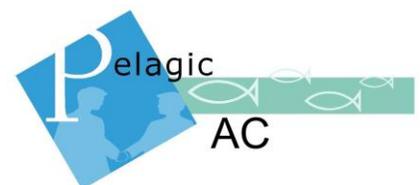




# PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 3/2015

July-September 2015



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# PELAC MEETINGS

## **WORKING GROUP I MEETING (8 JULY 2015, THE HAGUE)**

During the meeting the chair of the ICES Advisory Committee presented the ICES catch advice for 2016 for North Sea autumn spawning herring and for Western Baltic spring spawning herring. The meeting subsequently decided to advise following the management plan for North Sea herring, but to also emphasize the importance of stakeholder consultation when developing a management plan. Regarding Western Baltic spring spawning herring it was decided to recommend following the MSY approach. This was the first time that the Pelagic AC was able to provide advice on this stock.

Afterwards an update on the work of the ecosystem focus group was provided. A number of issues had been identified that members of the focus group considered especially important when moving towards ecosystem advice, e.g. how to set reference points in multispecies management plans and what the effects of density dependency are. The aim is to provide a general overview of what ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management means and how it could be implemented in a stepwise approach.

## **WORKING GROUP II MEETING (8 JULY 2015, THE HAGUE)**

This meeting focused on the ICES catch advice for 2016 for herring stocks West of Scotland and in Irish waters. Especially the combined assessment for herring in VIa North and South and VIIb,c caused a lot of discussion given that ICES has set its catch advice to zero for these stocks. This was in strong contrast to observations from fishermen who did not see a change in stock abundance. It was decided to develop a rebuilding plan for these stocks as soon as possible. Regarding Celtic Sea herring it was proposed to update the plan in light of the new limit reference point set by the benchmark and to ask the Commission to request a revision of the 2015 TAC based on the benchmark results. The advice for Irish Sea herring followed MSY. Given that the main stakeholder of this stock was not present at the meeting, however, it was decided to deal with this stock again at the October meeting.

Other stocks that were discussed were mackerel, western horse mackerel, southern horse mackerel and boarfish. The chairman summarized that the main problems in relation to western horse mackerel were that all simulations showed a high risk of the biomass falling below  $B_{lim}$  even with no fishing and that recruitment spikes are a dominant feature of population dynamics which must not be ignored. Defining reference points also proved problematic. As a way forward it was agreed to focus on the analysis of additional data, e.g. a retrospective analysis of Spanish acoustics surveys and to design a coordination plan of acoustic surveys to get appropriate coverage. It was furthermore agreed to explore how to utilize industry acoustic data and to continue developing a new management strategy.

For mackerel work was underway to draft a new management strategy which could possibly be a compromise between the very divergent strategies suggested by the EU and Norway respectively and would be circulated prior to the October meeting.

The management plan for boarfish had been updated to align it to the stock categories used by ICES. A new assessment was also underway, but had not been finalized yet.

# PELAC MEETINGS

Spanish and Portuguese scientists have made some progress on defining reference points for southern horse mackerel- a prerequisite for developing a management plan based on an analytical stock assessment.

At the end of the meeting a proposal submitted by one of the Spanish General Assembly members for a management plan for mackerel and horse mackerel in the Northwest Cantabrian Sea was discussed. This proposal, without explicitly mentioning it, would change relative stability and people therefore were reluctant to take any firm position on the proposal. In addition it suggested merging ICES areas VIIIc and IX which from a scientific point of view would not make sense. At the same time people had difficulties understanding the details of the proposal due to unclear language and concluded that the authors should be given the opportunity to present it to the Pelagic AC before taking a final decision. Furthermore, it was decided to remind the South Western Waters AC that it does not have a remit for the stocks of mackerel and horse mackerel which fall under responsibility of the Pelagic AC.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (9 JULY 2015, THE HAGUE)**

The work program and budget for the upcoming year as agreed on by the General Assembly through written procedure was presented along with a provisional meeting plan and an overview of outstanding payments. Afterwards a Commission representative introduced this year's policy statement which was subsequently discussed. Industry members shared their preliminary experiences with the landing obligation which did not vary much from the information provided at the April meeting. While it seemed that there were no major problems, it was still too early to draw any conclusions and a lot of issues remained unclear, e.g. in relation to the use of exemptions. Subsequently the Environmental Defense Fund presented its "discard reduction manual" which stimulated a lively discussion on possible mitigation measures, albeit many of the suggestions issued in the document were already being implemented in pelagic fisheries. Afterwards the advice formulated by the Working Groups on the previous day was adopted unanimously. It was also suggested to include a separate heading in the yearly TAC recommendation which will deal with relevant scientific requests to be incorporated in the Commission's request to ICES.

## **Vla HERRING MEETING (10 SEPTEMBER 2015, EDINBURGH)**

This meeting was the result of the ICES benchmark at the beginning of 2015 at which it was decided to combine the herring stocks in area VIa North and South and VIIb,c into a single assessment. As a consequence the management plan available for VIa North herring was no longer valid. During this meeting different possibilities with regards to separating the assessments again in the future as well as developing a rebuilding plan were discussed. Based on these discussions a course of action was agreed. The first step will be to collect new baseline samples of herring in the area for genetic analysis. Subsequently ways to scale-up the capacity to process large number of samples from surveys and catches will have to be developed and funding possibilities for this have to be explored. Industry acoustic surveys were also discussed as a way to improve the knowledge base for VIa herring

## PELAC MEETINGS

and to contribute to abundance estimates. It was agreed to develop a mini-survey plan before the PELAC October meeting clearly specifying what this mini-survey should achieve. In terms of formulating a rebuilding plan different elements were discussed, including the application of a lower fishing mortality than Fmsy, improving the knowledge base, taking into account socio-economic factors and carrying out an industry mini-acoustic survey. Definite conclusions, however, could not be drawn and it was agreed to organize another meeting.

Detailed minutes of all meetings and background information can be downloaded from the PELAC website: <http://www.pelagic-ac.org/02105/>

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

## **SEMINAR STATE OF THE FISH STOCKS (14 JULY 2015, BRUSSELS)**

PELAC observers: Ian Gatt, Miren Garmendia, Stella Nemecky, Irene Kingma

This meeting was chaired by Lowri Evans, director general of DG Mare. Ms Evans invited Commissioner Vella to make an opening statement. Mr Vella remarked how well the stocks were now fairing in the North Sea and Baltic Sea, applauding efforts by fishermen for reaching this position. He also pointed out that the situation in the Mediterranean was very bleak and called on the relevant Member States to work harder. Mr Vella stressed that everyone now agrees on the MSY approach but we should continue to aim to reach targets within the timeframe which has been set out. Multi-annuals plans are important, good progress had been made with the Baltic which had now stalled due to inter-institutional problems, he hoped these would be resolved soon. The Commission were working on plans for the North Sea; Celtic Sea would follow, with a pelagic plan proposal foreseen for 2017.

Eskild Kirkegaard from ICES provided a presentation on the North East Atlantic stocks which can be described as broadly positive. However, for some stocks in the Celtic Sea/West of Scotland regions there are problems, although fished at a low mortality level this had not resulted in improved biomass levels, including western herring.

Massimiliano Cardinale from STECF gave the presentation on the Mediterranean and Black Sea stocks. The scientific perception is the stocks are not in a healthy position; however, there are clearly data deficiency issues.

Mr Anton Paulrud from STECF gave a presentation on the economic performance of the European fleets. An assumption is being made within STECF that the inshore sectors were in the fishing business to make a living while the large scale fleet are only interested in making profit. Economic data gathering is not uniform across Member States but STECF notes the following from the 2013 figures:

- 150,000 fishermen = equated 110,000 full time equivalents (FTE)
- Effort had been reduced to 4.8 million days at sea
- 16 of 19 Member States providing data were profitable
- Large scale fleet – Gross value added, return on asset and profit were all increasing
- Small scale fleet – GVA, return on asset and profit all reducing

Ms Evans invited the various AC representatives to make a brief intervention.

The NWWAC representative noted the positive trend in the stocks and highlighted that successive decommissioning schemes had helped drive down the F rate on demersal stocks.

The Baltic Sea AC representative talked about the Baltic plan and expressed his frustration at the deadlock within the political institutes which now blocked the ratification process.

The NSAC representative was pleased with the trend in stock trajectories and agreed with the Commissioner's sentiments that fishermen had played a key role in recovering stocks. He also asked

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

why the economic figures were so dated, in his view efforts should be made to ensure current data is presented at the seminar. Ms Evans agreed with this point and gave a commitment to work on this for next year's seminar.

The PELAC representative stated that a formal response to the consultation would be submitted before the October deadline. He noted the positive trend towards sustainable fishing in the NE Atlantic and stated that from a pelagic perspective most of the stocks are being fished at or around MSY levels. It's vital that resources are made available to provide the necessary data to produce robust scientific advice. PELAC is striving to develop multi-annual management plans for all stocks under the AC umbrella. This strategy had been partially successful but stressed that the Commission needs to work with PELAC on the pelagic plan outlined by Commissioner Vella. He concluded by stating that it was disappointing that the AC's didn't feature in the framing of the policy statement.

Both the SWW and Mediterranean AC's lamented at the lack of focus by scientists and fisheries managers in their respective areas of operation. MEDAC stated that a new approach is required to break out of the downward spiral of the stocks and pleaded for the Commission to intervene.

Ms Evans opened the meeting to general questions from the floor. Of note, a couple of eNGO's asked why Bmsy targets had not featured in the policy statement. The Commission stated that in reality the only F that managers could control is fishing mortality and that remained the focus for the EC.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETING PRIOR TO WGWIDE (19 AUGUST 2015, WEBEX)

Participants: Esben Sverdrup-Jensen, Gerard van Balsfoort, Martin Pastoors, Katja Enberg, David Miller, Thomas Brunel and other WGWIDE members

### Industry information on five stocks over the last year

#### 1. Northeast Atlantic mackerel

Fishermen are seeing a lot of mackerel everywhere, also outside the mackerel fisheries. All the skippers find a lot of mackerel. In Ila there is mackerel bycatch. Some of the skippers say that it is even more than in the past few years. A lot of small mackerel are everywhere. A study (interviews with skippers) on distribution and migration of mackerel will most likely be presented at WGWIDE (C. Sparrevohn).

#### 2. Horse mackerel

*Western horse mackerel:* 40% of annual catches taken in the early weeks of the year. A lot of 2008/2009 year class in the catches.

*North Sea horse mackerel:* a lot of horse mackerel entering Skagerrak.

#### 3. Blue whiting

Fishery was good with high catch rates through the season. All signals are indicating that the fishery was OK.

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

## 4. Atlanto-Scandian herring

The Norwegian fishermen have seen a lot of fish and had good catches. Their perception is that the stock size is larger than the assessment suggests.

## 5. Boarfish

Only 1/3 of the TAC was taken last year – both fish availability and the market situation were contributing to this. Underutilization due to quota regulations, particularly in Ireland.

### Blue whiting

- **Acoustic survey**

No scientific reasons to believe that there is something ‘wrong’ with the acoustic survey. There have been high catches early in the year (2015). Even if fishers had taken 500 tonnes in the early year, it is only 10% of the biomass – should not affect the survey index that much.

- **Long-term management strategy**

David Miller explained what he has done – and that if the assessment changes, the long-term management strategy also changes. Results should be available before ADGWIDE.

### Horse mackerel

- **Acoustic information**

Ciaran O’Donnell is the person who knows about this, but he was not present at the WebEx.

- **Western horse mackerel MSY approach**

$F_{msy} = 0.1$  instead of 0.13.

- **Benchmark request**

The industry wants to have benchmark in 2017. WGWIDE will discuss possibilities for this. Andrew Campbell will show results in WGWIDE regarding using the IBTS for horse mackerel.

### Mackerel range of scientific issues

Density-dependent growth, request for long-term management plan evaluation. Confusion regarding the trawl survey. Thomas Brunel explained how the swept area survey (IESSNS) is used in the assessment, and also the approach on replying to the request. Industry-scientist workshop in Bergen in August on density dependency, will be a WD for WGWIDE regarding this.

### Boarfish

- **Update analytical assessment**

Analyzing the surveys in hierarchical way in the Bayesian framework. Work ongoing, will hear more at WGWIDE.

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

- **Management plan**  
Maurice Clarke to deal with it within ACOM.

## AOB

Western horse mackerel management strategy evaluations were not discussed at all – Martin Pastoors will present those in WGWIDE.

## EFCA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING (8 SEPTEMBER 2015, VIGO)

PELAC observer: Ian Gatt

The meeting was hosted and chaired by the EFCA Executive Director in their offices in Vigo. Invited representatives of BSAC, LDAC, NWWAC, MEDAC, PELAC and SWWAC attended the meeting.

### Introductory Remarks

EFCA reported that their main work continued to be JDP's carried out in conjunction with Member States emanating from a Commission proposal based on a risk assessed strategy. A new JDP is also planned for the North Sea. EFCA is assisting Member States in the Regional groups on control and monitoring in the context of the landing obligation. An EFCA representative would attend the LDAC seminar on IUU.

### ACs: State of Play

SWWAC: The representative explained that he worked within the artisanal sector which had not encountered any real problems with the landing obligation, but fully anticipated issues when the demersal ban entered into force next year. The industrial fleet will need to adapt their operation next year.

BSAC: The demersal sector is bound by outdated technical measures (T90 mesh and Bacoma), these will need to be amended before the demersal landing obligation goes live in January. To date the pelagic sector had proven to be much less problematic than anticipated.

PELAC: General concern over the uniform application of the landing obligation rules across Member States. Members relayed their experience with landing obligation at PELAC meetings; EFCA had been present during these discussions. The AC would continue to monitor developments. The PELAC thought the EFCA seminar on the landing obligation was a very useful exercise. Regional Groupings have now invited the PELAC to attend High Level meetings when control and monitoring issues are discussed.

NWWAC: Main issue has been producing advice on the discard plans; this had proved to be very resource hungry. Lot of questions remain to be answered particularly on cost to the industry, time and specifically what requires to be done at port level to handle discards. MCE is a key issue in terms of how it will be implemented.

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

LDAC: The landing obligation implementation in external waters is complex as the EU can't create rules in third countries. There will be conflicts within RFMO's as it requires unanimity to agree legislation and the CFP is not compatible with RFMO regulation. Of particular concern is the SW Atlantic given the dispute between the UK and Argentina as there is no regulation on bycatches, discards etc.

MEDAC: Landing obligation is one of the main priority issues. A major problem is the lack of discards data and information on fish under minimum conservation reference sizes. A pilot project has begun to start gathering relevant information.

## Landing obligation – state of play

EFCA has carried out pelagic JDP's related to the implementation of the landing obligation this year, these will be extended to cover the introduction of the demersal stocks next year. Assistance will continue to be provided to the Regional Groupings. EFCA is committed to attending AC and STECF meetings. Further seminars on the landing obligation will be convened; AC's will be invited to participate.

## EFCA Annual Work Programme 2015

Main highlights are the Roskilde Seminar, implementation of the landing obligation, the Black Sea project and training delivery for GFCM inspectors.

EFCA is coordinating control operations in all EU areas for specific fisheries through JDP's

- *North Sea and Western Waters: Cod, sole and plaice*
- *Baltic Sea: Cod, herring, sprat and salmon*
- *Mediterranean Sea: Bluefin tuna, swordfish and anchovy*
- *Western Waters: Pelagic fisheries*
- *NAFO and NEAFC*
- *Black Sea: Turbot*

## Draft Annual Work Programme 2016-2020

EFCA budget has been capped at 9.217 M euro until 2018. Delivery of services will be maintained while staff costs are being reduced. Rationalisation will be achieved by a review of administration, budgetary savings, human resource efficiency gains and creating a new business model.

## Priorities for the period 2016 -2020

- *Assistance to the EC and Member States for the implementation of CFP regulation 1380/2013*
- *Enhancement of capacity building instruments*
- *EFCA rationalisation*
- *Implementation of JDPs and operational plans (New North Sea JDP on either mackerel or herring)*
- *Level playing field enhancement*
- *Programmes, plans and assessment*
- *Data monitoring and networks*
- *Training*

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

## Rotation of the Advisory Board representative in the Administrative Board of EFCA

From 2 March 2015 to 1 March 2016:

- Representative: NSAC
- Alternate: MEDAC

From 2 March 2016 to 1 March 2017:

- Representative: MEDAC
- Alternate: NWWAC

## Cooperation with ACs

EFCA will continue to attend AC meetings to provide regular updates on the work of the agency. Support will be provided to AC's as required. EFCA are committed to convene bi-annual seminars on the implementation of the landing obligation.

## AOB

The PELAC raised a concern that at times control issues can appear which Member States struggle to cope with. The example of the blue whiting unilateral quota declared by Norway was cited. This fishery had taken place on the boundary of the Irish EEZ during February, which had caused a huge problem in terms of controlling this fishery. The PELAC representative asked if EFCA had capacity to coordinate ad hoc control exercises on a risk-based strategy. The EFCA Executive responded to say they have no mandate or budget to carry out this type of project, but suggested that the Administrative Board AC representative should raise this matter at the October meeting.

# MISCELLANEOUS

## STUDENT INTERNS

### Anaïs Mourtada

Since I started school, I have been interested in natural sciences like mathematics and biology. I have always lived by the sea, and therefore, I have been sailing since the age of 4. Thus, I chose an orientation that would allow me to combine my work and my passion for biology and the sea. After my Baccalaureate examination (major in mathematics) I attended a preparatory class, in order to apply for a school which trains students in agronomy and engineering, at the lycée St Louis (Paris, France) in the BCPST track (biology, chemistry, physics and geology). After two years, in 2014, I was admitted to AgroCampus Ouest (Rennes, France), one of the Grande École, where I study agriculture and life science. I am currently starting my second year with this internship at the Pelagic AC. I would like to major in halieutic next year in order to work on the management of fisheries and marine ecosystems. Therefore, the internship at the Pelagic AC provides a great opportunity for me. During this internship, I will focus on MSC certification and to be more specific, on EU pelagic fisheries which have already undertaken certification, with the aim of compiling awarded certification scores from already existing MSC reports. Based on that I will try to provide an overview of strengths and weaknesses of individual stocks. This is really interesting as it allows me to discover this sector, its actors and its issues and the question of sustainable use of the seas and fish stocks.



### Emilien Segret



Coming from the countryside in the middle of France, I have always been interested in the marine world. As a child, I spent my summer fishing with my brother. Growing up, my interest in sciences and mainly in life sciences brought me to obtain my scientific Baccalauréat (major in biology) with honors. Afterwards I studied in the “Classe préparatoire aux grandes écoles” (class preparing the students for a national competitive entrance examination) and was admitted to ENSAIA, a French “Grande École”, based in Nancy, next to the German border, which provides a degree program in live sciences and food. After completing my first year of Master, I am currently starting a gap-year with this intern period in the Pelagic Advisory Council. My ambition is to join AgroCampus Ouest next year, specializing in fisheries and aquatic sciences, especially in the management of fishing and coastal ecosystems. This training period provides me with the opportunity to discover the field of fishery management and to gain professional experience. In the Pelagic Advisory Council I have started to work on a project aiming to establish an overview of the different fisheries assessment models used within the framework of European fisheries management, focusing on multi-species and ecosystem models. The final work should compare advantages brought about by model development. My intern period will last five months, and I feel motivated to draw on this experience for my future.

## 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 Pelagic AC'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

## **FOCUS GROUP MEETING ON VIa HERRING (6 OCTOBER 2015, EDINBURGH)**

On 6 October, preceding the regular PELAC meetings, the focus group on VIa herring will gather to continue its efforts of developing a new multiannual management strategy for herring in area VIa.

## **WORKING GROUP I AND II MEETING (7 OCTOBER 2015, EDINBURGH)**

On 7 October the next PELAC Working Group meetings will take place in Edinburgh. Working Group I will focus on the ICES advice for Atlanto-Scandian herring, North Sea horse mackerel and blue whiting. Working Group II will deal with the ICES advice for Northeast Atlantic mackerel, Western horse mackerel, Southern horse mackerel and boarfish. A draft management strategy for mackerel will also be discussed as well as the way forward in regards to developing new management strategies for Western horse mackerel and herring in area VIa.

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (8 OCTOBER 2015, EDINBURGH)**

The General Assembly meeting on 8 October will review the accounts of 2014-2015 and approve the new work program and budget for 2015-2016. The subsequent Executive Committee meeting will discuss the results of the ecosystem focus group. Furthermore a presentation on a multispecies model for the North Sea will be given as well as an overview of the PelAcoustics project which tries to utilize acoustic data collected by fishing vessels.

All meeting documents are accessible here:

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

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