

National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations

Chief Executive: Barrie Deas

30 Monkgate

York

YO31 7PF

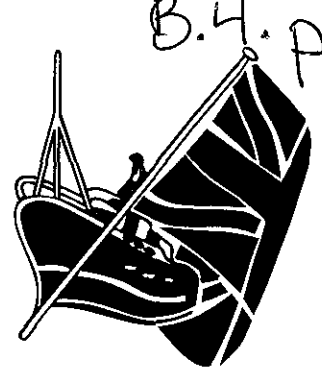
Tel: 01904 635430

Fax: 01904 635431

Accounts Dept: 01904 635428

email: nffo@nffo.org.uk

website: www.nffo.org.uk



Our ref: NFFO/3342/BCD

Poul Degnbol

Head of Advisory Programme

ICES

H.C. Andersens Boulevard 44-46

DK-1553

Copenhagen V

Denmark

Dear Poul

ICES Assessments: Data Deficiencies

Within the North West Waters RAC and the North Sea RAC there has been mounting concern that data deficiencies of various kinds impair the quality of an increasing number of ICES stock assessments.

As you know, this has immediate consequences for the fishing industry as the precautionary approach adopted by the Commission means that, in these circumstances, TACs are frequently set at lower levels that would otherwise have been the case.

It seems to us that it is unacceptable to allow the numbers of stocks for which it is not possible for ICES to provide an analytical assessment, or catch options, to increase; the priority therefore must be to find a way out of this impasse.

Either ICES must adopt a new approach, using assessment models where data is poor that are simpler, less reliant on supporting assumptions, and less data hungry, or we, collectively, must find ways of improving the data situation.

The NWWRAC, supported by the NSRAC, has suggested an initiative focused on the idea of a regional task force, involving fisheries scientists, fisheries managers and fishermen. The role of the task force would be to identify those fisheries suffering from data deficiencies, examine the nature of those deficiencies and to set in motion remedial measures that would over time improve the situation.

The Commission has welcomed this initiative but has declined to take a lead, drawing attention to other measures in place such as the Data Collection Framework Regulation that it claims may ease the situation.

We take the view that an initiative that brings together scientists fisheries managers and fisheries scientists at a regional level would have many advantages, not least prefiguring and setting the scene for the kind of regional bodies that appear likely to emerge from CFP reform.

Against this background, I write to ask if you would be willing to meet with a small group of representatives from the two RACs to discuss the potential of the idea.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Kind regards

PP Joanna Lanahan.

Barrie Deas

(For and on behalf of the North West Waters and North Sea regional advisory councils)