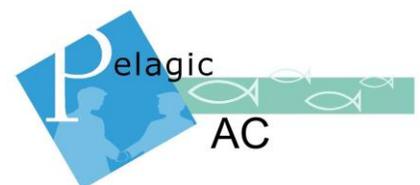




# PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 2/2017

April-June 2017



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# PELAC MEETINGS

## **6A & 7BC HERRING MEETING (24 APRIL 2017, DUBLIN)**

The focus group on herring met to discuss a draft rebuilding plan for herring in area 6a and 7bc which was later presented to Working Group II of the Pelagic AC. The final survey results of the industry acoustic surveys were presented as well and a number of issues discussed regarding the timing and location of this year's surveys. An update was provided on the progress made using genetic methods to differentiate between the two herring stocks in the area. Another focus group meeting will likely be scheduled in the autumn.

## **WORKING GROUP I MEETING (25 APRIL 2017, DUBLIN)**

During the meeting there was a presentation on the dynamics of catch and distribution of herring and mackerel in the North Sea which showed that mackerel abundance seems to have increased. There was a shift in Danish catches from the Norwegian trench to Northwest UK waters. The most important fishing grounds are now off the coast of the UK, but that has not always been the case. Herring is caught where it is most abundant, mackerel is not, but IBTS data should be interpreted with care for pelagic species.

A presentation was also provided on the outcome of the benchmark for North Sea horse mackerel. Despite a call for additional discard data, none had been received. The benchmark itself focused on developing a stock abundance index from industry data. However, additional analysis will be required to incorporate this potentially useful data within an assessment framework. Groundfish survey data were also revisited and in the end two indices have been developed: one for juveniles and for ages 1, 2 and 3. These indices show that recently there has been strong recruitment, but it was too early to draw firm conclusions.

Furthermore, it was decided to have a blue whiting focus group and a workshop on minimum conservation reference sizes (MCRS) on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June.

## **WORKING GROUP II MEETING (25 APRIL 2017, DUBLIN)**

A rebuilding plan for herring in 6a and 7bc was presented to the Working Group which subsequently endorsed the plan to be submitted to the Executive Committee. One of the focus points of the rebuilding plan is a scientific monitoring TAC that will allow continuous data collection to improve the knowledge base of the stock and eventually lead to two separate assessments again.

A brief update was also provided on the herring genetics project which is well underway. Marker development has been completed and in the next step the genetic samples collected from different areas and in different years will be screened to confirm whether the markers can be used to differentiate the different stocks.

The results of the mackerel benchmark were also presented. The SAM model has been developed further to improve model performance and diagnostics and to allow the incorporation of new data,

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e.g. RFID tagging data. Other data were updated and reviewed, e.g. the swept area survey and the egg survey.

Biomass reference points have also been calculated and revised. However, there was not enough time to deal with mortality reference points, because they rely on long-term simulations and it was suggested to deal with that at the upcoming management strategy evaluation.

The results of the benchmark for Western horse mackerel were also discussed. Due to the difficulties with the stock dynamics (e.g. pulse recruitment, indeterminate spawning) it was decided to use a new stock assessment model which is more flexible in terms of incorporating new data sources. This allowed to include total landings, numbers at length and catch at age from the commercial catch with the PG extended to 15+ from 11+. The egg survey has been included from 1992 onwards as well as a recruitment index derived from groundfish surveys. Biomass estimates, number at length and conditional age at length from French and Spanish acoustic surveys have also been included. Also the new model estimates stock size to be low. However, there are some indications that new recruitment is coming in. Reference points have also been looked at and  $F_{msy}$  was revised slightly.  $B_{lim}$  has been set to 662 kt and corresponds to the lowest observed biomass.  $B_{pa}$  is based on  $B_{lim}$  and takes into account assessment uncertainty. Its value is 912 kt. In response to the benchmark results and to deal with a possible seasonal closure it was decided to convene the focus group again at the end of June.

The final issues that were dealt with during the meeting were amendments to the NWW and SWW pelagic discard plan. The Working Group decided to recommend a roll-over de minimis to the Executive Committee including a small extension to cover both PTM and OTM gear in the Channel targeting mackerel, horse mackerel and herring. There also was a discussion on the current high survival exemption, but it was concluded to collect some more information in this regard.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (25 APRIL 2017, DUBLIN)**

The Executive Committee meeting discussed the draft delegated act on the re-allocation of EMFF funds. There was unanimous agreement that decreasing the budget for scientific advice was unacceptable from a Pelagic AC point of view and people did not agree to the proposed shift of funds from the CFP to the IMP. It was agreed to submit a letter to the Commission outlining these concerns.

Subsequently, there was a presentation by a representative of the company SARIA which uses fish by-products and turns them into fish proteins and fish oils for the pet food industry, the feed industry and aquaculture. The presentation provided an overview of the different products and the logistics of the by-product collection processes.

Finally, a number of recommendations from Working Group II in regards to amending the discard plans in the NWW and SWW were reflected on and approved.

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## **BLUE WHITING FOCUS GROUP (6 JUNE 2017, THE HAGUE)**

A set of draft Terms of Reference for the blue whiting focus group were discussed at the beginning of the meeting. The main issues to be addressed by the focus group was how to convince Coastal States to take up the two tier management strategy developed by the Pelagic AC in 2012 and how to improve the scientific assessment and survey of the stock.

To do so it was decided to liaise with relevant ICES working groups, such as the ones dealing with acoustics and surveys. It was also agreed to contact Dankert Skagen and ask him whether he could provide an update on his simulations taking into account any relevant changes that have occurred since 2012. A preliminary date for the next focus group meeting had been scheduled, conditional upon the availability of relevant experts.

## **MCRS WORKSHOP (6 JUNE 2017, THE HAGUE)**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June the Pelagic AC organized a workshop on minimum conservation reference sizes (MCRS). Speakers from science and market organizations provided their insights on the difference between marketing standards and MCRS, the history of MCRS, the science behind MCRS and the relationship between MCRS and gear selectivity.

Following an open debate a number two main conclusions were drawn from the workshop:

1. MCRS and marketing sizes should be aligned.
2. The current MCRS values have to be scrutinized since the justification for many of them seems out of date or is not available in the first place.
3. A case by case approach based on scientific evidence should be followed when deciding on (changes to) MCRS.

All detailed meeting minutes can be downloaded from the PELAC website:  
<http://www.pelagic-ac.org/2017>

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

## **SCHEVENINGEN GROUP MEETING (12 APRIL 2017, THE HAGUE)**

PELAC participants: Gerard van Balsfoort, Verena Ohms

During the meeting it was explained that both the Council and the Parliament viewed discard plans as an instrument to fill the legal gap until multiannual plans have been developed and implemented and that therefore there should be a second round of discard plans. The Commission had a different view, but would only discuss this issue further once it has received joint recommendations from the regional groups and the official positions from the Council and Parliament.

In light of these developments the Scheveningen Group decided to continue working on a new joint recommendation for a pelagic and demersal discard plan.

The Pelagic AC representatives reflected on recent discussions within the Pelagic AC and pointed out that one of the main problems was proper communication with the regional groups. Agendas, meeting invitations and draft documents were often sent out too late, if at all and there was a general feeling that the regional groups did not take the recommendations from the Pelagic AC seriously. In 2014 the Pelagic AC had submitted a substantial document on how the landing obligation could be facilitated in pelagic fisheries. One option was to include a de minimis exemption. However, none of the exemptions recommended by the Pelagic AC were taken over. Control and collaboration with the control expert groups and EFCA was another important issue for the Pelagic AC and a report had been submitted to the Scheveningen Group previously addressing the issue. Using gramme sizes as a control tool was one of the recommendations from the Pelagic AC and EFCA was currently running a project looking into this option. However, the regional groups did not seem willing to consider this as a control tool.

Another recent recommendation from the Pelagic AC considered the use of footnotes to mitigate some of the problems encountered due to the landing obligation. Unlike the inter-species flexibility the use of footnotes would not be discretionary to the Member States, but regulated through the TAC and Quota Regulation. The levels suggested were considerably smaller than the level for inter-species flexibility. Unfortunately, not all Member States liked the idea and instead of agreeing on a set of further footnotes, there was a statement from the Council and the Commission in which Member States committed to submit relevant data for assessment by ICES. The Pelagic AC representatives wanted to know how much progress has been made in this regard.

They also pointed out that having to deal with three regional groups was not only straining resources, but did not make any sense from a pelagic point of view. Most of the pelagic fleets were fishing in all of the areas and the stocks did not recognize any borders. It was important to the fishermen that the rules were the same across the areas, to ensure a level-playing field and avoid confusion. Given the Member States strong reluctance to have a regional subgroup dealing exclusively with pelagics, the Pelagic AC representatives instead suggested to have an annual coordination meeting with all relevant regional groups and the Pelagic AC where the work programs would be shared and discussed. Having such a meeting would greatly enhance transparency and clarify expectations.

The chair of the Scheveningen Group recalled that there had been discussions among the regional groups regarding the establishment of a pelagic subgroup. However, Member States were generally

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against the idea. Nevertheless, having an annual meeting as suggested could be a good way forward and it was concluded that the Pelagic AC will set up such an annual meeting and invite the chairs of the regional groups to attend.

The Scheveningen Group also promised to ask the control expert group to include gramme size collection in its considerations. Regarding the footnotes vs de minimis it was pointed out that at the beginning Member States had been very reluctant to grant any de minimis exemptions, because the pelagic landing obligation was a first trial. There might be more room now to consider de minimis exemptions, but that had to be discussed in more detail internally.

The Commission added that almost none of the Member States had delivered the information required to underpin the use of footnotes. Therefore, the discussion of this topic was delayed.

### **ADG BALTIC SEA (8-11 MAY 2017, COPENHAGEN)**

PELAC representatives: Ian Gatt, Lise Laustsen

#### **North Sea herring**

The headline TAC advice of no more than 517,819t, including 491,355t for the A fleet, is based on the EU/Norway 2015 management strategy. For the A fleet this represents a 15% TAC increase in relation to the 2016 ICES advice. However, managers chose to use the Fmsy catch option for setting the 2017 TAC, given that the reference points had been re-estimated following the revision of the natural mortality time series. Comparing the actual 2017 TAC level against the 2018 ICES advice results in the A fleet gaining 2% additional fishing opportunity in 2018. One other scenario to consider is that the EU/Norway managers might again choose to use Fmsy as the basis for 2018 TAC setting. In that case the A fleet would have an additional 25% TAC increase. ICES also continue to advise that activities that have a negative impact on herring spawning grounds should not occur.

ICES advised last year the 2014 recruitment had been good, this has now been reassessed with the result that the recruitment is significantly stronger than anticipated. This is the main driver behind the increased SSB level. However, 2015 continues to be assessed as very poor as is 2017, albeit assessed by only one data point. 2016 recruitment looks to be quite good. SSB has been above the MSY trigger point since 2009, and fishing mortality has been below Fmsy since 1996.

PELAC observers asked for the following text to be included in the advice, which has been incorporated. "During 2017, the Pelagic Advisory Council is planning to gather relevant information on herring spawning habitats and on the marine anthropogenic activity in those areas (e.g. marine aggregates (e.g. gravel and sand), bottom trawling and construction for the marine renewable industry)".

A benchmark exercise is scheduled for this stock in 2018 at which point reference points will be reassessed again. The group were informed that HAWG would not be in a position to provide new management strategy advice to managers until after the completion of the benchmark.

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## **Herring 3.a and Subdivisions 20-24**

The headline TAC advice of no more than 34,618t, is based on the MSY approach. The advice applies to the catch of western Baltic spring spawners and the eastern part of Subarea 4. Although there is an agreed EU Baltic Sea multi-annual plan in place ICES use the MSY approach as this a shared stock with Norway. Norway has not signed up to the Baltic multi-annual plan. Catch options relating to the EU Baltic plan are set out in the advice. If this advice is followed it will result in a significant 39% TAC decrease.

The spawning-stock biomass (SSB) reached the lowest point in the time-series in 2011 and it has fluctuated between Blim and Bpa in following years. Fishing mortality was at its historical low below FMSY in 2014. F has increased in 2015 and 2016, and is now above FMSY. The stock remains in a low production period, and recruitment was at record low in 2015 and 2016.

HAWG considers the stock to be in a poor state despite the 50% transfer from the North Sea. Some scientists believe the ICES advice is too complex and has led to inefficient management driving the stock biomass down.

Under issues relevant to the advice the ADG believed that the agreed TAC setting procedure for herring in Division 3.a results in a higher than expected F in relation to the 2018 ICES MSY approach. The status quo scenario remains that foresees transfers of up to 50% of TAC from Division 3.a to Subarea 4. This transfer will also increase the pressure on NS herring above the F intended by the EU–Norway management strategy. As the NS and WBSS stock biomass trends are going in opposite directions, the TAC setting procedure for herring in Division 3.a should be revisited.

A benchmark is planned for this stock next year, with preparatory work beginning by the end of 2017. Apparently there too many surveys producing conflicting data which needs to be resolved. Reference points will also be revisited with the general perception being that they are currently too high.

## **SEMINAR ON THE 5-YEAR INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE EFCA (20 JUNE 2017, VIGO)**

PELAC representative: José Beltran

The meeting was opened by Reinhard Priebe (Chair of the Administrative Board (AB) of EFCA) and followed by the EFCA Director, Pascal Savouret.

### **Presentation of main evaluation findings. (Roland Blomeyer and Mike Beke)**

The independent auditors presented step by step an evaluation of the activities and work carried out by the Control Agency during the years 2012-2016.

Since the last evaluation EFCA objectives in general contributed to the sustainable exploitation of living aquatic resources as well as ensuring a level playing field for the fishing industry. EFCA supported Member States (MS) to enhance control and fight IUU, assisted MS and the European Commission (EC) in harmonizing the application of the CFP, helped with research and development

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of control and inspection techniques, capacity building etc. Regarding the period 2012-2016 new objectives were introduced to develop new rules and laws. This is an example of the new requirements: Cooperate at the request of the EC, with competent authorities of third countries in matters relating to control and inspection in the framework of agreements concluded between the EU and such countries or RFMOs; assist MS in the implementation of the CFP reform; Cooperate with the European Border and Coast guard Agency and the European Maritime Safety Agency.

Other EFCA activities evaluated were: organisation of operational coordination of control activities by MS, establishing JDPs and operational plans; provision of training activities for Union inspectors; development and publication of training material for trainers of fisheries inspectors and Union inspectors; support the EU in the international dimension of the CFP and the fight against IUU activities; development, maintenance and support of an integrated fisheries information system; implementation of horizontal projects with MS and the EC to promote the level playing field in the areas of the LO, administrative cooperation, risk analysis, coordination of control means, compliance trends and cost-effectiveness; capacity building support to third countries in the framework of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements.

### **Findings**

There are 26 recommendations in the last five years evaluation report. The AB issued 22 of the 26, and organised a systematic follow-up process.

#### *Relevance:*

The relationship between the needs and problems in society and the objectives of the intervention were discussed. Focusing on EU policy and MS needs and problems. Also, the evaluation looked at new EFCA activities (new technologies for Maritime Surveillance, Common Information Sharing Environment, Union Inspectors, Compliance, LO, IUU mission in Third Countries and Capacity Building, Core curricula for inspectors, Fisheries Information System, JDPs).

#### *Coherence:*

The approach has been to review to what extent the EFCA activities correspond with objectives, and to what extent EFCA activities and objectives complement those of other relevant actors. For that, evaluation questions were addressed on the basis of desk research, interviews with AB /ADVB members, EFCA staff, international organisations (FAO and RFMOs), and survey feedback from the AB.

#### *Utility:*

To determine the utility of EFCA's work. (development of the Core Curricula for inspectors, IUU Regulation, training and tools, Implementing LO for Fisheries).

#### *Added value:*

To determine the extent to which attributing tasks and responsibilities to the Agency adds value compared to other possible options. (Expertise and coordination for fisheries control, breaking patterns of non-compliance with limited capacity for control and consequences, JDPs as a flagship activity, Limited AD-EFCA-AB interaction).

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## **Efficiency**

### *Findings:*

Budget structure, governance arrangements, improving practices, systems and processes, cost effectiveness, common approach.

### *Effectiveness:*

Cooperation, JDPS and regional cooperation activities, Capacity building activities.

### *Impact:*

Uniform application of the CFP, improvement of MS in CFP enforcement, facilitate inspection standards and harmonisation.

### *Sustainability:*

LO implementation support. Different areas and fisheries.

### *Gender:*

Balanced objectives.

### *Recommendations:*

Follow-up on the last evaluation, Maintain AB agenda point on working practices.

Another speaker from the Danish AgriFish Agency, talked about the structure and organisation of EFCA, tasks and working practices of the AB, interaction within EFCA (governance arrangements), and EFCA's external relations.

Miguel Guismao, head of Corporate Governance Service – EU Intellectual Property Office, made a presentation focusing on the Shared Services between EUIPO / EFCA and Richard Ares, EU affairs Strategic Advisor, commented on the interrelation activities and cooperation between AMSA – AFCA-FRONTEX.

The Second Session was introduced by Kim Stobberup (Blomeyer & Sanz), and Pedro Galache (EFCA). The issue, "EU Waters, Case study on LO and on CC and training", was exposed by Andrew Kinen (Ireland), Francesca Arena (DGMare), Hermann Pott, Helena Ramon Jarraud (EMSA), and Francesc Maynou (EU Project Monouw).

Francesca Arena talked about effort to improve control and enforcement, CCTVs, and implementation of the LO as the main matters.

Hermann Pott talked about the Baltic experience. Partnership accountability to development of test haul approach for compliance with LO. As main problems, he considered that: discarding is still a widespread practice. The reasons for continued discarding are: lack of flexibility for developing more selective gears; former legal obligation to discard still deeply rooted; operational constraint (sorting of catch, limited storage). Also the Lack of suitable control means.

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Helena R. Jarraud.(Head of unit / Maritime Surveillance EMSA). Her intervention was based on SAR. Satellite monitoring Area of Interest. Autodetection of Vessels and in ports. The technology is based on High Resolution Optical Images.

The next EMSA steps will be focusing on: IUU project; sharing information among CG authorities; improvement of information and ABMs; Common Vessels Registers; Remotely Piloted Aircrafts Services; Sharing Vessels.

The third session was introduced by Mile Beke (Blomeyer & Sanz), and moderated by Karin Hermansson (Head of Unit 1 EFCA). The speakers, Andrainna Fenech Farrugia (Chair Fish. Board Ministry for sustainable Development of Malta), Aronne Spezzani (DGMare), Leon Lomans (Netherlands), Danijela Pajkic (Austria), Alex Rodriguez (LDAC), Vanya Vulperhorst (IUU Coalition, Belgium), talked about the international dimension / IUU, RFMO's and third countries in relation to the EFCA role.

At the end of the Seminar, Pascal Savouret exposed the conclusions of the meeting.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER 2017**

Every three years a new General Assembly is appointed which subsequently elects a new Executive Committee as well as new chairmen. The current three year period ends in October 2017 and therefore, we will have elections at the next General Assembly meeting on 5 October 2017 in The Hague. If you are interested in remaining an Executive Committee member or are interested in joining the Executive Committee, please submit a short application letter outlining your motivation to: [v.ohms@pelagic-ac.org](mailto:v.ohms@pelagic-ac.org). If you are interested in chairing one of the Working Groups or the General Assembly and Executive Committee, please follow the same procedure. In case you have any questions do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat for more information.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### **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. 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.

<http://www.pelagic-ac.org/media/pdf/Rules%20of%20Procedure%20Pelagic%20AC%20-%202014%20November.pdf>

# UPCOMING MEETINGS

## **WORKING GROUP I AND II MEETING (11 JULY 2017, THE HAGUE)**

The upcoming Working Group meetings will mainly focus on the ICES advice for the various relevant herring stocks. In addition, the focus group on Southern horse mackerel aims to present its draft management strategy and EFCA has been invited to provide an update on the gramme size collection and comparison project. Furthermore, the Commission will present the outcome of the evaluation of the Control Regulation.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (12 JULY 2017, THE HAGUE)**

The Executive Committee will deal with the work program and budget for the upcoming new financial year and any potential recommendations from the Working Groups.

All meeting documents are accessible here:

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

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