the (3) during the workshop on MSEs.

Finally, the meeting ended with a discussion around the different concepts of risk. Mark Dickey-Collas concluded the meeting and thanked the participants.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

MIAC MEETING (16 JANUARY 2020, COPENHAGEN)

Before adopting the agenda, the chair gave a recap on the purpose of the meeting. Three years ago, the MIACO meeting was expanded and also a joint ACs-ICES meeting was added to coordinate on some issues and prepare the MIACO. Last year's action points were listed to check the progress achieved. As scheduled, ICES raised with recipients of advice the issue of sudden changes caused by revisions of reference points. This has also to do with the issue of quality assurance that will be tackled during MIACO. The 24-28 February workshop WKREBUILD is expected to see a large attendance. The main aim is to develop guideline for ICES for rebuilding plan. ICES also invited participants to register on the Observer Forum in order to get all emails and invitations from ICES.

The ICES secretariat made it clear that MIAC is for discussing strategic approach rather than to continue discussions that can take place between an AC and ICES.

Rebuilding stock guidelines and changes in reference points

The BSAC wanted to tackle the issue of a 0 TAC advice issued for Western Baltic herring. The way rebuilding guidelines are now applied by ICES are that if a stock is not able to rebuild in one year (which is almost always the case), then a 0 TAC is recommended. This brings stakeholders in a difficult situation with little room to manoeuvre. The WKREBUILD workshop will therefore be very useful. There was already progress in the past year but this one could really set guidelines on what to do in the case of rebuilding stocks. Colm Lordan explained that this was because if the stock is below Blim there is continuous risk of low recruitment and low productivity. WKREBUILD will develop guidelines that will show the way for manager for stocks below Blim. He emphasised that this was very much at the science policy interphase and therefore that managers have to choose which timeline they want to adopt. A proposed outcome might be to develop something like the catch scenarios table. After the workshop, this will be presented to ACOM in March.

A second issue connected to this topic was the dramatic changes in the stock advice due to changes in the way ICES looks at stocks. This was difficult for stakeholders that raised the question on how to handle the transition from one reference point to another one without impacting the fishery and market too much. Colm Lordan explained that the idea of spreading the transition on several years (like it is done in the US) could be a solution. The managers had the main role on this. This also touched upon quality assurance and ICES was aware of the issue. He also reminded that these changes are made in accordance with the best available science and were usually major steps forward in terms of understanding of the stocks.

Quality Assurance

PELAC signalled that the topic of quality assurance was important to its stakeholders and that it will be tackled during the MIACO meeting.

Industry scientific data

On the topic of the inclusion of industry data, Mark Dickey-Collas reminded participants that the inclusion of data for advices required a benchmark. This is a heavy procedure, but it is worth it. He signalled that some companies are undertaking work on by-catch data in a very thorough manner

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

but that they are not willing to share this data yet. He advised them to “really have a deep think on when do they want to bring it forward”.

Taking climate change into account in ICES processes

NWWAC raised the question of the taking into account of climate change in ICES and on the way ACs could be helpful regarding it. Mark Dickey-Collas explained that the EU gave funding for two big projects on climate change: CERES and CLIMEFISH. ICES is part of CLIMEFISH which is having a big symposium in FAO later this year. CERES also interacts with ICES. These projects are quite well integrated into ICES, and their final conclusions will be taken into account when available. ICES is also running a review audit process to see which WGs are considering ecosystem changes. This will show the best practises and where ICES stands right now. Later on, a workshop on reference points in a changing environment including changes in MSY, climate change, and species interaction will be on the agenda. Climate change also influences distribution of species. The issue here is double. First, with Brexit, the whole concept of zonal attachment is politically toxic. Second, is that this is also linked to productivity changes. Solutions for changes in distribution are much more related to the managing side. Finally, Mark Dickey-Collas will take part in the Project SNAP (a US NGO project) with 3 meetings on a period of 18 months. It will look at future challenges for fisheries and surely address the issue of climate change.

ICES Socio-economic WG

The NWWAC and LDAC asked a question regarding progress made by the ICES Working Group on Economics. It was already on the agenda last year. Mark Dickey-Collas explained that obtaining local community data was important. Simon Jennings’ answer was that in both fisheries and conservation science, there has been a shift in the way people were apprehended in relation to nature and science. The paradigm was now more around integration of the different components. It seemed inconceivable for him that ICES does not lead on the people-nature perspective. The focus on socioeconomics is broad and growing in the organisation. A lot of people in ICES are also involved in STECF and they do not want to replicate the process that takes place there. The economics group is running well but is still in its early years. The social part is more complicated, the inclusion of both sociologist and anthropologist has made it at first difficult to find the exact scope. The timeline in terms of concrete output will come later.

Stakeholder engagement

NSAC asked about the development of an engagement strategy with stakeholders by ICES. Mark Dickey-Collas explained that the formal strategy for engagement of ICES will be discussed and further developed in March at ACOM. Part of the ICES staff thought that ICES jumped a bit quickly and in a naive way on to stakeholder engagement. ACOM will need to agree on a strategy to formalise this. Such strategy will need to take into account the stakeholder’s advice and the social scientists remarks too. An issue was to find funding for the work of social scientists on this. NSAC NGO, Irene Kingma, pointed at the difficulty to have scientific involvement in the NSAC meetings. Colm Lordan answered that a lot came down to the national scientific institutes. Getting them to provide some scientific input to the ACs and to commit to the issue of interest of stakeholders was needed. Jesper Raakjaer from PELAC echoed what other ACs said on the topic. Further collaboration is needed with scientists.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

It is important for both sides to understand better the results. LDAC triggered the question of the integration of authors names in the ICES reports, asking what where the pros and cons of this. Mark Dickey-Collas answered that some countries were very much against stakeholder engagement that would be seen as "contaminating the science". The same people also asked for authorship of reports to be made clear. The bureau of ICES is split on this. Looking at the United-States or Canada brings another perspective on this. There, stakeholders are present in the assessment groups. A fisheries industry NSAC member pointed out that this stakeholder engagement strategy will have to formalise what is already happening. It was then proposed, that after March 2020 ACOM, ACs secretariats should coordinate and list the actions they actually take in the context of stakeholder engagement with ICES.

The meeting will be chaired and organized by the NSAC next year.

MIACO MEETING (16-17 JANUARY 2020, COPENHAGEN)

Suggested dates for MIACO 2021 – 14-15 January 2021.

A brief review of the past year's work (single stock advices, ecosystem impact, ecosystem overviews, fisheries overviews, special requests, technical services, viewpoints, benchmarks) was given by ICES. The need to ask for realistic deadline from requesters of Management Strategies Evaluations (MSE) was highlighted. The expert community resources are also low on some topics which creates complications for some advices (specifically on MSEs, where technical expertise is missing). National fisheries research institutes of MS should be at the forefront to address this.

The new Advisory Plan was then presented. The Advisory Plan is there to keep ICES advices resilient for future challenges. This document is geared toward the outcomes and for internal and external audiences. A strategic plan and scientific plan are also available alongside it. The key message is that advices support ecosystem-based decision making in seas and oceans. ICES priority areas are presented. The primary priority is to ensure **quality assurance from data collection to advice formulation**. It is also a key point of the agenda of the meeting. Other priorities include **sharing evidence** (including dialogue with partners), **incorporating innovation** (new knowledge in the advisory process, showing people how to bring this new knowledge in), **evolving advice** (in relation with the growing complexity of the marine management areas, including broader policy objectives), and others (highlighting benefit, identify needs). It is available at the following address: https://issuu.com/icesdk/docs/ices_advisory_plan.

Assuring Quality: data and advice

ICES reminded participants about the processes already in place (experts group audit, independence of reviewer, frameworks and guidelines), and the culture of accountability and transparency it is striving for. The quality assurance repository page is presenting this.

The plans for quality control of ICES housed **data** was explained to MIACO. This will include progress towards accreditation (work will be undertaken with the accreditation body Core Trust Seal), TAF (The Transparency Assessment Framework will allow to detail the process flows of ICES advices),

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

RDBES (the new data base will allow to have only one comprehensible data call, new outputs will also be made available), quality control of aging and biological sampling, improvement to survey databases. These measures had been validated and budgeted on a 5-year plan. A quality control point had been identified at the level of the data sent by member countries (in addition to the check that might already be in place at their level).

Sean O'Donoghue from PELAC praised the work undertaken by ICES on this topic and the progress already made. He pointed out that the accreditation system will need to span down to the **member countries** level, requiring them to also obtain such **accreditation**. Not doing so would still expose the system to a level of risk. Colm Lordan answered that ICES wanted to lead on this and that some national research institutes were already accredited. For the other, it will be a challenge and their accreditation could come in a second time. Sean O'Donoghue answered that a critical control point should then be signalled until they gain accreditation.

Another question was around the **critical control point**. Colm Lordan explained that it was ICES's intention to identify all of them for each stock. He added that this could start with the Celtic Sea stocks.

Finally, the importance of testing the system by feeding-in wrong information and then assess its robustness was raised. ICES answered that this might not be possible as a certain number of uncertainties will always be in the system. It represented a huge challenge, along with some kind of data that might never be creditable (such as the log-book data).

The EC pointed at the data collection framework, guiding member states on data collection. The EU is pro-active on checking that this guidance is really implemented. Each year each member state is evaluated in the way it gathered this data and this is reported back to STECF and the EC.

Quality assurance of advice was then tackled. This is ICES main priority, laid down in the Advisory Plan. Seeking accreditation for advice will take a significant number of additional years but the quality assurance framework will be enhanced. The idea of **creating a partnership between ICES and the stakeholders** in order to explore the issue, look at retrospective inconsistencies, and develop a quality assessment framework for the entire advisory process was advanced. The partners (including MIRIAC and MIACO participants) would need to meet before the end of next year in a workshop to start the journey.

This proposal was welcomed by stakeholders who also were willing to speed up this process and use the momentum created.

Mark Dickey-Collas presented the changes in the category of single-stock assessments. More stocks were classified as category one. Categories 5 and 6 remained challenges and it might be the time to look at the ICES approach for those stocks. It is not an objective for ACOM to have all stock as categories one stocks. Category one stocks advices are at 96% in line with MSY and Management Plan. A new process for MSY advice for category 3 stocks will soon be in place. New in 2020 will be that ICES will also report to the EC for each stock, explaining why MS is advised or why it isn't. The corrections of advices that occurred in the past year were also presented. These were caused because of coding error, recreational catches being taken into account in different ways, error in

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

calculation index of stock development index, and intermediate year assumption. Not all stocks were yet available in the Transparency Assessment Framework (TAF), but more were each year.

Advice evolution

Mark Dickey-Collas presented the changes ongoing in the fisheries world. The benefits of increased management intensity, the links that are created with biodiversity conservation, and the importance of broader political agendas: CBD, BBNJ, Climate change and ocean acidification, SDGs and Blue Economy. A direct consequence is an increased complexity with high stakes. Fisheries stakeholders will need to engage in those forums.

ICES is taking part in discussions around biodiversity and conservation. For instance, drawing a list for DG ENVI of the 30 human MSDF listed impact on sea-floor structure and function of ecosystems. ICES also gave advice on interactions of fisheries and the ecosystem in the Baltic Sea.

The participants were invited to reflect on questions around the diversity of management objectives, agendas and player and how to ensure consistency and less sectoral independence. Identification, engagement, communication were quoted as way forwards on this.

Engagement with stakeholders

ICES is increasingly using stakeholder workshops to explore knowledge gaps and appropriateness of methods for management, (WKIRISH, Baltic cod, WKRRMAC, deep sea access regulation, Baltic mixfish, Baltic salmon management plan). MIACO participants were asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the approach taken to engaging with managers and stakeholders through ICES workshops.

While some stakeholders pointed at the risk of losing independence and credibility if the engagement framework was not well defined (need for full transparency on the invited experts affiliation), other pointed at the existing rules regarding transparency and the code of conducts that were in place. Some stakeholders signalled that stakeholder engagement was in fact a guarantee for more credibility thanks to the real-world proof check it puts in place.

Further discussion took place later under agenda point *Commercially collected data & stakeholder information*.

Changes in the advices' frameworks

The regional seas conventions and a number of advice requesters are expecting greater progress from ICES on the reporting and **advising of bycatch in fisheries**. ICES is developing a bycatch roadmap to make tangible progress. This roadmap was presented to participants.

The importance to agree on a definition of bycatch and of taking into account recreational fisheries was then discussed. ICES signalled its intention to draw a list of species that need to be monitored because they have showed some decline.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

For a number of years, ICES has been developing a **framework for ecosystem advice**. The ecosystem advice exists in order to determine management objectives, develop knowledge, transfer knowledge, communicate, and re-evaluate. This year, WKCIFRAME will work on the scope of the ecosystem advice framework, the elements to be included, and the identification of key priorities. ICES will hold a dialogue meeting on ecosystem advice in Brussels in early 2021.

Goncalo Carvalho from the PELAC emphasised the need for ecosystem advices and pointed out that stakeholders have been working on the topic for a number of years (including through PELAC's focus group on the topic). Sean O'Donoghue agreed and added that ICES needs to be a facilitator and enabler in the dialogue meeting rather than a decision maker here.

The current coverage and the future direction for **ecosystem overviews** were presented to MIACO. 9 of them were already available and 2 new ones were coming up. The updates for Celtic Sea and Norwegian Sea are also been worked on. For **fisheries overview**, 7 were already published and 4 were in development. Continuous update was provided. Mixed fisheries advices were now included in the fisheries overview. This was problematic because the publication date in November didn't allow decision makers to use it properly. **WKMIXFISH** will take place in March (same date as PELAC meeting) and will be prioritizing stakeholder needs and make the advice easier to understand. It is **possible to feed in the workshop by sending documents to ICES and the chair ahead of it**. A method workshop in June 22-26 in Nantes, France. Finally, new **aquaculture overviews** were in development.

ICES signalled that the basis of advice for non-target stocks in the EU MAPs will change in 2020, moving from precautionary considerations to MSY targets.

Commercially collected data & stakeholder information

ICES has begun developing methods with industry to ensure the quality and consistency of commercially derived data. This links the outputs of WKRRMAC and WKSCINDI. It also has clarified how in the short-term information from the industry can be brought into assessments and forecasts. **WKSCINDI workshop recommended** (1) to establish standard and guideline for industry data collection initiative, quality process and pathway to making the data useful for ICES. A series of workshop will follow, starting in June 2020; (2) to evaluate the utility of self-sampling data from industry for enhancing knowledge and providing data for stock assessment; (3) to provide a test case for the RDBE; (4) to consider specific application of industry derived data. By getting some data rightly in, it will be easier to convince other assessors of the importance of including stakeholder data. WKRRMAC workshop was followed by a WebEx organised at the end of 2019. It focused on QA and the need to address the increased contribution of industry sampling, assess the relevance and need for fisheries independent surveys, funding and resources. There is work ongoing in the PELAC, looking for experts for working on acoustic, the member states and EC have been informed.

Stakeholder information in the advice sheet has continued to be contentious in 2019. Experts groups have requested to get the information earlier. It is partly linked to QA. ICES stated that it had full **ownership** of the advice sheet and therefore of the stakeholder information section too.

ICES explained that this was in place to inform dialogue but perceived that the section is not working as it should. A commitment to find a solution in this was reiterated. Moving toward a more formal

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

process and communicating the stakeholders' information to experts' groups ahead is also needed. ACOM had come up with a change in the guidance for experts' group, bullet 2 include now that stakeholder information will need to be transferred to the expert's groups ahead of the meeting.

Sean O'Donoghue explained that it was the 4th or 5th time that this is brought to MIACO. Each time reporting seemed to have been unclear. A few issues remain to be addressed. In its original form, the stakeholder information was unquantifiable information from the industry. It has been recognised in that the stakeholder information could have been useful to prevent the changes/mistakes in some advices. As this is non quantifiable information (sometimes not at all dealt with in the advice such as stock identity and genetic work), the interest for the expert group will be very limited. On the other hand, if this information comes at ADG it might make more sense. Regarding the quantifiable information (industry surveys), it has its full place in the expert group.

An additional issue was the occurrence of substantial changes in the stakeholder information that occurred with Celtic Sea Herring a couple of years ago. If the stakeholder information is to be changed, the authors should be informed and given the opportunity to withdraw their comment.

ICES representatives thought that sense checking had to occur at the WG level. They explained that ACOM would like to form a **small informal group for looking at mechanisms to include this sense checking**. This group would include ICES and interested stakeholders. Regarding this no decision could be taken before ACOM in March. Finally, the issue of stakeholder information change did not occur in the last year.

Sean O'Donoghue welcomed this proposal but warned that a similar one had been made some years ago and was very time consuming. A WebEx could be convened ahead of the expert group of course and a sense checking at the working group would indeed make sense. Additionally, PELAC stakeholder felt that there was an issue in the consideration of the non-quantifiable information representativeness. Geographic details and origin of the information are specified by stakeholders.

Transparency in the advice generation process

The PELAC asked to explore the possibilities to discuss the advice generation process and the formulation of the request to ICES. This issue was deemed more relevant to be discussed with the EC DG MARE unit1. ICES also added that the MSE process is open in terms of getting input. For MSEs, at the end of the process, there is a check in with the recipient to make sure that all scenarios are covered.

Stock category changes

PELAC stakeholder raised the question of changes in category of stock advices. There was an issue with category 3 stocks that seemed to never be able to have an increased F. ICES explained that it was revising the way it treated category 3 stocks in relation to MSY.

Regarding stock category change, there were no clear criteria, the experts decided on this depending on the quality of the assessment based on their knowledge.

Finally, the possibility to distinguish between stocks' quality within one category was not something made available now. ICES was reflecting on this as it was working on stock categories.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

RE-IMAGINING FISHING GEAR IN A CIRCULAR ECONOMY WORKSHOP (28 JANUARY 2020, BRUSSELS)

The workshop was organized by the PELAC, NSAC, NWWAC, and BSAC. It aimed at building on the conclusions from the NWWAC/MAC workshop on Plastics and the Seafood Supply Chain and to bring together members of all the relevant ACs with experts and scientists to explore in detail the impact of the requirements of the SUP Directive and the Port Facilities Directive on the fishing sector.

The Workshop focused specifically on the gear component of the legislation to provide a joint clear understanding of the preconditions, possibilities and impossibilities of gear recycling, a clear description of the complex situation and possibilities and solutions for the problems, and a classification of plastics used in fishing gear.

The workshop first stage a series of short presentations by experts in the field. All parts of gears life cycle were touched upon from design, to legislation, and recycling to monitoring. Expertise was provided from the perspective of recycling experts, gear manufacturers, fishers representatives, researchers, and environmental NGOs. This was followed by a plenary session on defining gears.

In a second time, the participants were divided into 3 groups to foster discussion on 3 different subjects: Designing of gear, monitoring gears, and collecting and disposing gears. Discussions conclusions were then presented to all participants.

A representative from the Commission DG MARE explained that this was a great event and was delighted to see that so many stakeholders were keen to work on this issue and that their existed numerous promising innovations in the sector.

Stakeholder led information & conclusions will form the basis of an advice to DG MARE to be prepared by summer 2020.

The full report of the meeting can be found [here](#).

SCHEVENINGEN GROUP TECHNICAL GROUP (29 JANUARY 2020, GHENT)

PELAC representative: Irene Kingma (covering both NSAC and PELAC).

Chair of the Scheveningen group: Dirk van Guyse – Flemish ministry, Fisheries department (quota & Eu-Norway)

Brexit: Scheveningen group received a notice from the EC that as of Feb 1st all UK participation will need to end (including all mail).

Scheveningen group work for first half of 2020

1: JR 2021 scope:

- Scheveningen- group do not ask specifics of the ACs at this time but want the AC to flag anything the ACs want changed. A request was made by NSAC or an early sight of the groups comments with specific regard to changes.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

- Technicalities of exemptions need to be looked into, Denmark talked about mesh sizes or gear types overlooked in current exemptions
- Want to prevent messy situation we had last year with all the work in August
- Mid-March the text has to be ready, timeline for the ACs will be taken into consideration

JR pelagic expires Dec 2020 so there will have to be a new one, the new plan can introduce certain technical measures, asks AC for input on that.

IK invited Schev group to attend PELAC meeting in March and NSAC meetings in Feb and April.

The group has asked the AC to help with an interim report on skates and rays, IK replied the NSAC is discussing with the NWWAC and the Sumaris group on how to take this forward

2 – EU-Norway process on cod

- Technical working group with reps from EU and Norway met for the 1st time to identify data to be used on the 18th of December, second phase of meetings held in London on 20th and 21st January.
- 110pg doc distributed by Norway yesterday to attendees of the meetings the Scheveningen group follows the work of the group
- Next meeting on the 3rd of Feb, will be policy oriented, they will try to narrow down policy choices at that meeting.
- There is no stakeholder process in the EU-Norway although industry scientists attended the meetings in London

3 – technical measures on directed/targeted fisheries

- Has to be introduced by the 15th of August, 1st of August deadline for Belgium
- So same timeline as JR for discard plans
- Scheveningen group still has no definition of directed fisheries have asked the commission for definition but no reply

Action point: secretariats to email dates of AC meetings with invites to Scheveningen group.

NORTH WESTERN WATERS TECHNICAL GROUP (6 FEBRUARY 2020, VIDEO-CONFERENCE)

PELAC representative: Sean O'Donoghue.

Sean O'Donoghue represented the PELAC on a teleconference for one hour with NWWMS TG on the 6th February 2020 in relation to Pelagic Discard Plan.

General Issues

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

1. When discussing the new Joint Recommendations on the Discard Plan, MS (Chair) pointed out that their proposal is most likely not going to include new exemptions, but is rather going to focus on providing information in support of the exemptions in place and on potentially extending them to other areas.
2. Another important general issue mentioned by the Commission was that the discard plans expire at the end of 2020 in accordance with the article 15 of the CFP. They suggested the discards plans should be considered under the Muti Annual Plan (MAP) for NWW.
3. Chair stated that they did not envisage any significant changes to either the demersal or pelagic discards plans.
4. The Chair highlighted that the discards plans had to be submitted to the Commission by the 1st May 2020.

Specific Pelagic Issues

The PELAC mentioned the following list of issues:

1. The Landing Obligation Workshop on the 5th March in the Hague
2. The PELAC highlighted again the need for uniformity across the three regional groups and that the PELAC had asked on numerous occasions for one informal group to deal with the widely distributed pelagic stocks.
3. That the PELAC had made numerous landing obligation recommendations since 2013 but very few of these had been taken on board.
4. That the PELAC did envisage changes to the pelagic discard plans and that the PELAC would revert to the NWWMS Group after Landing Obligation Workshop. This was noted by the Chair.

NORTH WESTERN WATERS HIGH LEVEL GROUP (10 MARCH 2020, VIDEO-CONFERENCE)

PELAC representative: Sean O'Donoghue.

The PELAC attended the NWW HLG meeting on the 10th March 2020 via teleconference. One hour was dedicated for ACs input from 12.30pm to 1.30pm. The PELAC informed the meeting that it had agreed on a set of recommendations on the revision of the Pelagic Discard Plans the previous week on 4th March at the PELAC EXCOM and that these recommendations would be sent to NWW HLG shortly.

The PELAC briefly went through the recommendations as set out below and as agreed at EXCOM. There were no questions from the HLG. The Chair noted the recommendations and looked forward to receiving the written confirmation.

- Uniformity
- Pelagic sub group to deal with pelagic discard plans
- De minimis exemptions:
- De minimis % to apply upon landing the catch
- Classification of high risk vessels

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

- Monitor use of de minimis exemptions and record all data
- Include control elements in pelagic discard plans
- Support existing de minimis exemptions but point out the specific nature of the vessels and areas
- Include control and enforcement of de-minimis exemptions into the discard plans
- Seek clarity for demersal and pelagic zero catch options
- Implications for 3 Pelagic Discard Plans post Brexit

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL COSTS

Please remember that the secretariat has to receive your reimbursement claims within 1 month after the meeting by post or email including copies of all receipts. Reimbursement sheets received after the deadline will not be taken into account. If you cannot meet the deadline, please inform us as soon as possible. To find out more about reimbursement rules please consult the PELAC's "Rules of procedure" or contact the secretariat.

<https://www.pelagic-ac.org/aboutus>

UPCOMING MEETINGS

ADJUSTMENTS FUTURE MEETINGS DUE TO COVID-19:

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, it was necessary to make some modifications to the scheduled PELAC meetings:

- **2 June - Working Group I and II and Executive Committee meetings:** this meeting has been **cancelled**
- **3 June – WHOM FG:** this meeting has been **changed** to an **online** meeting on **Monday 25 May** 14.00 hrs CET
- **3 June – Control FG:** this meeting will be organised **online** on an alternative date (t.b.c.)
- **9 and 10 July - Working Group I and II and Executive Committee meetings:** the dates for this meeting will remain in place but the secretariat will look into suitable tools to conduct the meeting **online**
- **7 and 8 October - Working Group I and II, General Assembly and Executive Committee meetings:** the dates for this meeting will remain in place but the meeting venue has been **changed** from Paris to **the Netherlands**
- **Ecosystem FG:** a date for an online meeting will soon be set, further information will follow on short notice

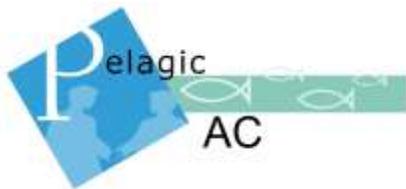
For more information please visit our website:

<https://www.pelagic-ac.org/pracmeetings/upcomingmeetings>

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