Report from:	**Kenny Coull**
Report date:	**19 March 2012**
Event:	WKLIFE
Place:	Lisbon, Portugal
Date:	13 – 17 February 2012
Organiser:	ICES
Participants:	Co-chaired by Manuela Azevedo (Portugal) and Carl O'Brien (UK) with wide partcipation from the scientific community and representation from the RAC's (Pelagic RAC ; Ian Gatt and Esben Svedrup-Jensen, NWWRAC ; Kenny Coull). Full list of attendees shown in Working Group report.
Purpose:	**Workshop on the Developments of Assessment based on LIFE history traits and exploitation characteristics**

AGENDA AND REPORT

The main issues addressed by the ToRs of the WKLIFE meeting relate to the assessment of stocks with either limited knowledge about their biology or lack of data about their exploitation levels. Cognisant of this weakness in the current ICES' advice, this workshop was convened by ACOM to investigate the feasibility of developing methodology for providing advice on data deficient stocks.

The opening sessions revolved around presentations and working documents relating to;
- Life history based population model.
- Low data assessment methods for conservation assessment (Celtic Sea).
- Data poor methods to establish pre-recruit models. (Estimating MSY from catch and resilience). (Froese method)

Stocks considered at WKLIFE were the 122 stocks without quantitative forecasts that ICES provide advice for. On recognising that many of the stocks listed had additional information available other than catch and landings, it was agreed that the first task to be undertaken was to categorize the stocks (by sub-group based on species relevant to AWG's) on the basis of:

1. Data rich stocks
2. Negligible landings stocks
3. Stocks with analytical assessments and forecasts that are only treated qualitatively
4. Stocks for which survey-based assessment indicate trends
5. Stocks for which reliable catch data are available for short time-series
6. Data-limited stocks
7. Stocks caught in minor amounts as by-catch

From this exercise it was clear that for many of the stocks considered, much more data are available, including;

- DCF data
- Commercial CPUE trends
- Time series of landings data
- Survey time-series

As WKLIFE was designed to define reference points for stocks where only LHTs are available, this exercise identified 39 stocks (category 5 – 6) requiring consideration.

For stocks in category 7 (stock complex), consideration was given to utilising a DCAC process (Depletion-corrected average catch) with Blackspot Bream being treated as an example. Further work was to be carried out to provide rationale for use of this method.

ToRs a & d

After classification the Sub-groups populated tables with basic life history parameters (for the stocks). In most cases, Fishbase was used as a reference source to obtain values but it was noted that this exercise was being done simply to test the process and that the EG's should be the appropriate forum to populate the tables with more relevant data. Using the basic life history parameters (selected) it was possible to generate fishing mortality reference points.

ToRs b & c

Each sub-group worked on an example of what could be produced with the "Froese method". However, in several examples, outcomes were not as expected and a series of procedures were being developed to clarify which conditions need to be met to allow use of this method. The availability of supplementary data may dictate or allow use the method. This matter was to be the focus of further discussion between recognised experts.

ToR e

The simulation framework used to evaluate the WKFRAME3 and ANNEX IV harvest control rules presented and discussed in WKLIFE will be used to evaluate the utility of advice based on categories 3 – 5 (outlined above). This will be undertaken after the meeting and results presented to ACOM's ADGINTRO in March 2012.

Points to note:

- LHT's should be compiled by stock experts in the relevant assessment WG's.
- Concern expressed that if a proxy MSY is utilised (for data poor stocks) the approach of moving towards MSY without TAC constraints could see substantial single year reductions – unclear how to incorporate a step process which allows for revision.
- As in many cases, the need for relevant appropriate data must be recognised as there is a tendency to build in precautionary factors, which can have a cumulative effect resulting in significant reductions in TAC's.
- Some data are not included in ICES' assessment and work is needed to investigate how to incorporate them. Although this issue seems to be a recurring problem that is widely known it appears that greater efforts are needed to ensure data collected (and funded) under the Data Collection Framework feeds into the assessment process (not within the remit of this group)

Further details of the workshop outcomes can be obtained by viewing the final report of WKLIFE at: http://www.ices.dk/workinggroups/ViewWorkingGroup.aspx?ID=585