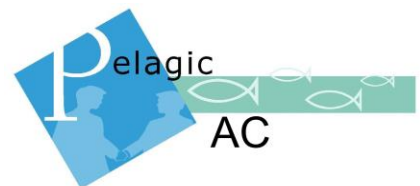




# PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 4/2019

October - December 2019



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Contents

PELAC meetings	2
External meetings	4
Practical information	8
Upcoming meetings	9
Contact information	10

# PELAC MEETINGS

## WORKING GROUP I MEETING (2 OCTOBER 2019, DEN HAAG)

The meeting focused on the newly released ICES advices for blue whiting, Atlanto-Scandian herring and North Sea horse mackerel and the setting of TAC recommendations for 2020.

ICES advice for blue whiting indicated that the stock is well above MSY Btrigger. F is decreasing but still above FMSY and the 2017-2019 recruitments have been low. ICES advises to follow the Long Term Management Strategy, reducing catches by 19.6% in 2020. An update on the work carried out with a consultant to evaluate a two-tier Harvest Control Rule was given. The hindcast analysis showed that the current implementation of the -20%/+25% stabilizing bounds could be problematic for the blue whiting stock in the long term. The PELAC followed the advice of ICES, added a request to revisit the ICES advice for 2016 and to further analyse the effects of TAC stabilizing bounds, and encouraged the Commission and MS to seek rapid agreement amongst Coastal States on sharing principles.

For Atlanto-Scandian herring, ICES advice advises to follow the Long-Term Management Strategy, reducing catches by 32% in 2020. The stock has been showing a low recruitment since 2007 and the biomass is decreasing. F is below FMSY. The PELAC recommended to follow the ICES advice, based on an agreed Long-Term Management Strategy and similarly encouraged a rapid agreement amongst Coastal States on sharing principles.

Regarding North Sea horse mackerel, ICES gave a two-year TAC advice, following the Precautionary Approach and applying an uncertainty cap. The combined survey index is indicating a low level for the stock and stock size reference points are unknown. The PELAC recommended to follow the ICES advice and highlighted that a full genome sequencing exercise has been initiated to allow for future mixed-sample analyses between horse mackerel in western waters and horse mackerel in the North Sea.

The July ICES advice for North Sea herring proposing to follow the MSY approach was discussed. F has been below FMSY since 1996. Recruitment has been relatively low since 2002 and a reduction in stock size was expected in the coming years. The OIG proposal to roll over the previous TAC was taken on-board. The PELAC recalled the latest Management Strategy Evaluation of ICES that was then found not to be precautionary in the long term under the assumptions of the simulations. Consequently, the PELAC recommended setting the TAC for 2020 on the basis of a F-value that was below the current ICES MSY-approach rule. For 3A the PELAC recommended following the agreed EU and Norway TAC principles when setting the TAC. However, the level of TAC set should take into account the above recommendations for the North Sea autumn spawning herring component

No recommendation was given for Western-Baltic herring.

## WORKING GROUP II MEETING (2 OCTOBER 2019, DEN HAAG)

The meeting primarily dealt with ICES advice for NEA mackerel, Western & Southern horse mackerel, boarfish and herring 6a, 7bc, updates on research initiatives and the PELAC TAC recommendations for 2020.

Northeast Atlantic Mackerel interbenchmark of May 2019 produced a new advice. The ICES catch advice was higher because of high recruitment year classes entering the cohort and the retrospective upward revision of SSB and downward revision of fishing mortality. F peaked in 2003 and was decreasing since then while still above FMSY. SSB peaked in 2014 and was on a slight declining trend. The ICES advice was based on MSY and the catch option table also included the Norway-EU-Faroes Long-Term management strategy. The PELAC recommended following the ICES MSY Advice to set the TAC and to evaluate the relevance of the existing

# PELAC MEETINGS

minimum conservation reference size for the North Sea (30 cm) in relation to stock production and conservation. ICES signalled concerns over the quality of the assessment because of short time series, and conflicting signals between indices. International negotiations for a sharing arrangement were not supposed to be on the table this year which should make them simpler. Concern was expressed by the stakeholders on the way some other countries set their TAC unilaterally and the limited response that is made to these actions.

The Western horse mackerel ICES advice followed the MSY approach. The industry stakeholder stated their concern on the advice reliability and the unusually low FMSY value. The 2019 benchmark had taken upward the MSYBtrigger value and brought FMSY down. The SSB was revised downwards and F upwards. The PELAC recommended to follow the ICES MSY advice and decided to continue the industry's research that recently initiated a full genome sequencing exercise to allow for future mixed-sample analyses.

Southern Horse Mackerel ICES advice was based on the MSY approach. The SSB was at its highest of the time series, and F was going down. The assessment was consistent with last year's one. ICES however highlighted that around 10% of the catches in the area were not actually Western horse mackerel but other *Trachurus* species. The PELAC decided to follow the evaluated by ICES management strategy for *T. trachurus*.

Boarfish is a category 3 stock and as such the ICES advice was based on the precautionary approach. The meeting supported the advice, but emphasized the need for continuing working on an analytical assessment.

There were some discussions around the ICES advice for herring in area 6a, 7b, c setting a 0 TAC for 2020. Update was given on the research ongoing on this stock and the rationale for a monitoring TAC was presented. Finally, the PELAC recommended to follow the ICES advice and to continue the scientific sampling programme covering genetics, body morphometrics and acoustics. The urgency to resolve with ICES the draft rebuilding plan developed by the PELAC when the advice will be provided was pointed at.

On the subject of Celtic Sea herring, the PELAC advised to follow the ICES 0 TAC while continuing the scientific sampling programme, at the appropriate times, in accordance with the ICES recommendations following a request from the European Commission.

Regarding Irish Sea herring it was agreed to recommend following the ICES MSY advice.

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY (3 OCTOBER 2019, DEN HAAG)

During the General Assembly meeting, a summary of the past year work of the PELAC was given. The final activity and financial report for 2019-2020 was presented which was subsequently approved by the meeting. The meeting dates for the first half of 2020 were announced.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (3 OCTOBER 2019, DEN HAAG)

The possibility to benefit from EMFF grants for research was raised. Stakeholder proposed to open collaboration with other ACs to draft a comprehensive recommendation to the Commission. Subsequently, stakeholder showed interest around the issue of plastic pollution and recycling. The different initiatives of other ACs and the Commission were touched upon. A special attention will be taken to circulate information on the issue. Finally, a paragraph of the comment on fishing opportunities deemed too general was taken out of the document.

All detailed meeting minutes can be downloaded from the PELAC website once they are finalized: <https://www.pelagic-ac.org/2019>

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

## EXPERT GROUP ON FISHERIES CONTROL WORKSHOP ON TRACEABILITY OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE PRODUCTS (10 OCTOBER 2019, BRUSSELS)

Participants: Guillaume Carruel attended on behalf of the PELAC

DG MARE explained the importance of a control regulation to ensure the legality of other processes. The rationale for the revision of the control regulation was presented, highlighting that its goal will be to make the best use of digital tools for final consumers and control agencies. The importance of data and the sharing of it was pointed at.

First, the Commission (DG MARE) presented its proposal for the revision of the control regulation on traceability and the collaborations that occurred with the other DGs. Key elements of the proposal were highlighted: On the lots, a more specific definition is proposed. A minor change is that a lot has to contain a "single species" as opposed to a "given species", still specifying that they come from the same geographical area and have the same presentation. The main change here is that this definition of lots now also applies to processed products (frozen and fresh) and imported ones. This raised concerns from some fish processors. A reinforced accent is put on the enforcement of the rules and regulations. It should fill in the loopholes and the lack of data in small scale and recreational fisheries and bridge the gap with the CFP (which the control regulation predates) and the other environmental policies. To improve traceability, the fishing trip identification number is a new requirement (it existed before but was only used for log-book masters). A new provision is the need to make this information available electronically. Additionally, IUU catch certificates are also now digitalized too. The scope and exemptions of these rules were also explained (below 5kg direct sales; excludes flour of fish, crustaceans, mollusks, animal feed, algae, produces unfit for human consumption).

In terms of schedule, the co-decision process was ongoing, a draft report from the EP will be ready in February 2020. At the Council, provisions have already been discussed and the process will continue under Croatian presidency (Jan-June 2020). Application of the new regulation is not foreseen before around 4 years and the implementation will be another process were the transposition of the regulation will need to be done.

Various case studies of national and regional administration work on traceability but also industry and NGO lead initiative and standards for traceability were presented.

## SCHEVENINGEN TECHNICAL GROUP MEETING (11 OCTOBER 2019, COPENHAGEN)

PELAC representative: Esben Sverdrup

The meeting focused on issues relating to the management for 2020 for North Sea cod, with little time for other issues.

From the PELAC Member States were encouraged to secure stakeholder engagement in the process surrounding the yearly consultations with ICES on the grant contract. Mirroring the discussions, we had at the PELAC meeting on October 2 and 3. Improved management of EU fisheries and strengthened scientific advice begins with the advice requests to ICES and providing a full spectrum of management options. ACs could play a key role in formulating requests to ICES.

In relation to the revision of the discard plan for pelagics, it was agreed that PELAC provides input early in 2020. This exercise must be prioritized in the 2020 PELAC work program.

Issues surrounding the implementation of new and more selective gear developed were also discussed in relation to the new Technical Measures Regulation. ACs encouraged MSs to secure rapid implementation.

# EXTERNAL MEETINGS

## EFCA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING (21 OCTOBER 2019, VIGO)

Participants: Jose Beltran attended on behalf of the PELAC

The PELAC representative explained the work ongoing in the organisation. The advices of stakeholders are given in line with the CFP and are supported by scientific evidences. Representatives of MS, Commission and scientists are usually invited to PELAC meetings. Communication with other ACs, and the PELAC members themselves, are fluid. The member usually participates in workshops and meetings organized by other agencies, that may be of interest.

Several points were specifically pointed at during the meeting: The work undertaken around the challenge of the landing obligation (Choke Mitigation Tool to avoid premature closing of fisheries). The PELAC Control Focus Group that evaluated the Commission proposal on the Fisheries Control System and developed adequate recommendations. The development of a multi-year management strategy and the work ongoing for the different stocks. The TAC recommendations for the following year. The complexity of fisheries management based on the Ecosystem Approach and the focus of the PELAC Focus Group on seismic activities. The regionalisation and difficulties to work with all regional groups.

## MEETING ON FRENCH MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (22-24 OCTOBER 2019, BIARRITZ)

Participants: Guillaume Carruel attended on behalf of the PELAC

France is preparing its next national strategy for MPAs. A review of the previous strategy was made and the important goals for the next one were highlighted. The difficulty to strike a balance between setting a quantified objective (according to various indices) and a more qualitative evaluation was at the centre of the debates. An important topic of discussion was also the space left to traditional human activities like fisheries in the MPAs and the importance to have a broader look at the entire marine spatial planning in the coastal seas.

International examples of MPA management were taken and participants were invited to express their views. The finalized national strategy for MPAs will be presented in June 2020 at the IUCN world congress for nature in Marseille.

## MAC & NWWAC WORKSHOP ON MARINE PLASTICS AND THE SEAFOOD SUPPLY CHAIN (7 NOVEMBER 2019, BRUSSELS)

Participants: Guillaume Carruel attended on behalf of the PELAC.

The workshop was to address a wide range of issues from microplastics to fisheries and initiative to combat plastic and processing and plastic in the European context.

The importance of the plastic issue for the consumer was highlighted and the producer responsibility perception. It is a non-competitive issue in the value chain and therefore calls for joint efforts and commitments. The qualities of seafood for human needs and its reduced carbon footprint were recalled.

Presentations were given on the actual occurrence and implication of plastic in aquatic organisms, presenting the FAO report on the topic. The use of plastic is easy to understand regarding its qualities (useful, cheap, durable, light, insulation). However, plastic in the environment has consequences: mainly the break down into macroplastics, microplastics, and nanoplastics. They are transported all over the oceans, interacting and ending up in various ecosystems. However, there is limited evidence of trophic transfers, and there is an existing scientific gap on interactions microplastic-fish. For humans, plastic is small fraction of total dietary intake of contaminants. Seafood depuration and removal of digestive system limits exposure to microplastic.

## EXTERNAL MEETINGS

The EU policies on the topic were then presented. The European Strategy for Plastic in Circular Economy was explained. The world-wide plastic production increases and from today at 50 million tons, it is scheduled to reach 1200 million tons in 2050. The Eu recycling target of waste packaging is 55% in 2030 and all packaging should be recyclable by then. The goal is to make plastic circular, (Reduce Reuse Repair Refurbish Recycle). The circle plastic alliance was presented, and public private partnerships were shown to be a good way to reach the goals of the strategy. Connections to other EU legislations were made (Chemical and microplastic addition- REACH; Single Use Plastic Directive; Port Reception Facility Directive, Urban Waste Treatment Directive). The importance of international actions and investment in innovations was also highlighted. The risk of poor scientific research publishing eye catching figures was identified. Other types of activities as sea such as recreational fishing would need to be taken into account in the initiatives.

Various project related to fishing for litter in Ireland and Spain were presented. Challenges included the categorisation of the different types of waste types, the complexity of recycling of contaminated material, the time and the involvement of fishermen needed.

The following discussions were tackling packaging, processing and market issues.

### INTER-AC MEETING (8 NOVEMBER 2019, BRUSSELS)

Participants: Guillaume Carruel, Sean O'Donoghue and Goncalo Carvalho attended on behalf of the PELAC.

- The Commission praised the work of ACs, recommended them to undertake a performance review like LDAC and expressed its awareness of the difficulties encountered by NGOs to attend all ACs meetings, and the difficulties encountered to implement some policies (LO, control regulation, ...). One of the main outcomes of the LDAC performance review was a list of recommendations.
- An important one for ACs was to follow-up on the advices, and to track their impact on the legislative process. Recommendations for other stakeholders were also formulated.
- The importance of consensus, trust, scientific basis for advices, and respect of all stakeholders' opinions in the ACs was reiterated.
- Some NGOs representatives explained their concern about their capacity to be involved in all the ACs' work and about the imbalance in representation of industry-OIG stakeholders.
- The topics of the quality insurance of ICES advice and the availability of funding for ACs research were touched upon. On the first point, the Commission was "open to discuss" the content of the Grant Agreement Commission-ICES with the stakeholders and on the second point, the Commission explained again the existing channels for answering call for research funds (through MS, EASM, or Horizon Europe).
- The Commission reiterated that the formulation of common advice was something to seek and that communication of ACs to the EP was possible provided that the information was first addressed to the Commission.
- The ACs were invited to provide ideas for research proposals in the context of the Horizon Europe research fund.
- ACs secretariat had to work on achieving a higher quality in their work program proposals.

### EP LUNCH SEMINAR ORGANISED BY MAC AND AAC (12 NOVEMBER 2019, BRUSSELS)

Participants: Sean O'Donoghue and Guillaume Carruel attended on behalf of the PELAC.

The meeting started with a presentation of the ACs work. The Commission highlighted the importance to conduct performance review in the ACs like the one done by LDAC. MEP van Dalen asked for more communication of ACs work and the transmission of the ACs advices to the EP. The reinstalling of MEP acting

## EXTERNAL MEETINGS

as liaison officer between the PECH Committee and the ACs was identified as an interesting way forward to foster communication. A representative of the Greens and some environmental NGOs were cautious about the ACs involvement in the EP and critical about the ACs advices being biased toward the fishing industry. The Commission recalled the different ways for ACs to benefit from funding for research but ruled out the having special provisions dedicating EMFF money for ACs research. Finally, the Commission invited ACs to send their priority topics for the next funding period as Horizon Europe research plan is developed.

### FAO SYMPOSIUM (18-21 NOVEMBER, ROME)

Participants: Guillaume Carruel attended on behalf of the PELAC.

The symposium was structured around four questions: What is the status of global and regional fisheries sustainability?, What are the challenges to improve the sustainability of fish resources?, What constitutes evidence, and how do we ensure an evidence basis for decision making? and, What does society expect from marine and inland fisheries in the 21st century?

The objective of this Symposium was to identify pathways to strengthen the science and policy nexus in fisheries. It would produce a technical document that synthesizes the information and debate in each of the Symposium's sessions, to be tabled at the 34th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in July 2020.

This will help outlining how fisheries can respond to the complex and rapidly changing challenges facing society and support the planning process of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

Quantitative information on the status of fisheries' sustainability globally and regionally were presented. The use of different types of data (including fisheries-industry data) for scientific assessments and the challenged that it might pose were also tackled. Issues encountered around the world in fisheries management were detailed with very important differences from region to region.



## 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. Please use the new Travel Claim Form of Pelagic AC. 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>

### CHRISTMAS BREAK

The secretariat will be closed on 27 December 2019, 2 and 3 January 2020. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year! We are looking forward to continue working with you in 2020!



## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### MIRAC AND MIACO MEETINGS (17-18 JANUARY, COPENHAGEN)

During the MIACO and MIAC meetings the different ACs will discuss their experiences this past year working with ICES.

This year PELAC will specifically tackle questions of quality assurance of the ICES advice, of the stakeholder information incorporation in the advice, on the Commission formulation of advice requests and on the stock assessment classification. Update on the preparation of the ICES workshop on rebuilding plans will also be given.

### WORKING GROUP I AND II AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS (4 MARCH, DEN HAAG)

The next Working Group and Executive Committee meetings will take place on 4 March. As usual this meeting will focus on a review of the AC's impact over the past year and address ongoing issues, such as the development of management strategies and rebuilding plans.

### EFCA AND PELAC COMBINED MEETING (5 MARCH, DEN HAAG)

Following the WG and ExCom meeting, the PELAC together with EFCA are holding a workshop on the Landing Obligation. Challenges encountered and solutions foreseen will be presented, the meeting will be attended by control experts and member states representatives.

### WORKING GROUP I AND II AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS (21 APRIL, DEN HAAG)

The next Working Group and Executive Committee meetings will take place on 21 April.

### WORKING GROUP I AND II MEETINGS (9 JULY, DUBLIN)

Please note that the meeting date has been changed for the Working Group meetings. The new date is 9 July, the meeting location is Dublin.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (10 JULY, DUBLIN)

Please note that the meeting date has been changed for the Executive Committee meeting. The new date is 10 July, the meeting location is Dublin.

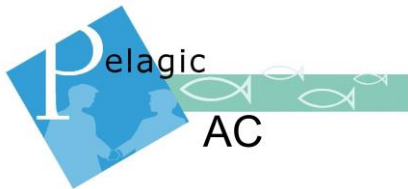
For more information please visit our website:

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

# CONTACT INFORMATION

## Pelagic Advisory Council

Louis Braillelaan 80  
2719 EK Zoetermeer  
The Netherlands  
**Phone:** +31 (0)6 3375 6324  
**Email:** [info@pelagic-ac.org](mailto:info@pelagic-ac.org)  
[www.pelagic-ac.org](http://www.pelagic-ac.org)



---

The Pelagic Advisory Council receives Union financial assistance as a body pursuing an aim of general European interest. This newsletter reflects only the author's view and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.