



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 1 / 2022

January – March 2022



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SEAWISE PROJECT (26-01-2022, ONLINE)

SEAwise sets out to develop an advice for managers on how to operationalise the application of the Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management (EBAFM). The scoping meeting for the SEAwise project was held to help the project coordinator better understand the views of stakeholders in terms of desired project outcomes. During the meeting, participants could contribute through an interactive online tool and were asked to share ideas and priorities distinguishing between ecological, social and impact factors.

Ecological items

In terms of ecological items, the key interests for ecosystem advice identified by the participants were: species interaction, climate considerations, MPAs and balanced harvesting. Balanced harvesting looks for trade-offs between the harvest of different species, and is thus linked to species interactions.

To a lesser extent, the following areas were also considered of interest: protection of spawning areas for pelagic species, non-commercial species, sensitive habitats, trophic relations, bycatch, sensitive species, noise impacts, impacts seismic activities, impacts of offshore wind farms, impacts of dredging activities, new species.

On wind farms, it was stressed that noise wasn't the only impact to consider: the development of offshore wind parks can potentially impact circulation patterns in the North Sea as a whole. Further it is important to understand the impacts of different stages of the wind park development (from construction to operational noise) on the different life stages of surrounding fish populations.

There are some cases of new species interesting specific areas, such as anchovies in the North Sea or chub mackerel in the Bay of Biscay. These migrations can partly be attributed to climate change. It is important to understand competition effects and the impacts on fishery development of these new species. In some demersal fisheries, changes in target species are becoming apparent due to these effects.

A final suggestion was made to include impacts of fishing on different types of species as a function of nutritional value. There are potentially interesting trade-offs to consider.

Social items

The most important item agreed by the participants in the context of social items was the public perception of fishing industry. The view of the public on the fishing sector has a large impact on the recruitment individuals in the industry. It also drives policy development that may not be well thought through.

To a lesser extent the following themes were also considered important: recruitment of fishers, loss fishing grounds, coastal community resilience, loss of jobs, market tools, ecological transition, CO2 emissions, diversification, food security, labour standards, energy consumption.

Impacting factors

In terms of impacting factors, participants agreed the impact of Brexit and the displacement of fishing activities outside of UK areas as well as changes in fishing opportunities was the most significant as it creates uncertainty and instability.

To a lesser extent area-based impacts such as MPAs/windfarms/dredging and divergence in approaches that results in stricter/looser regulations. Some participants argued that a more liberal mindset towards MPAs is needed, i.e. where fishing in MPAs could co-exist under carefully considered circumstances, and don't necessarily have to be excluded automatically. Marine spatial planning comes into play here as well.

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Finally, marine litter and its impacts on productivity and food safety was also identified as key since it still has many unknowns.

SEAwise indicated that a written report would be prepared based on this feedback, and would be made available by end of March 2022. The results could be presented for further discussion at the PelAC April meeting in 2022.

CFP FOCUS GROUP MEETING (02-02-2022, ONLINE)

The Commission launched a public consultation on December 17th 2021, aiming to gather input on the functioning of the CFP, which will be used as a basis for the report on the implementation of the CFP the Commission aims to deliver by end of 2022. The consultation was launched through a public online questionnaire, to which ACs were asked to contribute.

The objective of this report is to look into the functioning of the CFP and look at how its implementation could be strengthened. With this report, the Commission wants to see where it is now, where it aims to be in 2030, and how to get there. It is an important opportunity to improve the implementation of the policy at all levels. As part of this report, the intention is to look more specifically into topics such as the social dimension, climate change and clean oceans. The report will also be based on the supporting studies referred to in the corresponding chapters of the questionnaire.

This report on the functioning of the CFP will be prepared in consultation with the stakeholders. The [online questionnaire](#) follows the chapters of the CFP Regulation. It is part of the targeted stakeholder consultation opened until 28 February 2022, which will provide the basis for more in-depth discussions at regional level starting in April 2022. The consultation process will end with an event on 10 June 2022.

The questions refer to each chapter of the CFP Regulation, ending with the topics raised in the [Mission letter](#) to Commissioner Sinkevičius (social dimension, climate adaptation and clean oceans). They are designed to identify what works well (or not), identify any evidence of shortcomings in how the CFP is implemented and highlight good practice or innovative tools or processes implemented by stakeholders or Member States. The Commission is keen to receive any supporting documents on views, suggestions or examples of good practices or further suggestions on how to approach specific challenges identified. For the regional events, the Commission is in close contact with the Member States so that regional experts (such as members of the Advisory Councils) are designed to participate in those regional in-depth discussions. Finally, following the results of the online questionnaire and the in-depth CFP discussions at regional level, the Commission plans to organise a wider stakeholder event on Friday 10 June.

The Pelagic AC established a “CFP Review Focus Group” that convened on February 2nd through Zoom to discuss the consultation questionnaire and to develop a PelAC response. The Focus Group concentrated on the chapters general aspects, landing obligation, scientific advice and regionalisation for the better part of the meeting. Due to time constraints, the remaining chapters were considered to a lesser extent. Focus Group members submitted additional suggestions and input bilaterally following the Focus Group meeting.

In the interest of finalising the PelAC response within the deadline provided, the Focus Group decided not to include elements in the draft response that were new and had not been previously discussed at PelAC level, to avoid opening lengthy approval procedures. Many references were included to previous recommendations the PelAC had issued in the past to argue opinions in its response.

Key themes highlighted by the PelAC response were the impacts of Brexit and on the importance to take changes in relation to Brexit onboard in any review of the current CFP, as it has fundamentally changed

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the dynamic of the CFP. The PelAC stressed the shortcomings of the regionalisation process in the context of pelagic fisheries, and raised existing issues as a consequence of mis-alignment between the CFP and other Union legislations. The PelAC highlighted the importance of progressing the application of the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management.

In parallel to developing the PelAC response, the PelAC consulted other ACs and co-drafted a joint-AC letter regarding the process of targeting of ACs and the consideration of AC responses to such public consultations by the Commission services. This letter was adopted by 10 ACs on March 3rd and sent to the Commission, for additional consideration.

PELAC AND NWWAC MEETING ON COLLABORATION PELAGIC STOCKS (03-02-2022, ONLINE)

In a meeting between the NWWAC and the PelAC (attended by the PelAC Working Group II chair, the NWWAC chairman and the secretariats), the ACs discussed the mutual interest that exists regarding two pelagic species currently residing under the remit of the NWWAC: sprat and greater silver smelt in ICES areas VI and VII. The PelAC is interested in the targeted fisheries, while the interest of the NWWAC lies with the bycatches of these species in demersal fisheries.

The ACs discussed what procedures could be put in place to jointly collaborate on the development of recommendations for these stocks. It was agreed to produce a 'gentlemen's agreement' dictating the protocol for joint work, and underscoring the PelAC's recognition of the NWWAC's competency over these stocks.

It was agreed the ICES advice for the stocks would be presented at the PelAC April and July meetings. After discussing the advice with the members, the PelAC secretariat would prepare draft set of recommendations and submit them to the NWWAC for consideration. A bilateral meeting would subsequently be held between both ACs to discuss and agree on the final recommendations, in time for the respective NWWAC meetings where these would be formally adopted. The NWWAC will submit the recommendations to the Commission along with its advice on other stocks, mentioning these were jointly developed and agreed between the PelAC and the NWWAC. The Gentlemen's Agreement will upon completion and joint-agreement be circulated to the members of both ACs for information and discussion.

BREXIT FOCUS GROUP MEETING WITH FIVE ACS: (10-02-2022, ONLINE)

The PelAC initiated the first meeting between the ACs affected by Brexit: composing the LDAC, NWWAC, NSAC, MAC and PelAC. The meeting was co-chaired by PelAC Working Group chairs.

The chairs explained the envisaged objectives for organising the meeting in this setup. The aim is to provide a forum for exchange of views on issues related to Brexit, and identify common areas of concern where it would make sense to collaborate on and jointly communicate with the Commission and Member States. A key issue on the day's agenda was the Specialised Committee on Fisheries, as part of the new Brexit arrangement. From previous discussions within the PelAC a list of issues had been identified, many of which are now expected to be dealt with by the SCF. The PelAC's proposal is to take stock of interest from other ACs to meet at regular intervals in this form, and to determine how to collaborate on such issues of joint concern.

The PelAC highlighted a number of meeting principles:

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- To agree that this forum will not cover discussions on quota allocations nor CS negotiations. It is a long-standing tradition at the PelAC to stick to management and not political issues.
- To agree that ACs are one of the entities to be consulted by the Commission on SCF topics. Thereby, the ACs emphasize their wish to play a role but are not seeking exclusivity in the consultation of stakeholders.

Finally, the PelAC proposed to meet approx. twice per year in this format, through alternating organisation and chairmanships. Other ACs suggested that another important objective would be to try to clarify how the Commission foresees the involvement of ACs and to make proposals how ACs can jointly structure their input as stakeholders.

A status update was subsequently given with regard to the setup of the SCF, but much is still very unclear. While the SCF is supposed to have been formally set up by end 2021 it is not clear how it will operate. It was pointed out that a roadmap to calendar SCF activities for the coming years was due for completion by January 2022 under the TCA.

The meeting agreed to the establishment of the AC Brexit Forum and to continue discussion of cross-cutting issues affecting all ACs in relation to Brexit in this format moving forward. It was agreed to develop a ToR outlining the agreed principles and objectives, and that documents of mutual interest would be made available through a shared Dropbox file.

Secondly, it was agreed to draft a detailed joint-letter to the Commission asking clarity on a number of points regarding the engagement of stakeholder in work of the SCF. The letter would cover detailed questions both on the setup and operational mode of the SCF as well as provide a list of issues of common concern to which ACs wish to be consulted on.

The next meeting will be organised by NWWAC on May 5th 2022.

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (02-03-2022, HYBRID IN THE HAGUE AND BY ZOOM)

Working Group I meeting focused on evaluating its recommendations on fishing opportunities issued in October 2021 in relation to the final TAC setting, and looked ahead at priorities for the coming year.

First, a presentation was held by Paco Rodriguez Tress on his newly started PhD project at the DPPO. The project aims at looking into the utility of acoustic and effort data from pelagic commercial vessels for stock assessment purposes. The project was well received. Similarities between the similar ongoing project between the PFA-WMR were discussed and feedback from the members was provided for further elements to look into when conducting this project. It was decided to hold an annual update on the progress of the project at future PelAC meetings.

The meeting then went over the various stocks covered by Working Group I to compare the PelAC recommendations with the ICES advice and the final TACs set. Priorities for 2022 work were agreed, for a large part following up on the specific recommendations per stock issued in October.

It was decided to reconvene a Focus Group on blue whiting, to which scientists working on the recruitment index and the influences of the sub-polar gyre on the blue whiting distribution would be invited. With these updates the Focus Group could then determine a way forward to manage the stock.

A discussion was held on the recommendation issued for North Sea horse mackerel, where it was felt there was an urgent need to make optimal use of the existing data for this stock and to progress the assessment to a category 1 data category. It was noted as an action to jointly propose a letter to the Commission on this to the Executive Committee together with Working Group II.

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Finally, updates on the work of the Ecosystem Focus Group were provided, which included the submission by the PelAC on the Commission consultation to the Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources, which was developed by the Focus Group and submitted end of December 2021. The EFG Chair also set out his plans to hold a workshop on the Ecosystem Approach to fisheries management later in 2022, and flagged that the PelAC planned to co-organise a workshop together with the NWWAC in May 2022, on the impacts of seismic activities and offshore wind energy on fish stocks.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (02-03-2022, HYBRID IN THE HAGUE AND BY ZOOM)

As during Working Group I, Working Group II went through the various stocks under its remit to compare its 2021 PelAC recommendations on fishing opportunities with ICES advice and the final TACs set, and to agree on priorities for 2022 work.

First, a discussion with Teunis Jansen was held on mackerel fecundity, following up on the presentation of his recent fecundity publication held at the October meeting. The results of this work reveal a difference in the way mackerel fecundity is currently perceived by ICES. The study results suggest that mackerel is a so-called indeterminate spawner (capable of producing more eggs throughout the spawning cycle) in contrast to the previous notion that mackerel is a determinate spawner (where fecundity is fixed prior to the spawning period). Fecundity type misclassification may have consequences on SSB estimations based on Annual Egg Production Methods (AEPM).

While the findings were discussed at WG WIDE and submitted to the ICES working group on egg surveys (WGMEGS) for consideration, it was unclear whether WGMEGS was actively taking these findings onboard for inclusion in future assessments. A decision was made to invite the Chair of WGMEGS to the next PelAC meeting for a discussion on mackerel fecundity and how the newest results could interplay with the stock assessment process.

On Southern and Western horse mackerel, alignment of the combined TAC with the ICES advice areas was discussed. Working Group II vice-Chair explained that the current combined TAC is causing issues in the Bay of Biscay area where changes in compositions of species under the combined TAC are becoming increasingly visible, altering the balance of the species and making it difficult to protect species that are more sensitive. Alignment of the TAC with the ICES advice areas for Western horse mackerel would help distinguish more precisely between the stocks. It was decided to follow up on this discussion at the next PelAC meeting, and that the French and Spanish sectors would provide a written draft to elaborate on the issue in more detail.

On 6a herring, the outcomes the benchmark meeting held in February 2022 was briefly presented. The main outcome was that the benchmark meeting managed to split the stock again into 6a North and 6a South 7bc components, though only under a category 3 assessment. While there was still some of future work ahead, the groundwork had been laid to move towards a category 1 or 2 assessments in the future.

A discussion on boarfish led to the decision to reach out to the relevant research institutes working on the assessment model and secure an update at a future meeting. Similar to NS horse mackerel, it was felt that the boarfish stock also required prioritizing in the transition to stronger ICES data categories. It was decided to propose to the Executive Committee to pursue this transition at ICES level for both stocks as a joint-recommendation from both Working Groups.

Finally, the Commission held a brief update on the DCF, covering the revision of the multi-annual programme for data collection (EU MAP) which had recently been finalised. The EU MAP sets out concrete data collection requirements for Member States, translated from the basic DCF regulation. The new EU MAP places even more emphasis on the importance of regional coordination activities in the Regional

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Coordination Groups (RCGs) between Member States. Under EU MAP the MS need to produce work plans, containing details and activities on data collection and sampling strategies by Member States, and report annually on the activities. During the discussion, it became clear that the MS through the RCGs are tasked with selecting the data collection methods under DCF. The PelAC took an action to get in touch with the relevant RCGs for the next meeting to discuss the possible uptake of genetic sampling methods in the DCF.

EXTRA GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING (02-03-2022, HYBRID IN THE HAGUE AND BY ZOOM)

The Extraordinary GA meeting formally approved the final deed prepared by the notary for the revised PelAC statutes. In addition, the appointment of the new Head of Secretariat was approved.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (02-03-2022, HYBRID IN THE HAGUE AND BY ZOOM)

The PelAC Executive Committee meeting welcomed EFCA's newly appointed Executive Director, Ms Susan Steele, for a brief introductory presentation on EFCA's work priorities. Subsequently, the publication of the Executive summary of the mackerel evaluation of compliance report with the landing obligation was discussed at length between PelAC members and the EFCA Director. The discussion was positive and PelAC concerns were heard. Actions were taken for EFCA to discuss internally the possibility to remove of the summary from the EFCA website. Moving forward, it was announced that future compliance reports would include a new layer of transparency.

Subsequently, the newly appointed ACOM representative who will be liaising between the PelAC and ICES moving forward, Dorleta Garcia, gave a presentation on the ICES TAF (Transparent Assessment Framework) system. TAF forms part of ICES's aims to make improvements in quality assurance, was established to help make ICES data, methods and results easy find, explore and re-run. Through TAF, the data used in stock assessments is fully stored, documented and referenced in statistical software.

The joint-recommendation by the Working Groups to draft a letter to the Commission, requesting the urgent transition of the boarfish and NS horse mackerel stocks to stronger data categories (category 2 or 1) by ICES, was adopted by the Executive Committee.

WORKSHOP LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES (03-03-2022, HYBRID IN THE HAGUE AND BY ZOOM)

Long-Term Management Strategies (LTMSs) have been an important focus area for PelAC work and discussions for many years. The PelAC has a history both in contributing to the development of LTMSs, as well as providing advice on plans towards the European Commission. Therefore, there is a general interest at the PelAC to expand its knowledge on how LTMSs are applied around the world, and which tools can be used when working with Long-Term Management Plans and Strategies. That was the main rationale for holding this workshop.

The first speaker from the Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association, kicked off the workshop by presenting an overview of the history around long term management in fisheries. It was his observation that over recent years, key LTMSs developed by ICES have been subject to frequent revisions and changes – putting into the question the 'long-term' nature of management plans. He also stressed the importance of taking into account the appropriate terminology when discussing plans and evaluations, where terms are often used inter-changeably while they can differ depending on the scientific or management context.

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During the workshop, different case studies from other parts of the world were highlighted (covering examples from Iceland, the South Pacific and ICCAT), each illustrating different approaches to developing LTMSs and conducting evaluations in specific cases, focussing on process rather than on the detailed scientific approaches.

ICES also presented its views on LTMSs, explaining that ICES uses fisheries science to provide advice on management, following best-practice approaches. Approaching management plans with long-term objectives is viewed as best-practice in fisheries. Precaution is inherent to ICES advice, i.e. determining if the risk of the long-term biomass of the fishery falling below Blim is lower than 5%. MSY is often considered a main target, but it is not prescriptive. Long-term management strategies are defined by requesters of the advice and are then evaluated by ICES. An interesting debate would be how stakeholders can become an active part in the definition of a long-term management strategy.

Finally, The Marine Stewardship Council offered its insights into its experiences of engaging stakeholders to the work of its organisation, stressing the fundamental importance of providing feedback to stakeholders over the use of their contributions to MSC consultations.

During the plenary session, a number of discussion elements emerged such as different on complexity vs. simplicity of LTMS and MSEs. It was remarked that ICES seems to have a tendency to strongly focus on numerical values when estimating risk, making one wonder to what extent this approach is most meaningful. The case studies offered some examples how such processes could be simplified. In ICES's view, the differences in numbers from year to year can indeed seem minor, but further off the differences can start to matter. At the same time, in a significant part of the fisheries science community at ICES, there is a firm belief that more information gives a better answer. There was acknowledgement this could use some discussion.

The observation was made that recently, the ICES systems introduces frequent changes related to small changes in the assessment process leading to changes in reference points, since they are written into long-term management plans. It was also suggested ICES should carefully consider the need for initiating new benchmark meetings.

ICES agreed that the process was not always working optimally, but trade-offs need to be considered between resources, workload and requests received. There was a role for managers for stakeholders and managers to exercise the same restraint in taking short-term gains on the chin to avoid frequent revisions. There is a need to reform and reduce complexity, and ICES is willing to facilitate this reform but this will happen on a step by step basis.

The full report can be found on the website.

PELAC AND NSAC MEETING ON COLLABORATION PELAGIC STOCKS (08-03-2022, ONLINE)

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss in what way collaboration between ACs on stocks of mutual interests currently under the NSAC remit could take form. It concerns the following species in the North Sea area: sprat, sandeel, Norway pout and greater silver smelt.

The stocks fall under the competency of the NSAC following the current CFP regulation, but so far little work on them has been done. Some NSAC members welcome the interest of the PelAC to do more work on these stocks.

The NSAC is aware of some fisheries in the North Sea on sprat and Norway pout, though it is less clear if there is a targeted fishery for greater silver smelt in this area. The Pelagic remit covers all geographical areas and will be working on greater silver smelt in areas 6 and 7 in collaboration with the NWWAC.

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The NSAC specified distinction in the language for these stocks: while sprat is considered a pelagic stock by NSAC members, sandeel and Norway pout have demersal components as well. It is therefore important to specify the PelAC interests lie in the 'directed fishery by pelagic gears in NS area' for the stock in question.

The NSAC suggests the setup of a joint Focus Group as a means to take this work forward.

Joint Focus Group management of 4 small industrial stocks in NS area

As a way forward the NSAC proposes to develop a ToR for a joint Focus Group, covering the stocks considered and issues to be covered by the Focus Group: such as fishery management, TAC setting or other relevant issues (such as UK matters, conditions related to the fishery). A welcome additional outcome of this FG would be to jointly work on the development of a management plan/strategy for these stocks. The PelAC confirmed its interest in developing management plans, particularly for sandeel and Norway pout.

The PelAC updated the NSAC on an agreement reached between the two ACs for a similar collaboration on stocks of common interest in the NWWAC remit (sprat in the Channel and greater silver smelt).

The PelAC and NWWAC have co-developed a 'gentlemen's agreement' (GA) for collaboration on these stocks in the NWW region, which could generate useful ideas or serve as a model for collaboration with the NSAC. It has been circulated to the participants ahead of the meeting. In this agreement, it is clearly acknowledged and agreed that the ACs will respect each other's competencies, and that any advice/recommendations issued will come directly from the NWWAC. It was also clearly pointed out that the NWWAC interest lies in the bycatch fishery while the PelAC's interest lies in the targeted fishery for these stocks. The agreement sets out the procedure for how both ACs can draft, discuss and agree on joint-recommendations. This procedure could apply between the PelAC and NSAC as well. There are issues with regard to the timing of ICES advice release to consider.

The NSAC foresees some issues with this approach: Denmark holds 90% of the TAC for sandeel and Norway pout, concentrating the bulk of the interest to one country. Moreover, in the NSAC there is more interest in the directed fishery compared to the NWWAC. The NSAC would like to see the setup of a joint Focus Group with an appropriately formulated ToR, to which NSAC and PelAC members would be encouraged to participate. It was suggested a maximum of 4 participants per ACs should participate.

In parallel, developing a similar model such as the GA with the NWWAC could be useful, as a means to clarify agreement on the collaboration, how the work is done and what will be focussed on. The FG ToR can dictate how the Focus Group is structured.

A suggestion was made to deal with greater silver smelt separately, since there is little interest in this fishery from the NSAC. This could be specified in the GA.

The ICES calendar with dates for advice publications for these stocks need to be taken into consideration as the timing can be very different between the stocks. The sprat advice is published in April/May, Norway pout in October and sandeel in February. The Focus Group should be set up in relation to the advice release timing.

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INTER-AC MEETING (19-01-2022, ONLINE)

The Inter-AC was a full-day meeting, dedicated to a number of themes put forward by the Advisory Councils. DG Mare gave an extensive update on their work programme for the coming year, and announced their intention to hold more frequent inter-AC meetings in this format over the course of the year.

The Commission opened with a general update on the final TAC and quota negotiations which concluded at the end of 2021. Most TACs of the October Council were in line with MSY advice. For some stocks for which a precautionary advice applied, higher TACs were ultimately set by the Council. The Commission noted the Mediterranean stocks still remained in a fragile state.

The negotiations between the EU-UK and EU-UK Norway concluded at the very end of 2021. 2021 was an exceptionally busy year for DG Mare in terms of negotiations, with one round extending through to April and the other running in the autumn through December. The Commission thought the overall results were successful in terms of timing and delivering on the CFP objectives. The Commission worked on the basis of achieving consensus, especially between MS. On the work ahead, the Commission indicated that 2022 would be the year of the Specialised Fisheries Committee (SFC). In 2021, the bulk of the work concentrated on the negotiations, so 2022 will allow for more in-depth discussions in the context of the SFC: mixed fisheries in the Celtic Sea, how to deal with non-quota species, review of the management areas etc. are some examples of topics to be addressed. The Commission counts on the continued support and cooperation of the ACs during this year as well.

The first item on the agenda was the consultation on the Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems. The action plan stems from the Biodiversity Strategy and aims to identify measures to protect sensitive species and reduce impact on the marine environment. The Commission welcomed all the contributions received from the ACs and other stakeholders to this consultation, and was awaiting the results from a study by STECF that will feed into the action plan.

Various ACs commented on the consultation format: the online survey. While the topics were considered relevant and important, it was generally felt that the survey format was inappropriate for broad stakeholder groups such as the ACs. They are difficult to respond to and requests were made to discuss alternative possibilities, especially given the fact that the number of questionnaires increased significantly over the last year. The Commission indicated that ACs would be welcome to respond to consultations separately through position papers, for example.

The next agenda item was the ongoing consultation on the functioning of the CFP, which will form a basis for the report the Commission aims to deliver by end of 2022. The Commission explained it has a legal obligation to report on the implementation of the CFP, and that this analysis will particularly focus on the social dimension, climate and clean oceans. The report will build on previous studies, consultation responses, initiatives from the EP as well as the Council. The Commission encouraged all stakeholders to contribute to the online questionnaire, covering all aspects of the CFP. More in-depth regional discussions were planned for April 2022, followed by a stakeholder event on June 10th 2022.

DG Mare went on to give brief updates on work involving deep-sea waters access, impacts of wind energy developments and impacts of seismic activities.

The work on impacts of wind energy development falls under the marine spatial planning team of DG Mare, where an overview was presented of a 8-months literature study on the state of the art on these impacts. The work on impacts of seismic activities lies with DGENV, and a more generic presentation was held on its impacts on the marine environment, rather than on specific fish stocks. A distinction was made between impulsive noise (from e.g. airguns, drilling, seismic surveys) vs. continuous noise (such as shipping noise). Effects of noise on specific marine species is still unclear, but it could be increasing

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mortality in some species, impact hearing or lead to behavioural changes. Over the past 10 years, it is clear that sources of impulsive noise is increasing, due to offshore construction. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive requires MS to achieve 'good environmental status' and sets out in descriptors how this can be achieved. Under descriptor 2, anthropogenic sources of noise are identified as sources of pollution that needs to be addressed, e.g. through introduction of measures and monitoring strategies. A Technical Group on underwater noise has been set up to support the implementation of this Directive and work is currently underway to set threshold values for noise sources from transport, construction and offshore activities.

The NWWAC queried whether the Commission would follow-up on the joint NWWAC-PelAC and NSAC requests for impact assessments of offshore wind energy and seismic activities on fish populations.

The EU Contingency Plan for food supply and security was briefly presented, which sets out to develop an EU response mechanism to ensure adequate food supply in times of crisis, fed by lessons from the covid-19 crisis. A call for experts was recently launched from all food sectors, directed to individual stakeholders such as industries or NGO's. ACs are not expected to apply to this Expert Group.

A final update was given on the EMFAF, the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, which concluded in 2021 and will run from 2021-2027. The EMFAF will support maritime policy, CFP and ocean governance. It will serve as financial support for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and aid in achieving 'good environmental status'. It covers a 6.1 billion euro budget over the running period. The EMFAF follows the principle of shared management: MS draft programmes and actions following the objectives. Stakeholders will be consulted on the various programmes at national level. Most programmes are expected to be adopted by end of 2022. MS can then start with project roll-outs, and will need to report on the operations they finance. DGMare's main message to stakeholders was to engage with respective MS during the project roll-out phase and contribute with projects.

NWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (09-02-2022, ONLINE)

PelAC Representative was Sean O'Donoghue. The NWW group did not envisage any changes for pelagic species for the moment.

SCHEVENINGEN MEMBER STATE GROUP MEETING (15-02-2022, ONLINE)

There was no PelAC representative at this meeting but we received a short overview from Scheveningen MS Group. Work program: Member States will work on landing obligation, directed fishery, pilot project on CCTV, MPAs, the post-Brexit context, technical measures, European eel, consultation on the CFP Regulation and any other subject that will require their attention.

Discussion on the implementing acts of the technical measures regulation: MS shared their first reactions to reading the draft regulation prepared by the COM. They requested the organization of a technical meeting by the COM on this very technical subject. They indicated that certain provisions deserved clarification while others no longer really reflected the reality of fisheries and needed to be adapted. The COM has organized a dedicated exchange with the MS, but the details of the consultation of the other stakeholders are not yet known.

Landing obligation: Many exemptions require the provision of data and technical annexes this year. A CSTEP expert made recommendations to improve the quality of the information transmitted.

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SWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (16-02-2022, ONLINE)

The meeting was brief and focused on the ongoing work on eel and cetacean bycatch in the Bay of Biscay. It was defined that the existing exemptions to the Landing Obligation for pelagic species will need to be resubmitted this year and that no intentions of presenting new exemptions exist at this time by any of the Member States. It was also mentioned that some of the Member States will send comments to the revision of the PelAC Statutes.

INTER-AC MEETING (25-02-2022, ONLINE)

The Commission wants the ACs to do as much forward planning as possible and to give as much advance warning as possible to Commission staff to attend meetings. And then there was information on the preparing for the lump sum payments. This won't start until about June this year. That means that for the year starting 1st April 2022 the BSAC will follow current procedure. The lump-sum approach: After sending in the estimated budget for the next 4 years, the COM will pay that as a lump sum, 2% inflation can be weighted in annually. It will be paid as two instalments 80% and 20%. There will be no submitting for approval of final accounts. It will all be assessed against the work program of the AC (deliverables). The COM insists on savings on travel and hotel in line with the Green Deal, and to include virtual meetings. In the budget we submitted we already factored in 20% saving on travel and consideration of virtual meetings. The Delegated Regulation on the functioning of the Advisory Councils, will enter into force on 8th March.

SWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (08-03-2022, ONLINE)

It was the usual short debrief of the discussions between the representatives that happened earlier, attended by Goncalo Carvalho.

Apparently not a lot relevant issues were discussed in terms of pelagics. Dominic Rihan made a presentation which had details on the pelagic di minimis exemptions which will be shared with us. Additionally, Goncalo asked if any new pelagic di minimis exemptions were being prepared and the answer was no. So at this stage the MS only plan to re-submit the existing exemptions.

As a broader comments, just to let you know that both the discussions and the debrief was focused on eel and also cetaceans.

SCHEVENINGEN MEMBER STATE GROUP MEETING (10-03-2022, ONLINE)

PelAC Representative was Esben Sverdrup-Jensen. The meeting was mostly about eel.

NWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (22-03-2022, ONLINE)

PelAC Representative was Anne-Marie Kats.

The Belgian Presidency gave the ACs a brief update on the main discussion points of the TG meeting.

First, the draft Joint-Recommendation on the discard plan revisions was discussed, which was being prepared and largely based on the 2022 discard plans. The exemptions to the landing obligations are expected to be carried over an additional year and apply until end of 2023. The NWW group expected to

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

be able to share a final version of the draft to ACs by early April and was eager to receive the views of the ACs on the JR before submission to the Commission on May 1st. The draft would include scientific elements to justify needs for exemptions now and in the future.

The PelAC indicated its next meeting was scheduled for April 20th and the draft JR revision discard plans from all three regional groups relevant to the PelAC were on the agenda to discuss with the members. The PelAC would put forward any comments received by April 21st at the latest.

The NWW Group further explained it was in the process of drafting a letter to the Commission on the infringement procedure, related to issues around the landing obligation. The letter would be circulated to the ACs for information purposes. The NWW group was also working on a Joint Recommendation on sea bream in North Western Waters and the Bay of Biscay, which will be applicable until end of 2023.

Finally, the NWW group was coordinating work with other regional groups on eel to discuss a structural approach for managing the species.

SCHEVENINGEN MEMBER STATE GROUP MEETING (24-03-2022, ONLINE)

PelAC Representative was Esben Sverdrup-Jensen. The meeting was mostly about eel.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

22 AND 23 JUNE 2022: MIAC AND MIACO MEETINGS

12 AND 13 JULY 2022: WORKING GROUP I AND II AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

5 AND 6 OCTOBER 2022: WORKING GROUP I AND II, GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The PelAC meetings are physical meetings in Den Haag where hybrid will NOT be an option.

For more information please visit our website:

[Upcoming Meetings - Pelagic Advisory Council \(pelagic-ac.org\)](https://pelagic-ac.org)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pelagic Advisory Council

Louis Braillelaan 80
2719 EK Zoetermeer
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0)6 3375 6324

Email: l.meer@pelagic-ac.org; j.aleksandrova@pelagic-ac.org

www.pelagic-ac.org

Anne-Marie Kats will be on maternity leave as of 20 May until 19 September 2022. During this period, Ludmilla will remain your point of contact for the PelAC as usual. Julie Aleksandrova will temporarily be covering the Executive Secretary tasks.

