



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 2 / 2022

April – August 2022



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PELAC MEETINGS

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (20-04-2022, HYBRID IN THE HAGUE AND BY ZOOM)

Members attending the WGI meeting on 20th April received an update from Ana Leocadio from the Commission regarding the trilateral Herring Working Group. The WG report was in the process of being finalised and would be presented at the Heads of Delegation meeting in June. General remarks on the report included that the North Sea autumn spawning stock is in a good condition, however, the Western Baltic spring spawning herring stock has been declining consistently and is subject to a zero catch advice.

A presentation was provided by Martin Pastoors concerning the ICES workshop on the of industry-derived data (WKEVUT), which demonstrated good collaboration between science and industry. Hjálmar Hátún from the Faroes Marine Research Institute presented his research on blue whiting recruitment, distribution, and the influence of ocean-climate processes under the BlueOcean project. It highlighted the importance of including atmospheric and hydrographic data in fisheries assessments and the PelAC agreed to push for this data to be higher on the agenda in ICES assessments. Anna Rindorf also provided an update on the outcomes of the SEAWise scoping workshops, explaining how the results will help to inform end-user driven advice.

Updates from the Ecosystem FG included details of a joint PelAC-NWWAC workshop on seismic and wind farm noise impacts on fisheries taking place on 10 May. In addition, a proposal to host a research internship on the interactions between pelagic fisheries and sensitive species/habitats in the Northeast Atlantic was announced.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (20-04-2022, HYBRID IN THE HAGUE AND BY ZOOM)

The WGII meeting of 20th April was co-chaired by Sean O'Donoghue and Jérôme Jourdain. Members received a comprehensive update from Ana Leocadio from the Commission regarding the Coastal States negotiations on Northeast Atlantic mackerel. Northeast Atlantic mackerel is a priority stock for the Coastal States, all of whom possess a common will to work constructively and reach a quota sharing arrangement ahead of the October consultations. Discussions around quota sharing commenced in May 2022 with a review of a report on mackerel distribution. While this report was useful for understanding the spatial orientation of the stock, it did not provide a conclusive solution on zonal attachment. Leocadio reported that the EU supports a comprehensive and inclusive sharing agreement and has been considering their quota for mackerel in line with the constructive arrangement formerly agreed in 2014. The next quota sharing consultation is planned for 10-11 May. This will mark the start of the formal negotiation process on the mackerel TAC.

Updates were also provided on the joint work of the NWWAC and PelAC on sprat and Greater silver smelt. Both ACs have reached an agreement to develop joint advice for these stocks. For herring in 6a and 7b,c, genetic sampling would continue. Alignment between the TAC for Western horse mackerel and associated ICES advice was noted as an ongoing issue. As a result, the PelAC is gathering data to develop a proposal for more targeted advice, to apply to the individual species encompassed by current advice. The draft joint recommendations prepared by the regional groups were reviewed. The current exemptions relating to pelagic species are set to continue into 2023.

Harriet van Overzee and Delia Reis gave a presentation on the Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs), which are active in developing data collection plans, which form the basis for scientific advice. The RCGs provide the main hub for regional coordination of data for the CFP.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (20-04-2022, HYBRID IN THE HAGUE AND BY ZOOM)

The draft Terms of Reference for the Inter-AC Brexit Forum, which will discuss horizontal issues affecting the EU and UK bringing together the LDAC, NWWAC, NSAC, MAD, and PelAC, were approved.

Joost Paardekooper of the European Commission updated attendees on progress regarding the SCF. He noted the prevalence of procedural formalities, put in place given the SCF's potential to ultimately create legislation. The SCF had met twice to date, in July and October 2021, which focused on setup and prioritisation of work, and would meet for a first time in the week following the ExCom meeting (late April 2022). One Working Group has been created, which will potentially have sub-groups beneath it that take on certain tasks. Key priorities for the SCF involved coordinating EU and UK domestic management changes, EU-UK quota swapping mechanisms, management of non-quota species, and guidelines for setting provisional TACs.

A letter had been sent to the Commission from the ACs regarding opportunities for stakeholder involvement in the SCF. Paardekooper said that a full reply would be forthcoming, and suggested a joint-AC delegation would be optimal for communicating with the Commission regarding the SCF. Paardekooper also said a Commission representative would aim to attend the Inter-AC Brexit Forum meeting on 5 May 2022.

Sean O'Donoghue reported that WGII will discuss and agree a recommendation for sprat in the English Channel, to put forward with the NWWAC, to input before the TAC is established on 1 July. He proposed the ExCom give WGII the mandate to proceed via written procedure, without seeking further review from ExCom. The proposal was approved.

PELAC AND NWWAC WORKSHOP ON THE IMPACTS OF SEISMIC AND OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS ON COMMERCIAL FISHERIES (10-05-2022, ONLINE)

On 10 May 2022, the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) and the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) organised a workshop on the impacts of seismic and offshore wind energy developments on commercial fisheries. This workshop, which is a milestone in the work on the topic launched by the two Advisory Councils in 2020, gathered expert speakers from the European Commission, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the European Marine Board. The report from this workshop is now published on the NWWAC and PelAC websites.

The report provides a very good overview of the existing research on seismic activity, on the impact on fish stocks and more generally on underwater noise. It also identifies knowledge gaps and research avenues to better understand and mitigate noise impacts on ecosystems as well as to provide solutions regarding the impacts on fisheries activities.

Emiel Brouckaert, Chair of the NWWAC, underlined that “in light of the war in Ukraine and the subsequent and ongoing energy crisis, emphasis is being placed on the expansion of renewable energy sources and many Member States are looking specifically to offshore wind energy to achieve and even surpass the targets set under the Green Deal. This will have impacts on the marine environment and its existing users. While trying to reconcile multiple crisis circumstances, the production of aquatic protein and the contribution of the fisheries sector to the EU's food security should not be left out.”

Gonçalo Carvalho, Vice-Chair of the PelAC and Chair of the PelAC-NWWAC Advice Drafting Group on the matter, emphasized that “more research on population and ecosystem impacts of underwater noise must be undertaken as well as regarding the implementation of mitigation measures.” He added “while the urgency is there for the development of offshore wind farms, the precautionary approach must be respected and the integration of existing uses and known impacts needs to happen.”

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Based on the key expert knowledge presented during this workshop, the NWWAC and PelAC will continue their joint work on the impacts of seismic and offshore wind energy developments on commercial fisheries, bringing different perspectives together and aiming at delivering advice to the European Commission focusing on research priorities in this regard.

BREXIT FOCUS GROUP MEETING (2 AND 30-06-2022, ONLINE)

Five ACs are now part of this informal group, and the European Commission is supportive of it. O'Donoghue referenced the importance of the meetings in enabling ACs to be proactive, rather than reactive, and contribute to Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) meetings ahead of time. Engaging in the TCA was a cumbersome process, but the Inter-AC Brexit Forum meetings were very useful. He added that there is a lot of value generated through the ACs working together, particularly since the ACs are very committed to the process. He shared that the Commission agreed to brief the ACs on the outcomes of relevant meetings,

WORKING GROUP I MEETING (12-07-2022, THE HAGUE)

As is tradition in July, the PelAC WGI meeting focussed on reviewing the ICES advice on fishing opportunities for WGI stocks in 2023. The latest headline advice was examined for North Sea autumn spawning herring and Western Baltic spring spawning herring/3a herring.

The participants received an update on the 'evaluation and utility of industry data' workshop (WKEVUT), which concluded that there is significant potential for industry-derived data to be of value in stock assessments. Greater collaboration between industry and science was encouraged.

Thord Monsen, from the Directorate of Fisheries in Norway, presented a new initiative called the CatchID project, which aims to contribute to the development of a more modern monitoring, control, and surveillance regime, that can both improve compliance on national and international regulations, and secure market access for Norwegian seafood.

Anna Bobo Remijn from DG ENV provided a presentation on the state of play of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive Review, focusing on the evaluation and impact assessment studies undertaken to date.

An extensive report was provided by the Ecosystem FG, including updates on work on the impacts of seismic and offshore wind, a Commission discussion paper on the energy transition, followed by a discussion on the ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

The joint work of the PelAC and the NSAC on industrial pelagic stocks has progressed slowly. The joint-WG would therefore aim to produce more timely advice next year.

WORKING GROUP II MEETING (12-07-2022, THE HAGUE)

The WGII meeting of 12 July was largely dedicated to the presentation of the ICES advice on fishing opportunities for WGII stocks in 2023. This highlighted a need for the PelAC to advise the Commission and ICES that further work should be undertaken to progress Herring 6a South 7b,c to a category 1 stock.

Ed Farrell presented the genetics project updates, including the PelAC's boarfish modelling work, the genetic analyses of 6a North herring and herring in 6a South 7b,c, and the Northeast Atlantic mackerel genome project. All genetics projects are progressing well.

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The development of a revised management plan for boarfish was discussed. This will coincide with the next benchmark for the stock, which is planned to take place in 2023.

The situation facing Northeast Atlantic mackerel was also discussed. Members raised concern at the lack of sharing agreements between Coastal States and the absence of a long-term management plan. The PelAC's position on the inadequate management of this stock would be reemphasised to the Commission.

On Southern and Western horse mackerel, following a letter of support from the SWWAC, the PelAC agreed to work with the SWWAC to establish a joint-WG to promote data collection to help inform future TAC considerations.

For Greater silver smelt in areas 6 and 7, the need for stock identification issues to be resolved was emphasised. For sprat in areas 6 and 7, it was agreed that a dedicated FG should be established in early 2023 between PelAC scientists and interested members, to develop a roadmap on the development of a management strategy for the stock.

The current exemptions relating to pelagic stocks are set to continue into 2023.

The PelAC thanked Sean O'Donoghue for his outstanding 17 years of service as WGII Chairman.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (13-07-2022, THE HAGUE)

The draft Work Program for the PelAC was approved, including recommendations for WGI and WG II, as well as recommendations for the Advisory Council as a whole. Vincent Guerre of DG MARE provided an update on fishing opportunities for 2023, sharing that while there is a general improvement seen in aggregated data for pelagic stocks, significant steps towards sustainability need to be taken. Sean O'Donoghue updated attendees on the outcomes of Inter-AC Brexit Forum meetings, which enable the ACs to contribute proactively to discussions regarding the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. He also provided updates on the MIAC and MIACO meetings, during which ICES shared that the issues experienced with the reference point for southern horse mackerel would not happen again. There is an opportunity to comment on the draft ICES stakeholder engagement strategy through a small, yet to be established, working group that could focus on this stakeholder information and advice, and operate under agreed Terms of Reference. Jesper Raakjær of Aalborg University noted his intention to step down as Interim ExCom Chair and opened an invitation for members to apply for the position, which will be a fixed, two-year role.

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SCHEVENINGEN MEMBER STATE GROUP MEETING (04-04-2022, ONLINE)

The French Presidency hosted the meeting. The main discussion point of relevance to the PelAC was the draft JR being developed for revisions of the discard plans. The Scheveningen Group indicated it was in the process of reviewing scientific data to support the exemptions. The TG expected a new draft of the JR ready for circulation to ACs by end of the first week of April. A number of new de minimis exemptions would be introduced, of interest to the demersal sector (NSAC). All relevant exemptions currently in place were expected to be maintained.

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 major topic for the group this year is on eel, and the designing of concrete measures to protect the stock.

SWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (13-04-2022, ONLINE)

The Portuguese Presidency hosted the meeting and updated the ACs on the main discussions of the TG meeting. The main discussion point of relevance to the PelAC was the draft JR being developed for revisions of the discard plans. The SWW Group indicated it was in the process of reviewing scientific data to support survival/de minimis exemptions, but did not have much new information to incorporate due to covid-delays. Ongoing scientific studies will continue, and France expected new data on whiting in the Bay of Biscay area. The TG did not expect any changes to the current exemptions, just the introduction of new data. The TG planned to present the draft JR for approval to the HLG on April 21st.

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.

Finally, a meeting with experts was due on April 22 to discuss the management of eel, to which the ACs were also invited.

INTER-AC MEETING (29-04-2022, ONLINE)

On 29 April 2022, an inter-AC meeting was held online. This meeting was an opportunity to discuss with the European Commission issues that have already mobilized PELAC members, and some of which will continue to engage us in the coming months and years. Obviously, the war in Ukraine was the first of the topics discussed, in particular the way in which the European Commission has worked to propose solutions to provide emergency support to industries through state aid and support for the FEAMP and FEAMPA.

Another point addressed and on which discussions were very enriching was the energy transition of fishing vessels. DG ENV and DG MOVE presented the different ongoing research programs that could be of interest to fisheries, such as alternative fuels. Synergies must be found and remain possible. Main challenges are shared by ACs, in particular the regulatory challenges (management by gross tonnage and power capacities), safety of vessels and crews, etc.: all of this must be included in a common strategy, in a medium-term agenda.

Concerning the recent consultation from the European Commission on the review of the CFP and the CMO, a summary of the responses has been published on the Commission's website. A stakeholder meeting is being organized by the Commission on 10 June (hybrid format). If governance is an essential point of the CFP, the positive role of the ACs is highlighted by the Commission to work on future challenges such as traceability or the integration of the CFP with other marine policies (environment but not only).

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This meeting was also an opportunity to update the EU Single Use Plastics Directive, which came into force 2 years ago.

INTER-AC MEETING (12-05-2022, ONLINE)

The meeting was hosted by the MEDAC through WebEx. The agenda was focussed on administrative matters to be discussed between the Commission and the AC Secretariats. The most important topic was the start of the new lump-sum financing method/

First, the ACs held a tour the table for an exchange of updates as regards the implementation of the new Delegated Regulation on the functioning of the Advisory Councils, which came into effect in March 2022. The most important new elements of the Delegated Act were the appointment of a vice-Chairman in the Advisory council from the opposite stakeholder group as the residing Chair. The DA now also requires ACs to conduct a mandatory performance review every five years. Furthermore, further classification criteria were introduced in the DA to help and verify the designation new members to the appropriate stakeholder category. All the ACs were well underway to implement these new changes in their respective ACs, and either have or are in the process of amending its rules of procedures accordingly. With regards to the classification of members, the Commission encouraged ACs to share practices and learn from each other.

The second key agenda item was the introduction of the lump-sum financing methods for ACs, which will come into effect from 1 June 2022. The LDAC and the PelAC will be the first ACs dealing with this new application and financing process, and the Commission had been in touch bilaterally with both ACs in preparation for this. Under lump-sum, the emphasis and measure for payment will lie on deliverables instead of incurred costs. The template for the workplan is slightly adapted to fit with the new lump-sum system. Numerous questions were raised by the various ACs how best to estimate/formulate the desired deliverables (i.e. number of meetings and recommendations) ahead of time, when these are often very difficult to predict. The Commission offered some guidance to be as broad and accurate as possible, as well as in line with what has been produced in the past. Only in cases where the actual output is less than 50% of what was predicted, would ACs be penalised by cuts on the overall lump-sum. What counts is if ACs meet their overall objectives. The Commission also indicated that the lump-sum agreed between the ACs, based on the budget estimations submitted in January 2022, would be subject to a 2% annual indexation increase.

On its upcoming workplan, the Commission indicated it was expecting the release of the report on regionalisation of the CFP, further work on the report for the implementation of the CFP (expected to be released end of 2022) and more development on the crisis-file related to the war in Ukraine.

The Commission would confirm the final date of the next interAC meeting on short notice, planned for the autumn of 2022.

SCHEVENINGEN MEMBER STATE GROUP MEETING (22-04-2022 AND 20-05-2022, ONLINE)

The current exemptions relating to pelagic stocks are set to continue into 2023, the exemptions would soon require revision.

NWW MEMBER GROUP MEETING (24-05-2022, ONLINE)

The meeting was focused on the presentation of the CFP report, following a targeted stakeholders consultation from European Commission on the implementation of the CFP. The first step was a questionnaire for which PelAC produced response and recommendations send to the EC in March 2022. The results are bundled in the Famenet report. PelAC welcomed this possibility to discuss at

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the regional level, it is the opportunity to have an in-depth discussion as the format and timeline of the EC consultation which does not allow ACs to develop the full range of stakeholders' views.

This exchange was an occasion to underline the importance of Brexit which has fundamentally changed the landscape and dynamic of the CFP since the regulation came into force. PelAC recalled that he still concerned about the functioning of the ACs impacted by Brexit from 2021 onwards and the new reality of Brexit impedes the EU from setting and achieving its former objectives in the same manner. Any successful evaluation of the current CFP thus needs to fully take this development into account and capture its repercussions.

Beyond to recall the main successful elements introduced by of the CFP, or number of issues surrounding the implementation of the landing obligation and LTMP, conflicts that exist between the CFP and other relevant legislation were discussed at length, especially on UE roadmaps toward for zero emission. While the main obstacle for fishing vessels is the lack of alternative technologies that are mature or adapted to the size and diversity of EU fishing vessels, this transition to new propulsion technologies requires, in particular, more space on board (LNG, hydrogen, fuel cells, etc.) and it should be recalled that the CFP capacity management framework was originally designed to provide an overall framework for capacity evolution to reflect fishing capacity, not the GHG emissions of fishing vessels.

Next step: a hybrid stakeholder event on the functioning of the CFP will take place on 10 June 2022 in Brussels. This event will help the European Commission prepare the report on the functioning of the CFP (and CMO), due both to be adopted by the end of the year.

STECF EWG EVALUATION OF JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE LANDING OBLIGATION AND TECHNICAL MEASURES - OBSERVER MEETING (03-06-2022, ONLINE)

The EWG discussed the scientific advisory process and the imperatives around transparency and the importance of proper and robust scientific justifications in advice. The group was advised that a recent study on regionalisation to be published following week and emphasised the scientific basis on which all recommendations are based. For the process of joint recommendations, a majority are currently being assessed by the STECF.

The Landing Obligation was briefly considered in the context of the Delegated Acts and the expiration of provisions before the end of 2023, with a full review of exemptions. Plans were in place by the Commission to engage STECF to carry out a full review of all exemptions effective from the inception of the Landing Obligation. The objective of this Commission driven process is to underpin a long-term vision regarding sustainable fisheries and to give attention to other effective conservation measures and with assessment re the maintenance of same and their validity The focus of this is to contribute to the long-term spirit and provisions of the CFP

The economic impacts of the Landing Obligation were raised as a consideration. The STECF Team pointed out that their role is to look at the advice and to give an opinion on key areas, but not to function as a decision maker. The STECF Team were keen to focus on the area of improved selectivity as an objective in the Landing Obligation process

The STECF Team outlined the issue of gaps in information relating to discard rates, and the need for data pertaining to survivability rates and fish size. Re data provision, the adverse data impacts of Covid coupled with Brexit outcomes were outlined this year and catch info was provided on an inconsistent basis and in a range of formats. The STECF Team felt that there are no additional or new justifications put forward and an important issue for them relates to data accuracy. It was requested that in future information and data is provided in a format compatible with STECF. It was also pointed out that there is no information covering the

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exemption uptake discard recording. The limited information available was consistent with a considerable level of discards in some fisheries, with a need for improved gear selectivity was a consideration and the objective to improve this without jeopardizing economic stability. Importance of having feedback on the fluctuation of discards for certain species

A member of the WG indicated that industry views re new technical measures were sometimes rejected in the scientific assessment process and that industry was frustrated with this process. STECF proposed that the new Committee should take note of this commentary and input. The developments in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea were presented to the group and to include details of the North Sea exemptions.

For the Pelagic species, and specifically for greater silver smelt, the EWG was advised that catch information is limited and variable, but it was felt that the stock was in good status with a 200 % increase in the TAC this year. Boarfish was also beset by data limitations: Ireland does not use exemptions and the selectivity argument was considered in the argument around costs. Economics a key consideration for this species. For Mackerel and horse mackerel in ICES areas 6 and 7, only the French and Irish provided catch data. Furthermore, the selectivity studies and disproportionate costs studies illustrate the difficulty in the improvement of selectivity in certain fisheries

STECF outlined the Commission and their responsibility regarding the use of STECF advice. The Membership raised the matter of the “top ups” of discard figures and the methodology applied in the TAC & quota proposals of stocks under LO exemptions. The STECF representative indicated that this used to be the case to a point, but important that the dead discards are taken into consideration for catch with ICES utilising a generic discard rate which may not be indicative of reality. More clarification required and a concern that the survival rate for discards may be overestimated.

The STECF team commented on the review of multiple studies that have been carried out on the economic impacts of the LO in the SWW, many studies undertaken on the implementation of the Landing Obligation and the difficulty of assessing economic impacts were outlined.

ICES ADG CELTIC SEA (6/10-06-2022)

Sean O Donoghue attended the ADG Celtic Sea on behalf of the PelAC as an observer on the 7th June when the four herring stocks were discussed namely herring 6a north, herring 6a south 7 bc, Celtic Sea herring and Irish Sea herring. As a result of the Benchmark for the first time since 2014 the herring stocks in 6.a, 7.b-c the draft advice has split the combined assessment into two stocks again 6a north and 6a south 7 bc.

During the discussion at the ADG Celtic Sea the results of the Benchmark were explained and why it was a category three assessment rather than a category one. The draft advice for 2023 is 1212 t for herring 6a north and 1892 t for herring 6a south 7 bc. The advice for the combined stock for 2022 was zero.

The draft advice for the Irish Sea herring is a 14% decrease at 7309 t compared to 2022. The discussion at the ADG centred around the uncertainties in the current assessment model particularly the mixing issue with the Celtic Sea herring.

The Celtic Sea herring draft advice is for a zero catch for the fourth year running. The monitoring TAC advised is the same as 2022 at 793 t to enable the collection of essential scientific samples. The unresolved issues with mixing between the Celtic and Irish Sea herring, was also mentioned at the ADG.

MIAC (22-06-2022, HYBRID)

The MIAC meeting was organised and chaired by the NWWAC. The meeting focused on the one hand on AC specific issues brought forward by the ACs, including the background to the decision and communication to

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stakeholders of the change of the Fmsy reference point for Southern horse mackerel (SHOM) brought forward by the PelAC. Sean O'Donoghue participated in the meeting in Copenhagen on behalf of the PelAC and recalled its concerns and questions regarding the change of the reference point for SHOM announced by ICES in July 2021 at the PelAC meeting, which came with unfortunate timing and by surprise, since the PelAC had been working with the SWWAC for over a year on amending the long-term management strategy currently in place for this stock, trying to bring it in closer alignment with the ICES MSY advice. The issue was discussed and there was an acceptance within ICES that this was done in an unusual way and that it would not happen again.

The meeting also covered the following general topics:

- List of special requests received by ICES from DG MARE
- Clarification procedure for using agreed management plan in top-line advice
- Improving science and discard data for deep-water stocks
- Overview on ICES work supporting the implementation of the EU MSFD
- ICES Workshop on reference points WKREF
- Interpretation at meetings

MIACO (22/23-06-2022, HYBRID)

Sean O'Donoghue and Justyna Zajchowska participated in the meeting on behalf of the PelAC. The MIACO meeting covered the following topics:

- Stakeholder engagement: ICES presented its draft stakeholder engagement strategy on which they are looking for comments. The one thing that is not covered in the strategy is the stakeholder information integration in the advice. This was brought up by the PelAC. While there was a disagreement on reinstating this information, it was then agreed to set up a small working group to work on this based on agreed ToR. The working group would report during the January 2023 MIAC / MIACO meeting.
- Ecosystem based management: At the session on ecosystem-based management (EBM) the principles to consider when implementing EBM have been presented, based on Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and FAO guidance. According to the FAO Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) monitoring tool three elements should be considered in EAF implementation: Ability to achieve governance and external drivers; Ecological well-being (retained and non-retained species, ecosystem); Human well being (livelihood, food and nutrition security, health and safety, equity).
- Communication of advice
- Expertise shortage in ICES
- New science in 2022

A number of new, or continuing initiatives in ICES have been presented including:

- Reference points for fish stocks and fisheries
- Industry perceptions of stock and fisheries status e.g. cod in mix fisheries
- Sticklebacks & round goby in the Baltic Sea
- Spatial conservation and management measures
- Fishing opportunities advice for data limited stocks
- Evidence for ecosystem based fisheries management in the Baltic Sea
- Aquaculture overviews
- Quality control and assurance: This is the issue that the PelAC put on the agenda years ago. ICES brought up its quality assurance strategy. In the presentation, ICES recognised that during the advice development

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for this year, there were still 11 significant mistakes (not editorial mistakes but changes in the assessment). ICES informed that there was no progress in use of Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF) for stock assessments however according to ICES this does not mean that advice is not quality controlled and assured. Over next 18 months several training events are scheduled to improve quality assurance. TAF remains a priority for ACOM. The point made by the PelAC was that the issue now is the actual implementation of the strategy. The transparent assessment framework (TAF) is only one part of the quality assurance system, it is not all. ICES is looking at fast track the implementation of the quality assurance strategy at all the steps of the advice development.

- Bycatch of protected, threatened and endangered species (PETS) – operational management objective, list of species of bycatch relevance and template for annual bycatch advice.
- ICES working with EU DG ENV, DGMARE and NEAFC on issues such as MSFD and VMEs
- Mixed fisheries
- Forthcoming challenges
- Benchmarks and new information flows in 2022: When it comes to the status of 2021-2022 benchmarks – 2 are to proceed when it comes to small pelagic species: benchmark of sandeel stocks in late 2022 (WKSANDEEL) and benchmark for capelin stocks also in late 2022 (WKCAPELIN).

HYBRID SEMINAR BY COMMISSION ON FISHERIES SCIENCE: IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (24-06-2022)

In the current context of rapid climate and ocean changes, but also of increasing awareness about a wide range of various human impacts on ecosystems, there are growing needs to further take into account ecosystems considerations when managing fisheries. The science seminar provided an opportunity to take stock of the most recent developments in implementing an EAFM and to identify potential areas requiring further actions. The half-day hybrid event brought together a wide range of stakeholders such as scientists, fisheries and environmental administrations in MS and at regional level, the fishing sector, NGOs, and the representatives of the European Commission, Parliament, Council and Member States.

The seminar included an introduction by EU Commissioner Sinkevičius, followed by a presentation Mark Dickey-Collas (International Council for the Exploration of the Seas, ICES) on how these considerations are currently being included in the scientific advice provided to managers. Rob Stephenson (Canada) addressed the international perspective on how EAFM is implemented in other jurisdictions, and was a presentation on the outcomes of a recent EU-funded study on EAFM. An important part of the seminar consisted of a panel discussion with three experts: Louis Lambrechts (Ocean Policy Officer, WWF), Els Torreele (National Correspondent DCF Belgium, ILVO Marine), Brian O’Riordan (Executive Secretary, LIFE Platform).

In his introduction, Sinkevičius addressed the issue of participation of fishers in the EAFM. Fisheries have information that is still rarely being used. He emphasized the need to develop tools so that fisheries information, even if it is of anecdotal nature, can be incorporated into scientific advice. The CFP already refers to Ecosystem approach: limiting to fishing pressure to Fmsy, reducing unwanted bycatch, closing areas to fishing and taking into account predator-prey relationships. He said that the CFP is still fit for purpose and there is no rationale for a new reform. But we can do more under current Ecosystem Approach. The need for an Ecosystem approach is an important outcome of stakeholder consultation. Key components: sensitive species and habitats, clear objectives, ecosystem trends and consultation of key stakeholders.

Mark Dickey-Collas (ICES) addressed the FAO approach to monitoring the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, which consists of three main elements: 1) Ability to achieve (e.g. governance), 2) Ecological well-being and 3)

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Human well-being. ICES is already providing information for the ecosystem approach in their regional ecosystem overview documents. Selective extraction of species (fishing) is the top priority pressure in all areas except the Baltic Sea. Currently, 73% of the stock assessments include some aspects ecosystem variability e.g. putting in natural mortality into assessment. Ecosystem advice is about spatial management and working with people. See. e.g. the ICES stakeholder engagement strategy and the Bycatch roadmap.

The international perspective on the ecosystem approach was addressed by Rob Stephenson (Canada). He painted the picture of a hierarchy of approaches from single species fisheries management, through ecosystem approach to fisheries management, ecosystem based fisheries management and ecosystem based management. He also mentioned examples of approaches in Australia, USA and Canada. Overall, the ecosystem approach should influence species management plans to have common objectives with performance metrics.

The presentation on the EU-funded project on the EAFM focussed on a database that can provide an inventory of ecosystem challenges, measures, fisheries, regions and legal frameworks. From the database it is possible to select potential solutions to certain challenges.

The panel discussion first addressed the question of how the CFP needs to evolve to deal with EAFM? Brian O'Riordan emphasized the importance of including knowledge in fisheries communities. Get fishermen and scientists around the table and work on how you structure the knowledge to be included in the management process. The topic of including fishermen knowledge was also echoed by the other panellists. Els Torreele mentioned that she had a dream: "that a fisherman comes to the institute before he departs and asks what type of data would be needed from his trip and that he would then go out and collect the data and deliver it for use in the scientific process".

One key action for EAFM was mentioned as dealing with sensitive species and habitats. Louis Lambrechts stressed the need for incentives for better practices. He also addressed the socio-economic struggles and referred that the CFP Article 17 on fishing rights. This latter point was also taken up by Brian O'Riordan, who argued for area-based management instead of quota based management (but without addressing how area-based management would be used to distribute fishing opportunities). He described the motto of fisheries as "fishing with the right gear at the right place and the right time". Mark Dickey-Collas suggested that a relatively simple indicator of assessing whether we are moving in the right (ecosystem) direction, is to monitor the trend and direction of movement of sharks and rays. If elasmobranchs are OK, then the ecosystem is in a good state.

An ecosystem approach could include seasonal closures; no-take zones and a co-management process. Currently the CFP does not embrace co-management. But co-management can be used at the right tables, where it makes sense for the purpose of fisheries management. Often, small and large scale fisheries are in different zones and can be handled separately. When they are together: one could deal with this in advisory councils. Catalonia and Portugal have recently embedded co-management in the law. Louis Lambrechts also emphasized the observed benefits from co-management as it brings changes to the system and brings real-time information and more visibility of the fishing sector.

A poll under participants regarding the management objectives that conflicted most with the objective of MSY resulted in the highest score for offshore renewable energy targets. This is perceived by many participants as the key challenge.

Overall, the seminar highlighted many different aspects of an EAFM. The main focal points were on avoidance of bycatch of sensitive species, the engagement of stakeholders, the role of new forms of data and co-management.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

22 FEBRUARY 2023: WORKING GROUP I AND II, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

23 FEBRUARY 2023: WORKSHOP EAFM

19 APRIL 2023: WORKING GROUP I AND II, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

6 AND 7 JULY 2023: WORKING GROUP I AND II, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

For more information please visit our website:

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

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