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Date: 15 October 2012
Our reference: 1213PRAC07
Subject: Fishing opportunities 2013 for blue whiting, boarfish and horse mackerel
CC: Olivier Baudelet (by e-mail)

Dear Ms Evans,

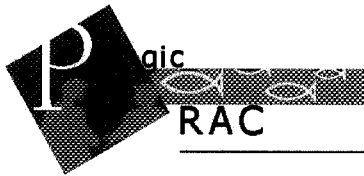
At its latest Working Group II meeting on 4 October 2012 the Pelagic RAC discussed the recently published ICES advice on fishing opportunities in 2013 regarding blue whiting, boarfish and North Sea and Western horse mackerel and agreed on a number of recommendations regarding these stocks. Subsequently these recommendations were adopted unanimously by the Executive Committee during its meeting on 5 October 2012.

Please find the detailed recommendations attached in the annex and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Ohms'.

Ms Verena Ohms
Pelagic RAC Secretariat



Annex I: Recommendation on fishing opportunities in 2013 for blue whiting, boarfish, North Sea horse mackerel and Western horse mackerel

Blue whiting (area I-IX, XII & XIV)

The Pelagic RAC advises to follow the currently adopted management plan for blue whiting and to set the TAC for 2013 to 643,000 tons accordingly.

Furthermore the Pelagic RAC strongly recommends a swift evaluation by ICES of its recently developed new harvest control rule submitted to the European Commission on 12 June 2012. Additionally the Pelagic RAC would like to draw the Commission's attention to the fact that Russian catches in 2011 have exceeded what was considered sustainable by other Coastal States. Although Russia never agreed to the NEAFC management plan for blue whiting, the Pelagic RAC considers it indispensable that Russia will commit to a common management plan in the future.

Boarfish (area VI, VII & VIII)

The Pelagic RAC recommends setting the TAC for boarfish to 82,000 tons in 2013 according to the ICES advice. At the same time it is recommended that the long-term management plan developed by the Pelagic RAC and submitted to the European Commission on 14 August 2012 will be evaluated by ICES immediately. In addition, a stability factor x should be included in the long-term management plan and also be subject to its evaluation. The exact value of this stability factor should be determined by ICES. The updated plan including the stability factor can be found in annex II. Furthermore the Pelagic RAC is requesting that the boarfish acoustic survey be included under the Data Collection Framework for 213.

North Sea horse mackerel (area IIIa, IVb,c & VIIId)

The Pelagic RAC's foremost objective regarding this stock is the development of a long-term management plan which will guarantee the sustainable exploitation of this stock. Therefore the Pelagic RAC will do whatever is in its capacities to facilitate the development of such a plan.

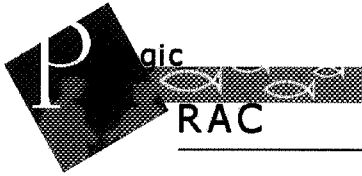
In the current absence of a management plan, however, the Pelagic RAC advises a gradual reduction of the TAC in the coming three years which provides a compromise between the ICES advice and a TAC considered appropriate by most stakeholders. This gradual reduction is calculated by taking the difference between the TAC for 2012 and the ICES advice for 2013 and dividing this number by three:

- TAC 2012: 44,180 tons
- ICES advice 2013: 25,500 tons

- $(44,180 - 25,500)/3$: 6,230 tons

Each year the TAC shall be reduced by 6,230 tons which will result in the following TACs:

- 2013: 37,950 tons
- 2014: 31,720 tons



- 2015: 25,500 tons

Should a management plan be developed and evaluated as being precautionary by ICES before 2015, the management plan will supersede the recommendation set out above.

Western horse mackerel (area IIa, IVa, Vb, VIa, VIIa-c,e-k & VIIIa-e)

The Pelagic RAC advises as an interim measure to preliminarily follow the long-term management plan for this stock and to set the TAC for 2013 to 183,000 tons accordingly. However, this recommendation is subject to an immediate evaluation by ICES of the existing plan particularly the issue stated in the advice that the plan is only precautionary in the short-term. In the event that ICES concludes based on this evaluation of the plan that the TAC advised for 2013 under the plan should be significantly revised the PRAC is recommending an in year adjustment to the TAC for 2013.

Annex II: Long-term management plan for boarfish including a 25% stability factor

<p>Draft Management Plan for Boarfish, <i>Capros aper</i></p> <p>The Pelagic RAC</p> <p>October 2012</p>

This draft management plan for boarfish *Capros aper* has been agreed by the Pelagic RAC and was drafted with help and assistance of the Marine Institute (Ireland) and DTU Aqua (Denmark).

The plan provides for the sustainable management of the developing fishery for the small pelagic species boarfish, *Capros aper*, in EC waters of IV, V, VI, VII and VIII. Given the uncertainty about stock status and the recent nature of the fishery, a cautious development is warranted. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN FAO) gives guidelines on how new and developing fisheries should be dealt with (FAO, 1996). These guidelines are given in the annex, with notes on the boarfish fishery.

This plan sets out a framework for setting the TAC for boarfish in all situations, irrespective of the amount or quality of data available. The plan contains a decision rule framework that is considered robust to any level of information availability and quality. The plan uses a "Reference TAC", defined as the average annual catch over the period 2008-2010. Boarfish were not considered to be overfished during this period (ICES, 2011). It is based on an Australian harvest strategy approach (Wayte, 2009), adapted to suit the current ICES advisory paradigm (ICES, 2011).

Proposed Management Plan

This plan aims to achieve sustainable harvesting of boarfish, maintaining the stock within safe biological limits.

1. The TAC setting rules 1.1-1.6 shall apply. Precedence is in decreasing order from Rule 1.1. These are shown in the table below. The decision year for TAC setting is the last year in the assessment, and not the TAC year.

Rule	Assessment	Uncertainty	Condition	Procedure
1.1.a	SSB and F	Low	$SSB > B_{trigger}$	F_{target}
1.1.b			$SSB < B_{trigger}$	$SSB * (F_{target} / B_{trigger})$
1.1.c			TAC from 1.1.a or 1.1.b deviates by $> x \%$ from previous TAC	TAC will not be allowed to exceed maximum fluctuation of $x \%$
1.2.a	SSB and F	Higher	$SSB > B_{trigger}$	F_{target}
1.2.b			$SSB < B_{trigger}$	$SSB * (F_{target} / B_{trigger}) * G$

1.3.a	F	Any	$F < F_{target}$	Reference TAC * G
1.3.b			$F > F_{target}$	$RTAC + (-RTAC / F_{lim-F_{pa}}) * (F - F_{pa}) * G$
1.4.a	U	Any	$U > U_{pa}$, TAC =	Reference TAC * G
1.4.b			$U < U_{pa}$, TAC =	$U * (Reference TAC / U_{pa}) * G$
1.5.	Survey biomass	Any	TAC y,q3,4 = TACy+1, q1	ASB * $1 - \exp^{-F_{0.1}}$ * G * 0.62 ASB * $1 - \exp^{-F_{0.1}}$ * G * 0.38
1.6	None		No information on stock status <i>and</i> no risk of recruitment impairment	TAC = 33,000 t (interim management plan TAC)

- 2 Notwithstanding Paragraph 1, if in the opinion of ICES, the stock is at risk of recruitment impairment, a TAC shall be based on advice given by ICES, and at a lower level than provided for in Paragraph 1, rules 1.1 to 1.6.
- 3 Closed seasons, closed areas and moving on procedures shall apply to all directed boarfish fisheries as follows:
 - i A closed season shall operate from 15th March to the 31st August. This is because it is known that herring and mackerel are present in these areas and may be caught with boarfish.
 - ii A closed area shall be implemented inside the Irish 12 mile limit south of 52°30 from 12th February to 31st October, in order to prevent catches of Celtic Sea herring, known to form aggregations at these times.
 - iii If catches of other species covered by TAC, amount to more than 5% of the total catch by day by ICES statistical rectangle, then all fishing must cease in that rectangle for 5 consecutive days.

Abbreviations

SSB	Spawning Stock Biomass in tonnes
F	Fishing mortality in units per year
U	Fisheries independent abundance index, from IBTS survey, numbers per half hour
C	Commercial catch in tonnes
TSB	Total Stock Biomass in tonnes

Parameters of the management plan

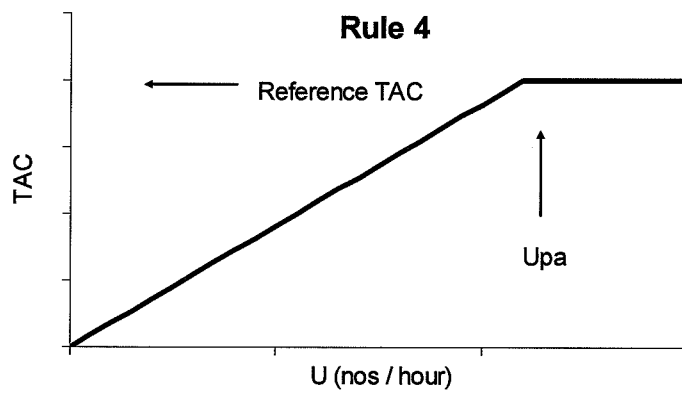
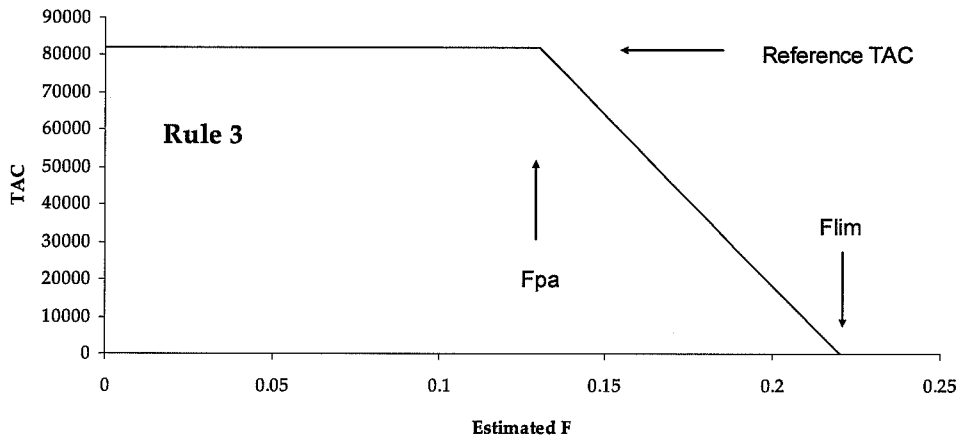
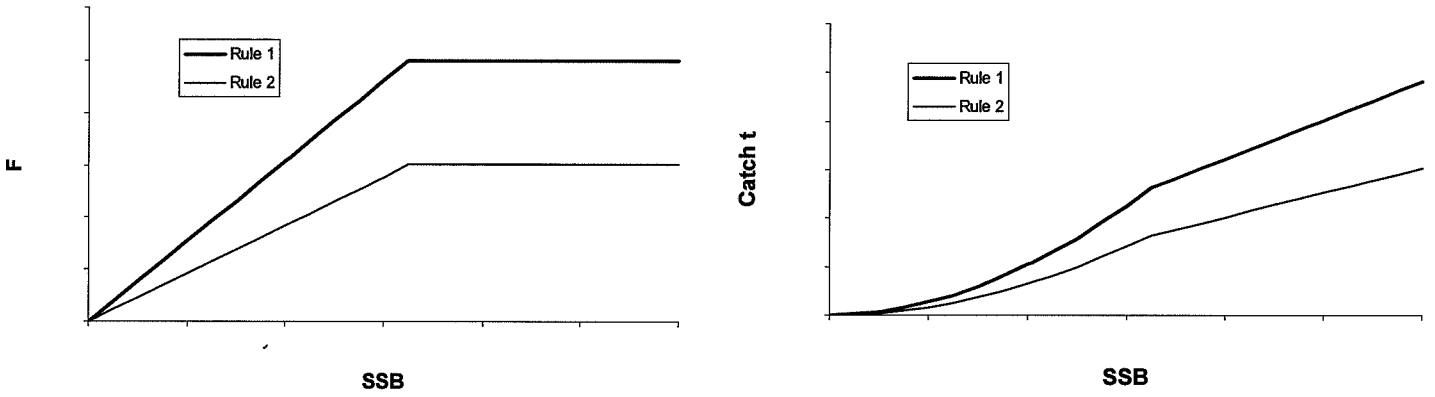
The final values of these parameters should be set by means of simulation studies. However at the outset they are defined as follows:

MSY SSB _{trigger}	xx t	$B_{lim} < SSB < B_{msy}$
B_{lim}	xx t	SSB consistent with recruitment impairment
B_{pa}	xx t	$B_{lim} * \exp^{(1.645 * CV_{SSB})}$

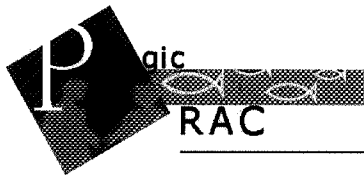
B_{msy}	xx t	Based on simulation
F_{target}	year ⁻¹	F_{msy} or a suitable proxy
$F_{0.1}$	0.13 y ⁻¹	Yield per recruit 2011 (preliminary)
F_{max}	0.28 y ⁻¹	Yield per recruit 2011, median (preliminary)
F_{pa} (preliminary)	0.135 y ⁻¹	0.9 * M (assuming limited forage status)
F_{lim}	0.22 y ⁻¹	$F_{pa} * \exp^{(1.645 * \sigma)}$; σ_F assumed = 0.3 (preliminary)
Reference TAC	82,000 t	mean catch 2008-2010 (ICES, 2011)
U_{max}	xn h ⁻¹	Maximum observed IBTS abundance (2008)
U_{lim}	x n h ⁻¹	0.2 * U_{max}
U_{pa}	x n h ⁻¹	0.5 * U_{max}
ASB	=	Acoustic survey biomass estimate (tonnes).
G_1	=	RTAC * $\exp^{-1.645 * \sigma_r}$
σ_r	=	CV (higher of process/observation error) where r refers to SSB, F, U or TSB, from rules 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

References

- FAO. 1996. Precautionary approach to capture fisheries and species introductions. Elaborated by the Technical Consultation on the Precautionary Approach to Capture Fisheries (Including Species Introductions). Lysekil, Sweden, 6-13 June 1995. *FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries*. No. 2. Rome, FAO. 1996. 54p.
- ICES. 2011. Boarfish in the Northeast Atlantic. In. ICES, 2011. Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2011. ICES Advice, 2011. Book 9, Section 9.4.22. 112-117.
- Wayte, S.E. 2009. (ed.). Evaluation of new harvest strategies for southeast scalefish and shark species. CSIRO Marine and Atmosphere Research, Hobart and Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Canberra, 137 pp.



Rules 1-4 illustrated in terms of F and TAC . Rules 1 and 2 are diagrammatic only.



Annex
Application of the Precautionary Approach to a new and developing fishery:
boarfish in the NE Atlantic.

UN FAO Guidelines	Comments in relation to boarfish
Always control access to the fishery early, before problems appear. An open access fishery is not precautionary.	Conservative TAC in place 2011, based on interim management plan
Immediately put a conservative cap (or default level) on both fishing capacity and the total fishing mortality rate. This could be achieved by limiting effort or total allowable catch. As well, attention should be paid to preventing excessive investment in the processing sector. The conservative caps should remain in place until analyses of data justify an increase in fishing effort or fishing mortality. The objective is to prevent the development of the fleet's fishing power and capacity outpacing the ability of management to understand the effect of existing fishing effort.	TAC in place, ICES annually assesses the stock. Need to balance development of processing capacity but avoiding overcapacity in either fish meal or human consumption.
Build in flexibility so that it is feasible to phase vessels out of the fleet, if this becomes necessary. To avoid new investments in fishing capacity, temporarily license vessels from another fishery.	No new vessels being built to target the fishery.
To limit risks to the resource and the environment, use area closures, which are relatively quick to implement and are easily enforceable. Closures provide refuges for fish stocks, protect habitat, and provide areas for comparison with fished areas;	Seasonal and area closures, in interim plan, adhered to by entire fleet.
Establish precautionary, preliminary biological limit reference points (e.g., spawning stock biomass less than 50% of the initial biomass) in the planning stage as described above.	Preliminary F based reference points available
Encourage fishing in a responsible manner to ensure long-term persistence of a productive stock or other parts of the ecosystem. For instance, encourage voluntary agreements on conduct in the fishery through co-management, community management, or some form of tenure of fishing rights.	Interim plan being followed on voluntary basis, although TACs set using different basis for 2012
Encourage development of fisheries that are economically viable without long-term subsidies.	In short term, subsidies may be a feature, but need to avoid dependence.
Establish a data collection and reporting system for new fisheries early in their development.	Programme established in 2007, detailed plan since 2009.
Immediately start a research programme on the stock and fisheries, including the response of individual vessels to regulations. When issuing a fishing license, require a vessel to report detailed information, including standard biological data and economic information.	Irish fishery has licensing requirement to collect samples. Industry funding survey, and biological sampling.
Take advantage of any opportunities for setting up experimental situations to generate information on the resources. This could be done by contrasting different harvesting strategies on subpopulations, for instance.	Underway as part of Management Strategy Evaluation, by Marine Institute.