



Dublin, 27 June 2017

Subject: Data collection and assessment for Brown Crab.

Dear Mr Machado,

The EU-funded project ACRUNET (www.acrunet.eu), a network of brown crab stakeholders from Atlantic Area countries, was closely aligned with the North Western Waters Advisory Council (2012-2015). ACRUNET led to important developments in international cooperation on management of brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*). The ACRUNET crab fishing partners concluded there was a general recognition of the need for a fisheries management plan based on practical management on a national scale, without being too prescriptive. Following the ACRUNET project, the NWWAC set up a Focus Group on Brown Crab (FGCrab), with an aim to agree on a joint brown crab fisheries management strategy in 2018.

The Focus Group cooperates closely with scientific experts, and at the last meeting in Paris (28 February 2017, [link](#)), scientists presented the results of the ICES Working Group on the Biology and Life History of Crabs ([WGCRAB](#)). Initial stock definitions and national assessments have been developed for brown crab stocks, but the Focus Group was informed that there is a need for coordination of data collection and assessment between Member States, in particular:

- a) International aggregated datasets of catches and landings (weights as well as size composition), especially for vessels under 10m, as well as for fisheries not targeting brown crab;
- b) Additional information on fishing effort associated with catch and landings (e.g. gear units, gear type, soak times), also internationally aggregated.
- c) Improved estimates of biological parameters (e.g. growth rate, size at maturity)

The NWWAC encourages further development of stock assessments for brown crab. The use of methods for data limited or assessment poor stocks developed by ICES should be explored, in order to improve the sustainability of the fisheries that are important for a large number of coastal communities. The NWWAC intends to develop appropriate management options for this stock, based on scientific information and taking into account national and local fisheries information. To do this, the NWWAC considers that management options and scientific assessments should be developed in parallel as each management option may require different types of data and different assessment approaches.



It was suggested that making use of electronic reporting possibilities would greatly help the possibilities for small scale fishermen to share information on catches, as well as details on for instance catch per unit effort, which are relevant for the evaluation of the stock over time.

Stocks of brown crab straddle across ICES areas and the NWWAC therefore looks for DG MARE's support to convince all relevant countries to participate in the collection and aggregation of data. Moreover, the NWWAC asks DG MARE to stimulate the improvement of the quality, quantity and aggregation of data collection and scientific underpinning for the development of future fisheries management measures.

Yours sincerely,



Emiel Brouckaert

Chairman
Executive Committee
North Western Waters Advisory Council

Cc:
North Western Waters Member States
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