



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 1/2021

January – March 2021

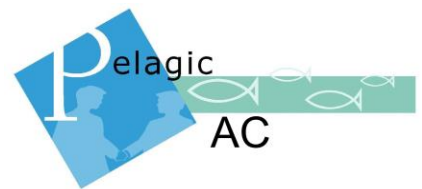


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PELAC MEETINGS

CONTROL FOCUS GROUP MEETING (12-01-2021, ONLINE)

The Control FG received an update from MEP Clara Aguilera on the latest developments on the revision of the Control Regulation. The PelAC learnt more about the timeline for the revision process and the nature of the amends to the regulation, which focus on a range of issues including traceability, the Landing Obligation, recreational fisheries, fisheries agreements with third countries, enforcement, and localisation systems.

Agreement had been reached on a number of key topics, notably the inclusion of recreational fisheries data, and fisheries agreements with third countries in order to avoid unfair competition with European fleets. Contention still existed around transparency and traceability, fishing capacity and engine power, use of CCTV, and vessel tracking technologies. Regarding the margin of tolerance, an agreement on this had not been possible due to a lack of political compromise.

An update on the Joint Deployment Plan on mackerel was provided following a response received from the SWW MS Group, which asserted that the data will not be supplied.

As the AC representative on the EFCA administrative board for 2021, the PelAC put forward Jose Beltran (OPP Lugo) to continue his position as PelAC representative.

The Control Focus Group meeting would be left in abeyance until the outcome of the Control Regulation.

ECOSYSTEM FOCUS GROUP MEETING (20-01-2021, ONLINE)

The Ecosystem FG commenced by reviewing the Terms of Reference for the group. It was agreed that the ecosystem approach would be considered in a broad way.

A questionnaire from the Commission on the wider environmental considerations of the Technical Measures regulation, which specifically dealt with bycatch of sensitive species, was discussed and a consensus response was developed.

The Group reviewed the topics of advice it produced during 2020, namely, the impacts of deep-sea mining (PelAC opinion), seismic activities (by NWWAC and PelAC), and offshore wind energy developments (by NWWAC, PelAC, NSAC) on fisheries and marine ecosystems, as well as multi-AC advice on the Blue Economy Roadmap. Future topics for advice and discussion were agreed as the Biodiversity Strategy, climate change, sensitive species bycatch, and joint advice topics with other ACs.

BREXIT FOCUS GROUP MEETING (17-02-2021, ONLINE)

The Brexit FG was established to provide a forum for discussion following UK exit from the EU and associated implications for fisheries management and AC functioning. The FG is co-chaired by Sean O'Donoghue (Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation) and Esben Sverdrup (DPPO).

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The inaugural FG meeting attracted a number of observers from other ACs (the NWWAC, the NSAC, the LDAC and the MAC), and each one gave an update on outcomes of Brexit discussions in their own organisations. There was an update on the status of bilateral and trilateral negotiations with no concrete outcomes on which to report.

The FG dealt primarily with a variety of options for the future functioning of the PelAC, post-Brexit. An array of options for the future functioning of the PelAC, developed by the Co-Chairs and the Secretariat, were presented to the group and discussed in detail.

Four options were considered to merit further discussion, including a review of whether there were additional stocks that should come under the PelAC's remit, consideration of whether there are ways to streamline functioning between ACs, and the exploration of a future 'pelagic forum'. These would be developed further by the co-chairs and Secretariat and carried forward for discussion at the next FG meeting.

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (02-03-2021, ONLINE)

The WG I meeting also focussed on evaluating its recommendations on fishing opportunities in relation to final TAC setting, and looked ahead at priorities for the coming year. For the majority of stocks, the negotiations had not been finalised.

For Atlanto-Scandian herring, the PelAC recommended following ICES advice to set the TAC in line with the management plan. There had been subsequent agreement to this by Coastal States. The suggested priorities for Atlanto-Scandian herring for the coming year were Brexit and the reshuffling of allocations, which has resulted in a reduced quota share for the EU to the extent that it is no longer a formal party to the fishery. Other priorities included the inter-benchmark on the interpretation of the spawning stock biomass survey, and maintaining a 'watching brief' on the issues arising from Brexit related to science, data collection, and management of the stock.

For North Sea/3a herring, the TAC was under discussion. It was expected that the final TAC for both North Sea and 3a herring would be close to what was recommended by ICES. Priorities included following developments on the long term management strategy, engaging in dialogue with the Commission and ICES on time/area closures to protect North Sea and 3a herring, and to map herring spawning grounds in relation to the impacts of seismic surveys/wind farms on pelagic fish stocks.

There was no final agreement on the TAC for Western Baltic spring spawning herring in 3a. The priorities included coordinating efforts with BSAC on the rebuilding plan, following EU/NO/UK negotiations on the TAC setting mechanism for 3a and North Sea Herring long term management plan, and similar to North Sea herring, engaging in dialogue with the Commission and ICES on time/area closures to protect the stock.

The PelAC recommendation for blue whiting was to follow the long term management strategy as advised by ICES. In terms of priorities for blue whiting for the coming year, the PelAC will continue to encourage an agreement on allocation sharing and management, engage with scientists on issues

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relating to recruitment and productivity, and conclude a way forward in managing blue whiting based on results of the hind casting study.

The ICES advice for North Sea horse mackerel, advocated for by PelAC, was to set the TAC at 14,014 tonnes following the precautionary approach, however, no final TAC had been agreed for this stock. Priorities were to continue the genetic stock identification project and associated work on historical catch rates, and follow-up on evaluation of discard plans and de minimis TAC provisions.

The Ecosystem FG update outlined that two advice papers had been produced since the start of 2021 – a PelAC response to the Technical Measures questionnaire and the Blue Economy Roadmap (multi-AC). Martin Pastoors provided an update on the ICES underwater noise data portal to determine the extent to which it could be useful for the PelAC's work on investigating noise impacts on spawning habitats of key species, such as herring. Furthermore, a way forward focus group on long term management strategies and rebuilding plans was in development, as well as a climate change briefing with CERES and ClimeFish.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (01-03-2021, CRN ONLINE SYSTEM)

During the first WGII meeting of 2021, the Group looked back at the previous year, examining what was achieved in terms of the December Council outcomes for pelagic stocks. The Group also looked forward and planned which issues would be dealt with during the upcoming year.

The ongoing post-Brexit negotiations were having a significant impact on fishing opportunities – with many TACs allocated as 'provisional' at the end of 2020, based on a percentage of the total ICES advice for the stock. For most stocks, the provisional TAC was set at 25% of the total for the year, for use up to the end of March. At the time of the meeting there was no agreement between Coastal States on management and sharing of stocks.

For North-East Atlantic (NEA) mackerel, the PelAC recommended following the ICES MSY advice at 852.284 tonnes. This had been reflected in the provisional TAC. WGII agreed future priorities for the stock, including following up on differences between the IESSN and egg survey results, advocating for a revised management strategy (based on an MSE conducted in 2020), and building on outcomes from the ICES WKRRMAC workshop held in 2019.

For Southern horse mackerel, the PelAC had recommended following the ICES advice for the stock – set at 128,627 for the year. This was reflected in TAC decisions. A lot of work had been put into developing a management plan for the stock, which was still being finalised in collaboration with the SWWAC. The Secretariat and Chair were pursuing an ICES review of a proposed amendment to Article 5.1 of the management plan, which shifted the MSY target date forwards from 2025 to 2022. Finalising this strategy was a priority for the stock.

On herring in 6a and 7b-c, the Chair highlighted the significant work carried out on the herring genetics survey, spear-headed by the PelAC and supported by the Commission via EASME. WGII heard how an 'urgent review' of the EASME project report had been requested, and a benchmark for the stock would take place later in 2021. Priorities for the stock focus on preparation for this

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benchmark, including holding another Focus Group meeting and furthering discussions around acoustic surveys in the post-Brexit landscape.

WGII priorities for Celtic sea herring focus on continuation of the scientific sampling programme for the stock, whilst supporting zero catch advice issued by ICES. Genetics work for Celtic sea herring was ongoing and it was hoped this could be furthered in 2021.

The PelAC's role with regards to Irish sea herring was significantly reduced in light of Brexit – with the Chair and WGII members noting that the EU's percentage share of the stock by 2025 would be just 4%. It was agreed that a pragmatic approach would be to simply maintain a 'watching brief' on this stock.

On boarfish, 2021 priorities included continuing to pursue a benchmark for the stock, as well as continuing to develop an assessment model. The PelAC would also pursue proposed closures via 2021 Discard Plans.

The WGII meeting also heard an update on the Control Focus Group, and a presentation from the Commission on the subject of the data collection framework. The Commission presentation focused on ways to communicate with actors within the DCF system – including how to connect into regional data collection coordinators (RCGs). Andrew Campbell presented an in-depth look at the MSE for NEA mackerel, showing WGII members various potential combinations of reference points, and their implications for the stock. It was agreed that this would be explored in greater detail at a future meeting of the PelAC – offering members a short-, medium-, and long-term view of different reference point options.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (02-03-2021, ONLINE)

During the Executive Committee meeting, an update was provided on stakeholder information in fishing opportunities advice following the MIAC and MIACO meetings on 14th January 2021. ICES notified of their intention to remove stakeholder information from the advice until further notice, and to conduct an internal review of mechanisms for incorporating it at the ACOM level. ICES were willing to collaborate with the PelAC further on this issue and the stakeholder information questionnaire developed by PelAC was met with interest.

Updates from the inter-AC meetings held on 18th January and 22nd February were also provided. The first meeting addressed the overall functioning of the ACs, with a focus on integration and participation of NGO members. There would be advice required 'in the Spring' on proposed amendments to the delegated act covering the ACs. The second meeting had focused on the Trade & Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and the EU, with some clarity given on the Specialised Fisheries Committee. Overall, the UK and EU were still in negotiations and the Commission did not have clear answers to many of the questions posed.

A performance review for the PelAC is in the planning stages and the ToR will be developed in time for review at the July ExCom. There followed discussions on allocation of vacant ExCom seats and UK

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participation in future meetings. There was agreement that UK representatives should not participate in ExCom meetings, but that in other settings their contributions were valuable and appropriate. The meeting finally heard a presentation from Anne-Marie Svoboda from the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, on the LIFE bycatch project.

ECOSYSTEM FOCUS GROUP (17-03-2021, ONLINE)

During this special 'briefing style' session of the Ecosystem Focus Group, presentations were given by two major European projects examining the impacts of climate change on marine ecosystems and fisheries: the CERES project, presented by Dr Myron Peck, and ClimeFish, presented by Prof. Michaela Aschan. Both projects have significant components relating to pelagic fisheries, and have worked alongside stakeholders from within the pelagics sector.

Both presenters covered a wide-range of topics and updates from these multi-actor, multi-year research initiatives. For example, Dr Myron Peck's presentation highlighted the knowledge gaps in current understanding of how climate change will affect key stocks. In particular, while species' responses to temperature changes have been well-studied, their responses to other factors such as salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, and the compounding effects of different factors have not.

Prof Michaela Aschan spoke of socio-economic projections generated by the ClimeFish project. ClimeFish had looked at five fleets' profitability projections under various climate change scenarios, over time. In broad terms, fleets were likely to see increased profits in the 2020s, followed by decline in 2030s and greater decline by 2050. She said that in the long term, effort may need to be reduced to keep profit at an expected level.

A detailed question and answer session followed the two 'briefings', with discussion ranging from changes in ocean currents, to quota management, to predator-prey interactions.

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MIAC MEETING (14-01-2021, ONLINE)

The MIAC meeting was organised and chaired by the NSAC. Subjects were put forward by ACs for discussion with ICES, based on agreed priorities amongst the participating ACs. The meeting focused on the following topics:

- Offshore wind, underwater noise & seismic activities
- Protected species bycatch
- BSAC workshop on stickleback
- Western Baltic spring spawning herring
- Advice on 3M Shrimp for 2021 and management implications

MIACO MEETING (14-01-2021, ONLINE)

The MIACO meeting covered the following topics:

- Review of ICES Advisory services in 2020
- Guide to ICES advice and principles
- Covid-19 pandemic disruption
- Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews
- Stakeholder information in fishing opportunities advice

ICES reported that stakeholder information had been removed from ICES advice sheets in 2020 in light of abbreviated advice supplied during the COVID-19 pandemic. During MIACO, ICES notified stakeholders of their intention to remove stakeholder information from the advice until further notice. ICES would commence a more fundamental, internal review of mechanisms for incorporating stakeholder advice at the ACOM level, explaining that the ultimate aim is to ensure a robust, formal process for incorporation of this kind of information – but it will not be added back into the advice until this has been achieved. The stakeholder information questionnaire developed by PelAC was met with interest and ICES were willing to collaborate with the PelAC further on this issue.

INTER-AC MEETING (18-01-2021, ONLINE)

Conclusions meeting by the Commission. The Commission will consider providing ACs with a timetable on topics, a sort of working arrangement with DG MARE to help them plan for the work ahead. The Commission also needs to improve its internal functioning and coherence towards ACs. Following this meeting, it will reflect on how to improve the follow-up of the advice received. More inter-AC meetings will be organised. The Commission already started looking into the amendment of the delegated act laying down the rules on the functioning of the Advisory Councils.

NWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (04-02-2021, ONLINE)

Sean O'Donoghue attended the NWW Member States Technical Group on the 4th February 2021 on behalf of the PelAC. The ACs (NWWAC & PELAC) were only allowed to participate in the meeting for the last item on the agenda. France are chairing the NWW Member States Group for 2021 and gave

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us a summary of their discussions in the earlier part of the meeting covering Celtic Sea Technical Measures, Red Seabream, King Scallop in the Eastern Chanel and Discard plan 2021-2023. The Chair indicated that the Group would be consulting the ACs on the Discard plan 2021-2023 over the coming months as they have to submit the plan to the Commission by 1st May.

Sean O'Donoghue presented our annual work programme covering the key heading such as the Implementation of the landing obligation, Control Focus group, Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, Regionalization, Future functioning of the ACs and Fisheries-science and other collaborations. He also outlined the dates for our upcoming meetings in March, April and July. There were no questions on the work programme from the Group but he did bring up the issue of JPD on mackerel and more importantly any future Pelagic JPDs. The Chair noted the PelAC view and said she would convey this to the main Member States Group and the Control Group.

NWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (03-03-2021, ONLINE)

Sean O'Donoghue brought up three issues at NWW Technical Group today namely de-minimis requirements for mackerel and horse mackerel in NWW discard plans, the boarfish closure for inclusion in the discard plans and the implementation of article 27 in the TCM on catch composition rules. The Chair said the NWW Group was aware of the issue of the de-minimis requirements and that the Group would be discussing this at a future meeting. On the boarfish closure the Chair asked that we send our recommendation again, to which I agreed. The issue of article 27 was noted.

SCHEVENINGEN MEMBER STATE GROUP MEETING (04-03-2021, ONLINE)

Information will follow later.

SWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (15-03-2021, ONLINE)

It was the 2nd technical meeting. Basically each MS made a quick update and then they asked questions to the Commission about the 4 points on the agenda:

- Red Sea Bream - STECF won't have time to analyse the joint rec. before May. Therefore, the SWWAC have till the end of March to provide comments (extended deadline)
- Cetaceans Bycatch - Spain is trying to get data from the observer programs but at this stage it is only preliminary. They will get back to the ACs on this issue in the upcoming weeks.
- Discard Plans - This was the topic that took more time. Firstly they will send info on the exemptions that end in 2021 and ask to extend one more year. On the other exemptions that they have to present new info yearly, they will deliver it a bit later.
- Directed Fisheries - they have to send info to the Commission no later than the 1st of May, because STECF is going to analyse this info on the meeting right after this date (thresholds, number of vessels, etc.)

The Technical Meeting was relatively short, because the work is preliminary and a lot of data has to be put together by the MSs before they get into in depth discussions. SWWAC pointed to advice 143

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SWWAC which has a paragraph on red sea bream but said they will ask the members for more input till the end of the month.

SWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (18-03-2021, ONLINE)

The meeting lasted about 15min and it was just with Juan Antonio Espejo Leña, who summed up the discussions that took place in the morning:

- LO - Discard Plans - gave the floor to MS Fr - want to present possible new di minimis exemption proposals. Goncalo Carvalho asked if he could say on which species/fisheries they were on, or at least if it was about pelagic stocks. Juan António answered that they will only be able to say this in the next Technical meeting
- Red Sea Bream - HLG members agreed that it made sense for the SWWAC to have a bit more time to give input (till the end of March). They are working on getting the scientific data to support the joint recommendation and the exemption
- Cetaceans - a bit more time spent on this item, because FR and ES are working hard to collect and compile the information from their observer programs. They will send info to the Commission in the next few weeks, but one of the points of discussion was to establish a joint way to collect and report the data
- Directed fisheries - FR again stressed that it would be very helpful to have the same type and format of data from all the MSs to send to STECF and the Commission asap
- They will send drafts of the Cetaceans and Directed Fisheries joint recommendations to the SWWAC and PelAC.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

6, 7 AND 8 JULY 2021 - WORKING GROUP I AND II AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

These meetings will be organized online.

6, 7 OCTOBER 2021 - WORKING GROUP I AND II, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETINGS:

If possible we would like to organize these meetings in Den Haag.

For more information please visit our website:

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

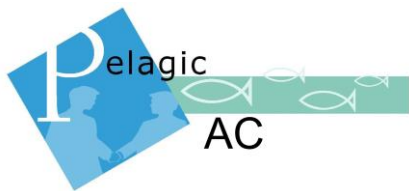
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