



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 3/2018

July-September 2018

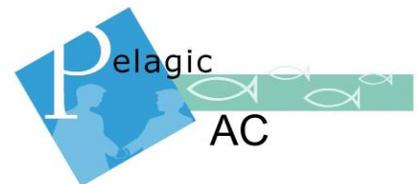


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PELAC MEETINGS

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (5 JULY 2018, COPENHAGEN)

As in previous years this meeting focused on the ICES advice for North Sea herring and Western Baltic spring spawning herring. In both cases the advice was based on MSY leading to a recommended TAC of no more than 311.572 tonnes for North Sea herring and zero tonnes for Western Baltic spring spawning herring. There was a long debate in relation to the zero TAC advice and the lack of transparency and stakeholder involvement in some decisions taken by ICES, especially regarding the definition of short term, medium term and long term. This definition, which some argued is a policy decision, is crucial to the ICES MSY rule, but ICES never involved policy-makers or other stakeholders in the decision process. The comparatively low TAC advice for North Sea herring triggered a discussion on increasing the banking provision from 10% to 25%. It was concluded to deal with the issue through written procedure after members had a chance to provide further input to the discussion.

Subsequently the Commission's consultation on the evaluation of the entry-exit scheme and the European Parliament's consultation on technical measures were briefly discussed. It was decided to deal with both consultations in the focus group on technical measures.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (5 JULY 2018, COPENHAGEN)

Working Group II dealt primarily with the ICES advice for herring stocks in the Celtic Sea. In the absence of a management strategy for Irish Sea herring and considering that the rebuilding plan for Celtic Sea herring had not been finalized yet, it was agreed that the ICES MSY advice should be followed for both stocks.

Regarding herring in 6a and 7b,c there was a long discussion about the revised rebuilding plan. Whereas the Herring Assessment Working Group of ICES has previously communicated that the plan has been assessed and found precautionary, the Advisory Committee concluded that a full Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) was needed to properly assess the plan. However, such an MSE cannot be carried out before the end of the year, resulting in an ICES catch advice of zero tonnes. After some more discussion the meeting decided to postpone a decision on the stock until the October meeting.

Subsequently an update was provided on the work of the focus group for Western horse mackerel. Landmark Fisheries, a Canadian consultancy, has been contracted by the industry to explore whether some of the tools used in Canadian fisheries management could be applied to Western horse mackerel. Landmark Fisheries has extensive experience with management strategies for data-limited stocks and stocks that show similar dynamics to Western horse mackerel. The results of this exploration were to be presented to WGWIDE.

Afterwards a Commission representative presented the Commission's legislative proposal for the revision of the Control Regulation. It was agreed to reconvene the control focus group to deal with the proposal.

PELAC MEETINGS

Finally, an update was provided on the pelagic discard plans, none of which has taken into account the latest recommendations from the Pelagic AC.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (6 JULY 2018, COPENHAGEN)

During the Executive Committee meeting an amendment to the budget was proposed and accepted. The Commission also presented the policy statement as well as the Commission's proposal on the future EMFF. It was agreed that the Executive Committee should draft a statement in relation to the proposal.

Subsequently the advice from the Working Groups was presented and adopted unanimously. The Executive Committee also gave a mandate to the Management Team to recruit and hire a new Executive Secretary.

All detailed meeting minutes can be downloaded from the PELAC website:
<http://www.pelagic-ac.org/2018>

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

ADG WIDE (12-14 SEPTEMBER 2018, COPENHAGEN)

PELAC representatives: Ian Gatt, Gerard van Balsfoort, Sean O'Donoghue

This ICES Advice Drafting Group (ADG) provides advice for mackerel, blue whiting, Atlanto Scandian herring, western and North Sea horse mackerel, and boarfish. All of these stocks fall under the remit of PELAC. North Sea horse mackerel and boarfish advice was provided last year and is applicable for the period 2018-19. An advice was also drafted for the NEAFC request on long-term management strategy options for Atlanto Scandian herring.

Mackerel

As there is no internationally agreed management strategy ICES advice is based on the MSY approach. Catches in 2019 should be no more than 318,403 tonnes. As the stock is perceived to be below the MSY Btrigger value the MSY approach is used to generate the TAC advice.

SSB reached a high level in 2011 and has been declining since. Fishing mortality declined in the period 2005 – 2011, but has increased since, and is now perceived to be above Fmsy.

The advised catch is lower than last year because of the following:

- Downward revision of the stock compared to last year
- Estimated SSB declined by 13% from 2016 to 2017; due to high fishing pressure and low recruitment
- SSB in 2019 will be below MSY Btrigger which implies that the advice should be based on a fishing mortality that is below Fmsy

The data series for the IESSNS and the RFID tagging is short and therefore results in an unstable assessment. There is a general concern regarding the tagging data which is the most influential data source in this assessment. Working group scientists suggest convening a meeting early next year (inter-benchmark?) to deal with the issues emanating from the tagging data, and try to resolve problems in relation to how the SAM assessment model processes the data.

Abundance estimates of the juvenile part of the stock are uncertain because they rely on:

- The recruitment index that has a low influence on the assessment
- The recruitment index has not been updated for 2016 and 2017
- Commercial catch data for age groups not fully recruited in the fishery which are therefore more uncertain

Western horse mackerel

The advice is based on the MSY approach and recommends that catches in 2019 should be no more than 145,237 tonnes.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

This stock and the fishery are highly dependent on infrequent high recruitments. Following a period of low recruitment, the estimates since 2014 are above average. SSB has declined since 2007 and is estimated to be around MSY Btrigger since 2014. Fishing mortality has decreased since 2013 and is below Fmsy.

The stock was benchmarked in 2017 when a new stock synthesis method to assess the stock was used. This has shown the same stock trend development as the previous assessment, but re-scales the absolute level of SSB and F. The 2017 French groundfish survey only covered a small portion of the planned survey area, this has resulted in a highly uncertain value for the 2017 recruitment index value. However, this has a minor impact on the estimated SSB.

The stock is assessed to be at a historical low, yet the 2019 advice is for a substantial increase in catches. One of the reasons is the revision of the biomass estimates. Nonetheless, given recent higher recruitment the stock is predicted to increase in 2018 above the historical low, and continue increasing if the 2019 stock advice is followed.

Blue whiting

ICES advises that when the long-term management strategy is applied, catches in 2019 should be no more than 1,143,629 tonnes.

Fishing mortality (F) has increased from a historical low in 2011 to above FMSY since 2014. SSB has decreased since 2017 but is well above MSY Btrigger. Recruitments in 2017 and 2018 are estimated to be low, following a period of high recruitments.

The assessment uses preliminary catch at age data in the assessment year to supplement information from the acoustic survey conducted in the spring. In most recent years more than 90% of the annual catches of the age 3+ fish are consistently taken in the first half year, which makes it reasonable to estimate the total annual catch at age from the preliminary first semester data. This is expected to provide an assessment that is less prone to the year effects sometimes observed in the international survey. Deviation between preliminary and final catch weight for 2016 and 2017 are less than 3%. The final age structure differs due to limited availability of biological samples. This could have an impact on the accuracy of the forecast.

The assessment estimates a low 2017 year class, born out by a series of surveys not used in the assessment. This is likely to lead to a decrease in stock size, and a reduction in fishing opportunity when the 2016 and 2017 year classes are fully selected into the fishery from 2020.

Although there is a long-term management strategy agreed by EU, Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway, parties continued to set unilateral quotas. This has led to catches exceeding the ICES advice.

MISCELLANEOUS

FAREWELL

After 6,5 years at the PELAC the time has come to set sails and explore new waters. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to work at the PELAC and to learn about the complex world of fisheries management. Working for the PELAC has not only taught me about stock assessments, different kinds of fisheries and stakeholder management, but also gave me insight into the functioning of the European Union. It allowed me to visit Europe's coastal states and meet some of the brightest, most passionate people we have. Even though I am saying farewell to the world of fisheries (at least for now), I do hope to stay in touch with many of you. Please add my personal email address: verena.ohms@gmail.com to your address book and don't hesitate to contact me whenever you are in the area and would like to have a chat.



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.

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

UPCOMING MEETINGS

WORKING GROUP I AND II MEETING (2 OCTOBER 2018, DEN HAAG)

The next Working Group meetings will take place on 2 October. As in previous years these meetings will deal primarily with the ICES advice for widely distributed stocks as well as the PELAC TAC recommendations for 2019.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (3 OCTOBER 2018, DEN HAAG)

During the General Assembly meeting the final activity and financial report for 2017-2018 will be presented. Subsequently the Executive Committee will discuss the socio-economic effects of the landing obligations as well as the advice from the Working Groups.

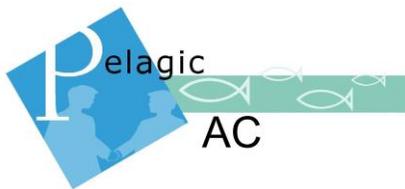
For more information please visit our website:

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

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