



Sam Lambourn
Chairman
North Western Waters RAC

Our Ref: G81/GH/LS

19 December 2007

Dear Sam Lambourn,

Thank you for your letter of 17 December on improvement of the quality of data for fish stock assessment purposes. ICES welcomes this step and looks forward to working with the RACs on this issue. The ICES Council decided in October 2007 to establish "Data Compilation Workshops" where stakeholders and scientists meet to discuss the quality of data for the 2008 round of assessment. Also, at these workshops stakeholders are invited to present data on what is called "non traditional" sources. Such data could be the surveys done among fishermen on their impression of the abundance in the North Sea and in waters west of Scotland.

ICES is in the middle of reforming its advisory programme and the precise form and the timing of these workshops is under discussion. ICES will present a proposal at the meeting between the RACs and ICES planned for late January in Vigo, Spain.

The data from the catching industry that ICES currently uses in its fish stock assessments include:

- 1) Landings by area and species as collected by the national statistical offices - it is of course important that these data are accurate and that they are not influenced by IUU fishing;
- 2) Sampling from the commercial catches (scientific observers at sea) and landings (scientific sampling at landings). This can obviously only be conducted in close cooperation between scientists and fishermen;
- 3) VMS and logbook data. It has become increasingly important in analysis to provide a detailed geographical breakdown of the catches and to provide an estimate of the fishing effort by fleet and gear. This is an area where procedures are not yet well established and where a joint effort could be very beneficial for all concerned.

I am aware that there is close cooperation between the industry and the national fishing laboratories in many countries and our joint analysis should also include a discussion on what the appropriate level of cooperation should be. Perhaps, the RAC-ICES work might be on establishing general policies and implementation would be at the national or even regional level. In this respect the work done under the "Data Collection Regulation" is important and this aspect should be part of our discussions.

ICES will invite to a continuation of the work done on generating data through industry sampling catches and landings. I hope that work in this direction can progress quickly.

General Secretary
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The RAC-ICES meeting that I mentioned above will be a place to elaborate on these themes. We share your interest in working with precise and accurate data, and look forward to an improvement of data to be used in the fish stock assessment for better analyses and advice.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Hubold', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Gerd Hubold
General Secretary

CC: ACOM and Senior Advisers