



## REPORT

### North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

#### FOCUS GROUP ON CELTIC SEA MIXED DEMERSAL FISHERIES

Thursday 27 January 2011

09.30-16.00

CNPMEM – Paris

Chairman: Jacques Pichon

Rapporteur: Paul Trebilcock

#### 1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed participants. He gave a brief background to the meeting, highlighting that this was the third in a series of meetings on this subject. He gave an update on progress to date and an overview of the work outlined in the agenda for this meeting.

#### - Apologies

Apologies were received by the Secretariat from Bertie Armstrong (Scottish Fishermen's Federation), Barrie Deas (NFFO), Caroline Gamblin (CNPMEM) and Els Torreele (ILVO).

#### - Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

#### - Adoption of the Report of Last Meeting

Clarification on the statement regarding the relationship between fishing effort and Fishing Mortality (F) contained in paragraph 2.1 of the report was requested. Colm Lordan agreed to provide an explanatory statement that would be added to the report.

Subject to this addition the Report was adopted by consensus.

**ACTION: Colm Lordan to provide explanatory statement on relationship between fishing effort and fishing mortality.**

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## 2. Review of biology for Celtic Sea demersal stocks

Colm Lordan (Marine Institute researcher and Co-Chair of ICES WGCSE) gave a presentation reviewing the ICES assessment data on key demersal stocks in the Celtic Sea. The full presentation is available on the NWW RAC website for information.

In summary for Celtic Sea Stocks:

### Cod

- ICES had offered no assessment advice this year due to uncertainty in data
- Historically discard rates of Cod were relatively low, however since 2003 it is thought that discards have been increasingly driven by quota constraint
- It is felt by ICES that F remains relatively high, although not precisely defined
- A truncated age structure has been observed in this stock (ages 1-3 make up about the 80% of catches)
- Reasons for the truncated age structure needs to be understood and addressed to ensure that there are an increased proportion of older age groups in the stock, if possible this should be considered as a management objective
- Strong recruitment perceived in 2009 and 2010 and supported by French and Irish scientific surveys
- The December Fisheries Council decision of a status quo TAC will lead to substantial discarding due to the influx of strong incoming year classes

### Haddock

- Increasing stock
- Recent strong year classes continue to contribute to the good status of the stock
- Discard estimates remain uncertain, however thought to be substantial

### Whiting

- Similar situation to Haddock
- SSB increasing
- Strong year class in 2008
- Discard rates key concern with this stock (50% by weight and 78% by number)

### Plaice

- No real update
- ICES benchmark workshop on flat fish (WKFLAT) were meeting next week to review this stock assessment
- Stock perceived to be in relatively poor state
- Stock by-caught with Sole



### Sole

- Relatively good status of stock
- F decreasing
- Close to Fmsy target

### Nephrops

- Assessment by Functional Units
- No significant changes from last year

### Megrim VI and VII

- No update
- Advice based on indices that do not show changes in stock abundance

### Anglerfish

- No update
- Advice based on indices that do not show changes in stock abundance

### Elasmobranches

- Complex mix of different species
- Not fully understood, relatively data poor assessments
- Overall some stocks increasing and some decreasing

Some examples of increased mesh size effects on haddock and whiting were presented. These showed a positive correlation between increasing mesh size and reducing discarding of small fish.

Following the presentation a number of views and questions were raised:

- Although optimal exploitation rates were not being observed in all stocks, overall trends in most Celtic Sea stocks were positive
- Discard rates were still not fully understood but were of concern in certain stocks (cod, haddock and whiting particularly)
- Mesh size as a selectivity tool caused some concern with regard to:
  - a) Its effect on target species;
  - b) The ultra-mixed fisheries in the Celtic Sea and its effects on the retention of important high value commercial species;
- Had any data from the Belgian scientific institute on beam trawl discard been used?
- Had all member state research institutes been approached to take part in this work?



- Possibility of carrying out selectivity surveys for specific Celtic Sea stocks such as nephrops or northern hake in a coordinated manner taking into account the existing campaigns run by several national scientific institutes?

In response to these issues Dr. Lordan said:

- The impact of mesh size increase for Celtic Sea Cod was minimal as they grow through the selection window very quickly and therefore mesh was not an appropriate tool for reducing F
- Loss of important high value commercial species was an issue and it would be possible to carry out an economic evaluation of such effects as well as biological effects
- Mesh size increase would be suitable for haddock and whiting selectivity improvements, however this should be considered in the context of the ultra mixed fisheries in the area
- Increasing mesh size would have significant economic consequences but could deliver long term benefits if implemented correctly
- It was not just mesh size that should be considered, square mesh panels, separator trawls and other gear modification effects should be further investigated
- The Belgian beam trawl data would be integrated into the assessment during 2011
- All member state research institutes could get involved if they had something to contribute to this area of work and should contact Colm Lordan for coordination purposes

Further comments from the floor followed:

- Are ICES any closer to being able to offer advice on Celtic Sea Cod given that ICES are considering a change in the format of its advice for 2012; what can be done by industry to assist this?
- It was felt that there was a potential problem with the availability of Haddock on the grounds versus the TAC set. The Commission/Council restricted an increase in TAC to 15% on political grounds rather than on scientific evidence giving mixed messages on its commitment to discards.
- To be able to fully understand and subsequently address discarding properly it is necessary to understand what are the drivers for discarding –under minimum landing and/or marketing size, regulatory impacts, market aspects and traditional working practices and fishing patterns were all considered factors



Further comments from Colm Lordan:

- He was optimistic that assessment advice would be back in place for 2012. A review is due to take place in July of assessment methodology for this stock looking at data handling. This work has the support of ACOM.
- Drivers for discarding were complex. Historically in the Celtic Sea it was primarily driven by undersized fish and poor selectivity. More recently quota and regulatory drivers seemed to be driving discarding more.

**ACTIONS: The NWW RAC to note the update on stock review of Celtic Sea Stocks.**

**The NWW RAC to continue pushing for improvement in assessment of key stocks in Celtic Sea, particularly Cod.**

**The NWW RAC should identify key drivers for discards and possible ways of addressing them.**

### **3. Effort management: legislative framework for subdivision VIIIfg**

The Commission representative, Mr. Lindemann, gave an overview of the main outcomes of the December Council and the DG MARE's current position regarding the Celtic Sea:

- The Commission was disappointed that its Celtic Sea management plan proposals were not adopted at the December Council
- It was still committed to an effort control regime, although not ruling out alternatives
- It had concerns about discarding in the Celtic Sea
- If the NWW RAC did not develop a credible alternative Long Term Management Plan (LTMP) the Commission would seek to implement its own effort based plan
- There is to be a review of existing Cod recovery plans and the Commission did recognize regional differences but wanted to see progress in all regions

There were a number of comments and concerns from the floor:

- The Commission continued to ignore industry concerns and knowledge based opinions leading to its unerring desire for an effort control based regime in the Celtic Sea



- Reducing effort, improving selectivity and improving stock abundance all supported the case that the situation is not as dramatic as in other sea areas
- Selectivity is an issue however it was strongly stated that an effort regime can restrict the ability to be selective and care must be taken so as not to reduce selectivity by vessels
- There was a lack of clarity on the high grading ban and its applicability
- Joe Maddock made it clear that his organization (Irish Fishermen's Organisation) did not support the separation of Celtic Sea from area VII for the purposes of a LTMP. He also made clear that his organisation would not support a Rights Based Management system.

The Commission noted these points and then went on to highlight a number of areas of ongoing working at Commission level:

- Review of Cod Recovery Plans
- Nephrops Management plan (functional unit management)
- Long Term Management Plan for Northern Hake
- Western Waters Regulation review
- Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) review
- Ecosystem based approach to management in the Celtic Sea (linked to MSFD)
- Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA) review
- Shellfish Management (specifically crab)

Comments from the floor:

- There appeared to be no clear or strategic thinking from the Commission on a range of complex and overlapping regulations and initiatives
- A Long Term Management Plan for the Celtic Sea should eliminate the need for the current raft of complex regulation
- There needed to be several ongoing reviews/consultations and proposals, as well as a status report on each produced by the Commission
- There remained an apparent fundamental lack of understanding by the Commission on the ultra-mixed fisheries and fleets operating in the Celtic Sea
- There is a need to follow up current work being developed by ICES and STECF regarding the practicalities of implementation of an ecosystem based approach to fisheries management to meet objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.



**ACTIONS:** NWW RAC to request from the Commission any ongoing reviews, consultations and proposals that effected or will effect the Celtic Sea, as well as a status report on each and how each fitted into a strategic regulatory framework (highlighting areas of overlap and contradiction)

NWW RAC to request clarification and assurance that an agreed Long Term Management Plan for the Celtic Sea would eliminate the need for the current raft of complex regulation

NWW RAC to follow up ongoing discussions at ICES/STECF level in relation to the implementation of an ecosystem based approach to fisheries management, in particular in relation to the Celtic Sea

#### **4. Towards a Long Term Management Plan for Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries: guidelines and objectives**

Sean O'Donoghue introduced and presented a NWW RAC discussion paper on a Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries management plan, as agreed by the Steering Group in December 2010. This paper has been circulated before the meeting among NWW RAC members for information.

Following extensive discussion it was agreed to redraft the paper incorporating comments from the discussion. A redrafted version is attached to this report as Annex II.

Further comments were made:

- It was agreed that for the purposes of this proposed pilot management regime Celtic Sea would mean ICES subareas VIIfg
- It would be catch based (landings + discards) rather than effort based
- The concept of Total Allowable Catches was felt to be correct
- There is a need to understand patterns of discards by areas and build time series on it
- The concept of CCTV onboard vessels was **not** supported at this stage
- Need to progress on work with scientific community and Member States in identifying data gaps and improving data quality for key stocks in VIIfg
- Important to identify priority stocks for MSY targets, both biologically and economically
- Economic targets required more clarity and understanding
- There were concerns from the Spanish industry about an effort ceiling in the proposed management plan due to the following:



- Regulation (EC) 1415/2004 sets the fishing effort ceilings for Spanish fleet in Area VII. Sub-areas VIIg and VIIh - where the long term management plan will be applied - are within Area VII.
- The proposed LTMP intends to set new effort ceilings based on vessel presence in VIIg during the last five years.
- Currently the Spanish fleet does not exercise its fishing activity regularly in the sub-areas VIIg.
- If a new ceiling is accepted based on vessel presence over the past five years, the resulting effort assigned to Spain would then be reduced. This would mean a loss in fleet presence as well as effort capacity (i.e. fishing days). This is something that the Spanish fleet would not be keen to accept. The change in effort ceiling could also have implications on relative stability.

It was agreed that the above concerns raised by Spanish representatives could be covered by recital text at the beginning of the paper.

**ACTIONS:** Paul Trebilcock will review and redraft the NWW RAC discussion paper on a Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries management plan in light of comments made

Sean O'Donoghue to draft recital text to address Spanish concerns on discrimination regarding access rights to the area as a result of the implementation of a capacity cap

## 5. Initiatives for the reduction of discards

This agenda item, proposed by WWF, was agreed to be postponed until the next meeting.

## 6. Definition of strategy and work plan for the NWWRAC

It was acknowledged that the development and drafting of a Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries management plan was a substantial piece of work that would require significant resources (both time and money) to complete properly.





It was agreed that the redrafted NWW RAC paper should be assessed and work packages identified as next step.

Expert people or institutes should then be identified and invited to carry out the work packages by the Focus Group.

The Secretariat would assist in identifying funding opportunities.

**ACTIONS: Work packages and potential experts/institutes to be identified**

**NWW RAC Secretariat to assist in identifying funding opportunities to carry out necessary work**

## **7. GEPETO Project**

The focus group received a presentation from Benoit Guerin on behalf of the GEPETO project. A description of the project is available on the NWW RAC website for information.

It was suggested that this project could be used in the developmental work involved in a drafting and developing a Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries management plan.

It was felt that there were still procedural and funding issues that required further consideration by the Executive Committee.

It was agreed that a decision would have to be taken by the NWW RAC Executive Committee on the level of engagement with this project giving due regard to the practicalities and funding implications for both parties.

**ACTION: NWW RAC Executive Committee to consider level of engagement with GEPETO project**

**Meeting finished at 16 h**



## Annex I. List of attendees

<b>MEMBERS</b>		
1	Jacques Pichon ( <b>Chairman</b> )	FROM Bretagne-PMA – France
2	Paul Trebilcock ( <b>Rapporteur</b> )	Cornish FPO – United Kingdom
3	Víctor Badiola	OPPAO-CEPESCA – Spain
4	Iwan Ball	World Wildlife Fund – EU
5	Arianna Broggiato	EBCD – EU
6	Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale – Belgium
7	Luc Corbisier	SDVO – Belgium
8	John Crudden	European Anglers' Alliance – EU
9	Antón González	Wales and West Coast FPO – UK
10	Hugo González	ANASOL-ARVI - Spain
11	André Gueguen	OPOB – France
12	Sam Lambourn	Skipper / NWWRAC Chairman – UK
13	Julien Lamothe	ANOP – France
14	Daniel Lefèvre	CRPM-Basse Normandie – France
15	Jesús Lourido García	Puerto de Celeiro S.A.- Spain
16	Joe Maddock	Irish Fishermen's Organisation – Ireland
17	Eduardo Míguez López	EAFPA – EU
18	Lorcan O'Cinnéide	Irish Fish Producer's Organisation – Ireland
19	Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Association – Ireland
20	Eibhlin O'Sullivan	Irish South & West FPO - Ireland
21	Jean-Marie Robert	CNPMEM – France
<b>EXPERTS AND OBSERVERS</b>		
22	Jan Lindemann	DG MARE - European Commission
23	Elisa Vinckenborg	DG MARE - European Commission
24	Colm Lordan	Marine Institute (Scientific Expert)
25	Alain Biseau	IFREMER (Scientific observer)
26	Marc Ghiglia	UAPF (ACFA observer)
27	Benoît Guerin	SWWRAC Secretariat (observer)
28	Michael Keatinge	BIM (Observer)
29	Sarah Kraak	Marine Institute (Scientific observer)

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30	Eamon Mangan	DPMA France (Member State)
31	Ségolène Monteillier	DPMA France (Member State)
32	Marina Santurtún	AZTI-Tecnalia (Scientific Observer)
33	Marie Sébire	SWWRAC Secretariat (observer)
34	Borja Velasco	SEGEMAR – MARM España (Member State)
<b>NWWWRAC SECRETARIAT</b>		
35	Conor Nolan	Executive Secretary
36	Alexandre Rodríguez	Executive Assistant - Fisheries Policy Issues
37	Joanna McGrath	Executive Assistant-Administration / Finances



## **Annex II. Revised Paper on a Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries management plan (ICES sub area VIIg)**

### **1. Rationale - Broad objective**

The main objective of this paper is to develop with the stakeholders and scientists an appropriate, workable and effective management plan (henceforth, MP) for Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries (sub area VIIg) during 2011. The MP will have an initial transitional developmental phase in 2012-2015. The key drivers for the MP are objectivity, transparency, inclusively and evidence based decision making.

Following the transitional developmental phase a long-term management plan will be developed.

The transitional developmental MP will be based on biological, economic and social objectives as outlined in points 4-6. In addition the overarching Governance will have to be addressed in the context of any proposed new structures.

### **2. Framework for the elaboration of a management plan: questions to be addressed**

#### **2.1. Where are we now?**

- Fleets (number of vessels, gears, areas where they operate...)
- Stocks
- Trends
- Socio-Economics (turnover, direct and indirect employments generated...)
- Marine spatial planning (interactions between fishing grounds and MPAs, windmill parks, other marine users...)

#### **2.2. Where do we want to be in 5-10 years time?**

- MSY subject to ecosystem and mixed fishery considerations
- Achieving fishing mortality targets for key indicator stocks
- Fleet renewal without subsidy
- Results based management
- A high degree of self regulation
- Low discards

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- Full scientific information, no more missing relevant data for managing the fisheries
- **New LTMP substitutes entirely other rules and regulations and is not an addition to already existing ones.**

### 2.3. What are the management measures that will deliver this?

- Technical measures
- Closed areas
- Fleet structure policy/capacity reduction
- Quotas
- Fisheries Science Partnerships / Self-sampling
- Others

### 3. Procedure for the adoption of a management plan

3.1. The development of a **draft** management plan through collaborative work between scientists, economists and stakeholders

3.2. This work will define a number of **options** that could deliver our objectives.

3.3. Each option will be accompanied by an **assessment** that will analyse the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. This will be used to inform the various trade-offs that will be required in adopting a final plan.

3.4. All options will be discussed with the **stakeholders** (ports, regional and NWWRAC meetings)

3.5. The draft LTMP will be **refined** in light of the comments made by key stakeholders

3.6. The LTMP will be **discussed** within the North Western Waters RAC and, if agreed, **adopted** as NWWRAC advice

### 4. Definition of objectives - Biological considerations

#### 4.1. Transitional Objectives:

1. To have an agreed common understanding of all stakeholders on the state of stocks in the mixed demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea including the geographical area covered (i.e. ICES sub areas VIIIfg).



2. Reduce discard rates by 20% from current levels by 2015 for Cod, Haddock and Whiting
3. Follow the scientific advice for MSY in transition by 2015 where applicable and available. As the MP is based on mixed demersal stocks choices on the appropriate MSY targets will have be decided. For stocks where MSY transition catch options are not available use an innovative new adaptive approach to define the desired overall fishing mortality.
4. To work with scientists to redress data quality and quantity issues to ensure more robust assessments and management targets.
5. To work with ICES to find new and innovative approaches to utilise fishermen information that are both qualitative and quantitative.
6. Develop a suite of indicators and risk assessment framework for species of lesser importance (by-caught) in the mixed fisheries.
7. To identify vulnerable species and habitats impacted on by mixed fisheries and adopt a management plan accordingly.

#### **4.2. Long-term objectives:**

1. To have new adoptive assessment methods that are readily supported by all stakeholders.
2. To minimise discards of in all mixed demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea.
3. Adapt a Total Allowable Catch rather than a Total Allowable Landings management System.
4. To manage mixed demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea on the basis of total allowable catch.
5. To ensure at least 75 % of the catch biomass is fished at or below MSY targets or other appropriate target for mixed demersal fisheries.
6. To ensure that the remaining 25 % of the catch biomass is fished at sustainable catch levels based on a risk assessment framework.
7. Develop the framework for a fully documented fishery with reversal of the burden of proof.
8. To have in place a fully verifiable operational documented fishery system.



9. To protect vulnerable species and habitats through specific measures such as MPAs and other technical measures.

## **5. Definition of objectives - Economic considerations**

### **5.1. Transitional objectives**

1. Adopt measures to ensure a viable fleet.
2. Optimise the economic return to the fishing industry.
3. Prevent the expansion of effort in the Celtic Sea through a capacity limitation that is in accordance with the EC rules in force, in particular Regulation (EC) 1415/2004.
4. Develop co-management framework including rights based management mechanisms.
5. Promote efficiencies and reduce carbon footprint.
6. Develop an economic model and performance indicators for the fishery.

### **5.2. Long-term objectives**

1. A viable fleet that is capable of renewing itself without subsidies.
2. Maximise the economic return from the resource for the sector whilst maintaining the sustainability of the stock and habitats.
3. Ensure cost effective management of the fishery and high levels of compliance.
4. Encourage maximum commercial flexibility and administrative simplicity for industry participants.
5. An operational integrated biological-economic model that has a set of key performance indicators.



## **6. Definition of objectives - Social considerations**

### **6.1. Transitional objectives**

1. To define an appropriate set of social criteria that is relevant to mixed demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea.
2. To define the parameters to be measured based on the appropriate set of social criteria.
3. To engage the fishing industry and other stakeholders in defining one and two above from the start and also on the data collection, assessment and management process.
4. To adopt measures to protect the vulnerable fishing dependant coastal communities.
5. To develop a social model and performance indicators

### **6.2. Long-term objectives**

1. A defined set of social criteria.
2. Quantifiable and measurable parameters.
3. Sustainable fishing dependant communities.
4. To provide a range of incentives for participation in a fully documented fishery.
5. Incentives schemes the norm and appropriate disincentives for breaking the rules.
6. Operational biological-economic and social model that has set of key performance indicators for the mixed demersal fisheries.

**---END---**