



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 3/2016

July-September 2016

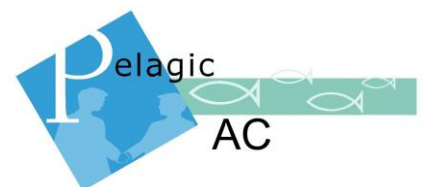


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PELAC MEETINGS

WORKSHOP ON THE LANDING OBLIGATION (5 JULY 2016, BRUSSELS)

The Pelagic AC organized a meeting to discuss problems encountered to date with the pelagic landing obligation and possible solutions. The meeting was hosted by the Commission and well attended by members of the Pelagic AC, Commission representatives, ICES, EFCA and representatives of the North Western Waters and North Sea regional groups. The meeting started with presenting and explaining problems identified to date without going into any discussions. Examples of such problems included impacts on labour conditions due to closed discard chutes and the question how a de minimis exemption is being applied, whether on individual vessel or Member States basis.

Subsequently a brief presentation of the Pelagic AC's control recommendations to the regional groups followed. Most notably in relation to mandatory reporting of gramme sizes as proposed by the Pelagic AC.

Afterwards there was a thorough discussion on the issues listed and progress has been made on a number of them. The most prominent discussion was in regards to bycatch of zero quota and zero TAC species and how this could be handled, e.g. through different flexibility mechanisms and quota swaps. At the same time it was pointed out that since the introduction of the landing obligation the willingness of Member States to swap quota has strongly decreased. However, there was general consensus that it was not the intention of the landing obligation to close a fishery early in the season that still has a lot of quota left and people agreed that common sense must prevail and that pragmatic solutions must be found.

Another issue discussed included the use of technical measures, e.g. the new pelagic grid developed in Sweden to reduce saithe bycatch in the herring fishery. The Commission explained that in the short term it was not necessary to wait for a revision of the Technical Measures Regulation to implement such measures, but that this could be done through joint recommendations or pilot projects.

The perceived conflict with the Animal By-product Regulation has also been resolved. The Commission explained that undersized fish is still edible fish and does not fall under the Animal By-product Regulation. However, there might be a point at which people themselves declare something to be an animal by-product and from this point onwards there is no way back.

Other topics, e.g. in relation to tonnage increase for safety reasons, mandatory gramme size collection and others will have to be addressed again in future meetings. Overall people agreed that the workshop was very useful and that this forum should continue.

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (12 JULY 2016, PETERHEAD)

The focus of this meeting was on the presentation of the ICES advice for North Sea and Western Baltic spring spawning (WBSS) herring as well as the ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM).

Dr. Christopher Moore, executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), attended the meeting and presented the ecosystem guidance document developed by

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the MAFMC to accelerate the implementation of an EAFM in Mid-Atlantic waters. This guidance document is based on a series of workshops and white papers to which different stakeholders contributed significantly. The main strategy of the MAFMC to tackle the vast concept of EAFM is by breaking it down into smaller units that can be dealt with more easily. The main focus areas at the moment are climate change and variability, forage fish, habitat and interactions. The EAFM definition employed by the MAFMC specifically acknowledges humans as part of the ecosystem by recognizing the biological, social, economic and physical interactions among components of the ecosystem. The work done by the MAFMC is hoped to inspire future work of the Pelagic AC's ecosystem focus group.

The ICES advice for North Sea herring was based on the multi-annual management plan. However, the F_{msy} value for North Sea herring has been updated while the multi-annual management plan still operates with the old F value. This led to a discussion of whether the management plan should be updated given that it is no longer compatible with the MSY approach. A decision on this stock has been postponed to the October meeting.

Regarding WBSS herring the ICES advice was based on MSY. There was a brief discussion on the optional flexibility to catch part of the TAC of this stock in the North Sea. At the high end of the spectrum, this could lead to overfishing of North Sea herring whereas at the low end of the spectrum this could exceed F_{msy} for WBSS herring. The advice for the stock will be discussed further in October.

The last issue addressed at the meeting concerned the focus group on technical measures which already drafted a response to the Commission's proposal on a new Technical Measures Regulation. However, given the BREXIT vote it was decided to park the issue for the moment until more clarity will be provided in relation to the BREXIT implications.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (12 JULY 2016, PETERHEAD)

The meeting focussed on the ICES advice for Celtic Sea herring, Irish Sea herring and herring in area VIa and VIIb,c as well as progress made on a number of other stocks.

The ICES advice for Celtic Sea herring was based on MSY whereas for years the Pelagic AC has recommended following the long-term management strategy it has developed and which has been evaluated to be precautionary by ICES. The Working Group agreed to continue recommending following the management strategy.

Regarding Irish Sea herring ICES recommends following MSY which was supported by the Working Group given the lack of an alternative management strategy.

For herring in VIa and VIIb,c ICES recommended zero catches in 2017 whereas for 2016 ICES has provided advice on a monitoring TAC to allow catches for genetic sampling and surveys carried out by the industry. Several presentations were provided on this stock in regards to genetic stock identification and the planned industry acoustic surveys to provide biomass estimates. There also was a discussion on the next benchmark for this stock which was supposedly scheduled for 2017. However, ICES could not confirm that a benchmark would indeed take place in 2017 given that it was unclear if sufficient new data will be available as well as enough manpower to analyze these data.

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and participate in a benchmark. In the end it was decided to ask the Commission to include such a benchmark in its next MoU with ICES.

Work was presented on the development of a juvenile abundance index for Western horse mackerel based on groundfish survey data which looked very promising. The idea was to eventually include another fishery-independent data source in the assessment to decrease uncertainty. Genetic analysis of horse mackerel, including Western, Southern and North Sea horse mackerel, was ongoing as well as other types of analysis, e.g. chemical and batch analysis. The genetics project seemed promising, however, there was a technical error encountered that will have to be solved.

The proposal from the South Western Waters regional group to amend the minimum conservation size for southern horse mackerel was discussed. However, no agreement could be reached during the meeting and it was decided to follow-up on the discussion offline.

The ICES evaluation of the Coastal States management strategy for Northeast Atlantic mackerel has been postponed to 2017. The Working Group will follow the process.

In terms of boarfish it was pointed out that the North Western Waters regional group has rejected the Pelagic AC's request to implement the closures as foreseen in the long-term management strategy through an amendment to the pelagic discard plan. It was concluded that it was necessary to follow-up on this issue with the regional groups and to find out why they largely ignore recommendations put forward by the Pelagic AC.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (12 JULY 2016, PETERHEAD)

During the Executive Committee meeting the chairman announced that following the BREXIT vote he decided to step down as chair of the Pelagic AC at the October meeting. He invited members interested in taking over chairmanship to contact the secretariat as soon as possible.

Subsequently the Commission presented this year's consultation document on fishing opportunities in 2017 which also contained a report on the implementation of the landing obligation. There was a brief discussion on the document in terms of clarity of language and in regards to how changes in reference points affect the validity of a multiannual management strategy for TAC-setting. Some people also mentioned that the role of the Advisory Councils should be acknowledged in the consultation document. The chairman asked members to submit any further comments to the secretariat as soon as possible so that the Executive Committee could prepare a written response to the consultation document.

Afterwards a researcher from University College Dublin gave a presentation on the possibilities of Next Generation Sequencing and how technological developments have made genetic analysis much more efficient and cost-effective over the past years. He highlighted the benefits this kind of research could provide to fisheries management in the future.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

SEMINAR STATE OF THE FISH STOCKS (15 JULY 2016, BRUSSELS)

PELAC representative: Esben Sverdrup-Jensen

On behalf of the PelAC Esben Sverdrup-Jensen participated in the EU-Commission meeting on the state of the fish stocks. Representatives from the scientific community, Commission and ACs presented their views on the management of fish stocks.

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen stated the following:

“Thank you Director General for the opportunity to bring forward issues of relevance to the Pelagic AC.

The Pelagic AC is committed to the sustainable management of pelagic and straddling fish stocks and has a very long and strong track-record of providing detailed consensus based advice on the management of stocks – including developing long term management plans.

When fishermen, processors, NGOs and civil society come together to form comprehensive advice on management issues, there can be very little political gain or benefit in going against the agreed interests and will of the all relevant stakeholders.

Nonetheless the EU Commission and Member States has continuously disregarded advice produced by the PelAC, and instead pursued undefined concepts and ideas.

The most valid example is on the landing obligation and the implementation of the discard ban. Instead of following the PelAC recommendations, they left the sector in a regulatory chaos. 1.5 years after the implementation most questions remain unanswered and challenges unsolved.

On blue whiting the Pelagic AC developed a long term management plan. It was repeatedly evaluated as precautionary by ICES, but it was never adopted by Commission and Member States. Instead we are now in a spineless situation with no agreed TAC and no management principles followed by Member States and Commission. This must change.

As we have seen in the previous presentation, the pelagic fleet in the EU is well structured, well balanced and compliant. The greatest threat to pelagic fish stocks and pelagic fishing communities is no longer over fishing. It is flawed and flimsy science.

That is why we always give the same piece of advice to scientists visiting the Pelagic AC: Do a reality check on your work, on what comes out of your laptop, the model runs, the tables and the scenarios. Do they really match what goes on in the real world, out at sea. Is it the same developments fishermen who spend 300 + days at sea register? Have you even remembered to talk to anyone who has actually been at sea?

Did 1,5 mio t of blue whiting really just disappear into the blue from one year to another?

Is the mackerel stock really decreasing – while at the same time spreading as far as the Baltic and Greenland?

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The same piece of advice can be given to you – the Commission. Do a reality check on what you do – before you do it.

Is it really wise to make a bilateral sharing arrangement on the basis of two completely different perceptions of the same stock?

Does it really make sense not to follow consensus AC advice provided and agreed by all relevant stakeholders?

Thank you for the opportunity”

NWW TECHNICAL MEETING: CHOKE SPECIES WORKSHOP (5-6 SEPTEMBER 2016, EDINBURGH)

PELAC representatives: Irene Kingma, Rob Banning

Participants from: UK (Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Belgium, France, Spain, Netherlands, Ireland, NWWAC (Barrie Deas; Emiel Brouckaert; and Liane Veitch) & PELAC (Rob Banning and Irene Kingma)

Welcome and agenda overview

The UK chair confirmed that the NWW high level group (HLG) will meet at the end of September to discuss the developments the technical group have made in relation to choke mitigation.

Update form the ACs

- NWWAC industry representative: NWWAC representatives attended last TG meeting on 17 July, since then not a lot has happened (despite submission of some preparation for this meeting). Industry believes exemptions will be needed to make landing obligation (LO) work, interpretation of 5% of *de minimis* perhaps should be looked at again, high survival exemption will go a long way to making LO work and should be used where possible. Interspecies flexibility has potential to help with implementation, but how this will work still has to be determined. Other solutions should be looked into, such as management approaches other than TAC for some stocks/species.
- NWWAC industry representative: we appreciate invitations to these meetings; but more warning would help aid preparation. The Challenge now is moving from abstract to concrete. ACs also working on Technical Measures Regulation proposal and Multiannual management plan proposals, both of which are relevant to the implementation of the LO. The effective closure of fisheries by choke will lead to unknown displacement effects which will need to be addressed/controlled somehow so there aren't negative knock-on effects.
- NWWAC other interest group (OIG) representative: explained the areas of different industry/OIG opinions, e.g. restrictive use of *de minimis* and need for good evidence before granting high survival exemption.

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- NWWAC industry representative: need to start thinking seriously about contingency measures. The faster we can come up with choke mitigation measures, the faster the AC will be able to support further implementation of the LO.
- PELAC: 18 months experience with the LO, so far workable. Main problems so far have been with freezer trawlers with boarfish and hake, despite lots of trials into avoidance (particularly net devices and acoustics (sonar and echosounders)).
- UK: hosted this meeting as there is a clear need for regional solutions to choke to be developed well in advance of 2019.
- Commission: planning a review of the TAC framework in 2017, looking at how it is working for each stock/fishery to determine if TAC management is achieving the objectives of the CFP for each stock, and if not, how this could be improved.

Assessment of various choke mitigation options

Participants were sent a 'homework assignment' (PELAC was added to the participant list too late for them to participate in this) which was based on the outcomes from the choke meeting in April. Participants were asked to score several potential choke alleviating solutions and come up with additional solutions of their own.

During the meeting all the positive and negative sides of the potential solutions were discussed.

Discussion of homework

Proposal 1: Review the number and type of TACs for highly mixed fisheries with particular consideration given to removing certain stocks from the TAC and Quota Regulation and treat some stocks as prohibited (and apply alternative management measures).

Some Member States:

- Want to have a new list with species that are treated as prohibited species but are not prohibited species (can be landed within quota but not sold for profit??). A special category would have to be created for these in the TAC and Quota Regulation.

Concerns expressed:

- There currently is no legal framework for a category like this, unclear how this could be applied (worked out examples needed).
- Need for adequate and enhanced monitoring.

Proposal 2: Applying an "others TAC" to deal with unavoidable catches (example from the TAC and Quota Regulation: bycatch quota for Bluefin tuna).

Scotland: Tried to work up an example using deep sea stocks but ran into multiple issues.

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- very difficult to sort out in a situation where some of the stocks you do not want to catch (low or 0 TAC) and others are targeted.
- How would relative stability apply?
- How could it be controlled?

European Commission:

- There is a difference between *others TAC* and *others quota*.

Comments:

- When the CFP reform was done in 2013 others quota was considered but it did not go ahead because of relative stability issues.
- Looked at others quota for the Irish Sea but wouldn't be a sensible option.
- Norway others category is for quite similar species caught in only 1 metier, most situations in Europe are different.
- The group TAC for skates and rays have proven to be very restrictive creating potential chokes situations.

Proposal:

- Proposed to look for and work up an example of a situation where this might work.

Proposal 3: Manage target species on basis of F_{msy} , bycatch alternative for other stocks.

Proposed by Northern Ireland fleet, whiting and nephrops in Irish Sea used as example. Whiting has an 80 tons TAC but bycatch is 700 tons of whiting below MCRS a year.

Additional:

- Should be combined with obligation to implement technical measures.
- Ireland: F_{msy} cod VIa = 40 tons, catches 1800 tons!!

European Commission:

- Have to find workable solutions but MSY cannot be dropped as it is a policy objective of the CFP (agreed by EC, Council and EP). But Baltic plan shows the ranges concept allows for flexibility. Look at all possible solutions before you can start talking about a change of the regulation/objectives.

NWWAC:

- Brexit will change NWW TAC setting, will be more like a Norway negotiations situation. There MSY does not really feature in the way it does in the EU.

European Commission:

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- Even after Brexit the policy objectives will remain.

OIG representatives from the ACs were asked if they could envisage a situation where fishing above MSY would be acceptable after 2020:

- Answer: EU has to abide by international agreement, the objectives in art 2.2 are there for a reason, rebuilding biomass will lead to higher yield and profitability in the long run.

European Commission:

- Too early to start questioning CFP objectives but if it's clear that tailored solutions might be needed for certain species/gears/areas.

Scored same as suggestion "For identified metiers create leading TACs, remove non-target species TACs, establish a percentage of bycatch, with objective to reduce over X years and establish accompanying measures for the most sensitive species."

Proposal 4: Improve data collection on choke species to support appropriate uplifts.

UK: STECF already has a lot of data on catches and discards collected under the Data Collection Framework, this is the input for the calculation.

Scotland: this seems to be different from discussion yesterday when we were discussing sticking to Fmsy.

NL-scientist: for stocks without MSY assessment this could help.

Scotland: invest in getting the right proxies.

NL-scientist: yes, also the discard behaviour will change which will lead to an over calculation of uplift.

NL: improving data on data poor stocks can lead to improved fit for the TAC.

UK: that's a long term solution, short term uplifts will need to be set correctly.

Scoring: will not help in delivering MSY by 2020 but it is a useful and popular measure. Uplift is a short term solution anyway. Uplift only goes to Member States with a quota. In other words if a Member State has 0, and the uplift is 10%, than this Member State still has a quota of 0.

Proposal 5: Adjust the quota area split to reflect the current biological situation (for stocks that are biologically the same).

Ireland: this could work for cod, haddock and whiting in the nephrops fishery.

UK: hake > example from April Council, merit in combining the WW and NS stocks, and allow flexibility that (part of) the North Sea quota can be caught in the Western waters.

Spain: this example would change relative stability that is a different question.

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Belgium: there does not seem to be an adequate example to use this.

Proposal 6: Get guidance from STECF on how evidence for high survivability exemptions will be reviewed.

UK: worried that not all gears/species will be reviewed in time so will need to work closely with STECF/ICES on getting input on what questions need to be asked.

Proposal 7: Pooling the *de minimis* for the different pelagic species that constitute a bycatch of the demersal vessels to alleviate quota (example from France for blue whiting, herring, horse mackerel, boarfish). Reason: France does not have a quota for boarfish and the pelagic quotas of the other species belong to the pelagic companies in France.

UK: *de minimis* only for specific species in specific situations + this sounds like a pelagic others quota for demersal fisheries.

France: others quota would apply to the full fleet, not just the demersal. Temporary solution only.

UK: there is an example for the Skagerrak.

France: would be for the entire demersal fleet.

Proposal 8: Obligatory swapping of quota

Belgium: stimulate is better word, obligatory no.

UK: agrees.

NWWAC industry representative: swaps need to be reviewed on a case by case basis, but some choke situations will only be alleviated if the Member States do not move on certain swaps and transfers.

No scoring, will provide an overview of the discussion to the HLG.

Proposal 9: For identified métiers create leading TACs, remove non-target species TACs, establish a percentage of bycatch, with objective to reduce over X years and establish accompanying measures for the most sensitive species.

UK: so for one métier at a time?

Ireland: individual rules per métier would be a nightmare to set up and enforce, we don't want new catch composition rules.

Spain: want this for all fisheries, on a fleet by fleet basis, is already used in NAFO area and Norwegian waters. A TAC for unavoidable bycatches, for species which were discarded until now, F remains the same if fishing pattern remains the same.

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Netherlands: we don't have a good grasp on metiers, changing all the time, so can't work with this.

Meeting adjourns with conclusion that this meeting was good for getting clarity on the questions, but not necessarily providing the answers hoped for. Next to that, it is more useful to work on the basis of case studies/practical examples, so to make it concrete. HLG will need to take some hard decisions on relative stability, fishing limits and number of TACs.

3 November 2016: NSAC workshop on choke species

ADG WIDE (13-16 SEPTEMBER 2016, COPENHAGEN)

PELAC representatives: Esben Sverdrup-Jensen, Ian Gatt, Sean O'Donoghue, Søren Anker Pedersen

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 the PELAC. This year ADGWIDE also provided advice on blue whiting management to NEAFC, and a revised 2016 mackerel advice.

Mackerel

Revised 2016 Advice

ICES released a revised version of advice for Northeast Atlantic Mackerel in 2016. The revision was produced because an error in the recruitment index applied in the 2015 assessment was recently found and corrected.

The correction results in a 14% upwards revision of the Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) value in 2015 and a 3% downwards revision of the Fishing mortality (F) value in 2014 relative to the advice released in September 2015.

Applying the MSY approach results in a 16% upwards revision of the catch advice for 2016, from 667 385 tonnes to 773,842 tonnes.

2017 Advice

ICES advice is based on the MSY approach ($F=0.22$); catches in 2017 should be no more than 944,302 tonnes, and existing measures to protect the North Sea spawning component should remain in place.

Fishing mortality is estimated to be 0.24 in 2016 – based on ICES estimate of total catch. The surveys give contradictory information on the recent development of the stock. The 2016 egg survey suggests a decrease in the SSB since 2013 while the abundances-at-age from the IESSNS index have increased between those years. As a result of this discrepancy, in this year's assessment, the surveys have less influence on the estimated stock abundance than the catch information.

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North Sea horse mackerel

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, catches in 2017 should be no more than 18,247 tonnes.

The survey indices show contrasting trends: The French Channel Groundfish Survey (CGFS) Q4 abundance index from area 7d, where most of the catches were taken during the last years, indicates an increase in the fishable biomass of North Sea horse mackerel (+20 cm). This is due to stronger than average recruitment (<20 cm) in 2013 and particularly in 2014. However, the IBTS Q3 survey does not show such a clear increase, and the index is at the level of 2012 and 2013.

Considering the uncertainties involved in the survey indices, the new information available this year does not change the perception of the stock. Advice in previous years was for total catch under the assumption that discarding was negligible. New information available for 2015 indicates non-negligible discarding in non-directed fisheries. This new information is taken into account in the catch advice for 2017.

Blue whiting

ICES advises that when the MSY approach ($F = 0.32$) is applied, catches in 2017 should be no more than 1,342,330 tonnes.

Fishing mortality (F) has increased from a historical low in 2011 to above FMSY since 2014. Spawning-stock biomass (SSB) increased since 2010 and is above MSY Btrigger. Recent recruitments are estimated above average, but with a high uncertainty.

The assessment now 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 preliminary first semester data. This is expected to provide more realistic fishing mortalities in the assessment year.

A new version of the SAM model (Berg and Nielsen, 2016) is now used for the blue whiting assessment. This model accounts for age-correlated observations in the IBWSS survey. However, the blue whiting assessment results are still highly sensitive to the value of the most recent survey index.

The EU industry reported that the fishery for blue whiting in 2016 was very good. High catch rates were maintained all through the season and the vessels had no difficulty catching their allocations. There was a higher proportion of smaller blue whiting in the catch at the start of the season than in the previous year. The main fishery off the west coast of Ireland was further offshore in 2016 than 2015.

It would be fair to say there remains a lot of uncertainty surrounding the quality of the blue whiting assessment.

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Blue whiting Long Term Management Strategy

ICES advises that the harvest control rule (HCR) proposed for the Long Term Management Strategy (LTMS) for blue whiting, as described in the request, is precautionary given the ICES estimates of Blim (1.5 mio t), Bpa (2.25 mio t) and FMSY (0.32).

The HCR was found to be precautionary both with or without 20% TAC change limits above Bpa. However, the 20% TAC change limits can lead to the TAC being lowered significantly if the stock is estimated to be below Bpa, while also limiting how quickly the TAC can increase once the stock is estimated to have recovered above Bpa.

The evaluation found that including a 10% interannual quota flexibility ('banking and borrowing') in the LTMS had an insignificant effect on the performance of the HCR.

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WKIRISH: SECOND WORKSHOP ON THE IMPACT OF ECOSYSTEM AND ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVERS ON IRISH SEA FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (26-29 SEPTEMBER 2016, BELFAST)

PELAC representative: Alan McCulla

The Second ICES workshop on the impact of ecosystem and environmental drivers on Irish Sea fisheries management (WKIrish2) was chaired by Mike Armstrong, UK and met at AFBI in Belfast, UK, 26–29 September 2016, to carry out a total of 12 tasks (listed below) for Irish Sea whiting, cod, haddock, plaice and herring to provide input data and parameters for the WKIrish3 benchmark meeting, which has now been scheduled for early 2017. Proper scientific analysis for individual stocks is essential as we move towards ecosystem based management advice for the Irish Sea.

The Pelagic AC's focus at this meeting was Herring in Division 7a North of 52°30'N (Irish Sea).

There is no shortage of herring in the Irish Sea...' was the headline emerging from the discussion, with absolute biomass estimated to be between 70,000 and 100,000 tonnes.

Reliable information about the herring fishery in the Irish Sea can be traced back to 1823 and there is clear evidence the fishery has followed a cyclical pattern since then.

In more recent times it is only since 2012 that ICES has adopted an assessment for the stock, which is good news. Nevertheless, problems with the model used in the assessment were the main feature of discussions in Belfast.

The main issue occurs because the model is unable to factor in what is a significant feature of Irish Sea herring, namely changes in survey (catch) selectivity (age), which are brought about because of significant inter-annual variation in the migratory patterns leading up to spawning. The assessment model gives more prominence to catch data and less to acoustic survey data and the question arises how this can be addressed. In other words how can migration patterns and resulting changes in catch selectivity by age be modelled?

This question will be referred to IPS (International Pelagic Survey) for discussion and evaluation at their next meeting in January 2017. An early solution would be appreciated by the industry, which despite the high levels of SSB faces the prospect of a further 10% reduction in the TAC for 2017. In 2016 the TAC is lower than what it was in 2003, when the SSB was less than half the weight it is today.

WKIrish2 Tasks:

a) Explain the basis for existing assumptions on stock structure and mixing rates between stock areas, or proposed new assumptions which form the basis for spatial aggregation of fishery and survey data and/or adjustments to data sets to account for stock mixing.

b) Review and recommend life history parameters (e.g. growth parameters, maturity ogives, fecundity, natural mortality), for use in assessments. Where applicable, provide appropriate models to describe growth, maturation, and fecundity by age, sex, or length.

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- c) Describe the history of fishery management regulations and actions that are expected to have caused changes in the quality of fishery catch data or the selectivity patterns of fisheries that are of relevance for the scientific assessment of the stocks and provision of advice.
- d) Develop time-series of (commercial and recreational) fishery catch estimates, including both retained and discarded catch, with associated measures or indicators of bias and precision.
- e) Estimate the length and age distributions of fishery landings and discards if feasible, with associated measures or indicators of bias and precision.
- f) Develop recommendations for addressing fishery selectivity (pattern of catchability at length or age) in the assessment model.
- g) Recommend values for discard mortality rates, if required, following the guidelines provided by ICES WKMEDS and indicate the range of uncertainty in values.
- h) Review all available and relevant fishery dependent and independent data sources on relative trends in abundance or absolute fish abundance, and recommend which series are considered adequate and reliable for use in stock assessments. Provide measures or indicators of bias and precision.
- i) Identify any longer term or episodic/transient changes in environmental drivers known to influence distribution, growth, recruitment, natural mortality or other aspects of productivity and which are relevant for assessments and forecasts.
- j) Review progress on existing recommendations for research to develop and improve the input data and parameters for assessments, and develop and prioritise new proposals.
- k) For each stock, develop a spreadsheet of assessment model input data that reflects the decisions and recommendations of the data evaluation workshop.
- l) Prepare the data evaluation workshop report providing complete documentation of workshop actions, decisions, list of working documents, other information used by the workshop, and a list of any additional tasks to be completed following the workshop with dates and responsibilities for completion.

MISCELLANEOUS

FOCUS GROUPS

The PELAC currently has a number of focus groups under the remit of Working Group I and II

Working Group I:

- Ecosystem approach to fisheries management (“ecosystem focus group”)
- Technical Measures Regulation (paused until more information is available regarding BREXIT)

Working Group II:

- Herring in 6.a and 7.b,c
- Western horse mackerel
- Control and implementation of the landing obligation

If you are not yet a member of these focus groups, but wish to join any of them, please contact the secretariat.

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

WORKING GROUP I AND II MEETING (5 OCTOBER 2016, DEN HAAG)

The upcoming Working Group meetings will focus on the ICES advice for widely distributed stocks as well as progress made in various focus groups. Presentations will be given on ongoing efforts to increase the knowledge base of various stocks, mainly herring in 6.a & 7.b,c and horse mackerel. First simulation results of a potential harvest strategy for southern horse mackerel will be presented too.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING (6 OCTOBER 2016, DEN HAAG)

The Executive Committee meeting will deal with the TAC recommendations provided by the Working Groups. The president of NEAFC will give a presentation on “Coastal States and joint management of pelagic stocks”.

During the General Assembly meeting the final activity and financial report for 2015-2016 will be presented as well as the budget and work program for 2016-2017. Afterwards an interim chairman will be elected to cover the period until the next general elections in October 2017.

For more information and to access meeting documents please visit:

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pelagic Advisory Council

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