



REPORT

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

FOCUS GROUP ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR CELTIC SEA

Wednesday 8 September 2010

14.00-17.30

MARM – Madrid

Chairman: Jacques Pichon

Rapporteur: Paul Trebilcock

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed participants. He gave a brief background to the meeting, highlighting that Celtic Sea Cod was different to other EU managed Cod stocks in terms of its biology, distribution, growth rates and fisheries it is taken in.

The Chairman highlighted the fishing industry's pro-active approach on this subject, highlighting initiatives such as the Trevoise Closure and Science Partnerships. Data deficiencies and assessment uncertainties remained significant but not insurmountable issues that required urgent attention.

- Apologies

Apologies were received from Jacques Bigot (CFTC-ETF), Sam Lambourn (NWWRAC Chairman) and Mike Armstrong (CEFAS). The list of attendees is available in Annex I.

- Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

- Adoption of the Report of Last Meeting

The Report of the last meeting, held in Paris the 7th of July¹, was adopted by consensus without changes.

¹ Available in NWWRAC website:

http://www.nwwrac.org/Meetings/Meetings_ENG/Navigation.php?id=421&language=English



2. Review of current regulatory framework in VIIIfg and adjacent areas

2.1. NWW RAC Opinion re the EC Consultation Paper on Effort Management Ecosystem Approach (July2010)

Paul Trebilcock summarised the NWWRAC Opinion on the Commission's non-paper on effort management in VIIIfg (attached for information).

Key areas covered by the paper were:

- Co-decision procedure
- Status of stocks and ICES advice
- Scientific assessments – industry partnerships
- Opposition to an inappropriate days at sea regime
- Pro-active proposal of capacity cap rather than effort regime

It was acknowledged that, following the scientific presentation from the ICES Celtic Sea Ecoregion Working Group Co-Chair at the previous meeting, the situation of the all of stocks concerned were not optimal in relation to Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) but it was clear that there are positive trends. There had been a dramatic decrease of fishing effort in the last ten years of approximately 30-40%. The Stakeholders felt that there was not necessarily a demonstrable link between fishing effort and fishing mortality.

2.2. Analysis of Commission's Response to NWW RAC Opinion (August 2010)

It was strongly stated the Commission's response to the NWW RAC Opinion was totally unsatisfactory.

The main concerns were:

- The legal status and clarity of the Commission's response on co-decision making.
- The negative interpretation and presentation of the ICES stock assessment advice.
- The Commission's apparent total focus on-a-days at sea regime rather than addressing key long term objectives and then developing the appropriate management proposals.



- The apparent lack of understanding displayed in the activities and possible response of the fleets that would be affected.
- The apparent ignorance of the substantial reduction in effort through existing regulation and structural changes in Member State fleets.
- The adverse and unnecessary effects on zero or low cod catching fleets/vessels.
- There was confusion over terminology in the Commissions response switching between VIIIfg and Celtic Sea with no difference.
- The need to learn lessons from mistakes in other areas such as Irish Sea, West of Scotland and North Sea where benefits have been minimal but economic and social effects have been devastating.

In summary the original proposal and subsequent response to the NWW RAC from the Commission failed to describe clear objectives and a question was raised asking was the Commission proposal aiming to address a LTMP or was it rather attempting to circumvent the co-decision procedure?

Ken Patterson on behalf of the DG MARE of the European Commission responded:

- The Commission's response clearly states that their view is this proposal would not be subject to co-decision procedure.
- On the state of stocks the Commission had used the headlines from ICES advice to express what they believed to be the conclusions.
- On science-industry partnerships he stated that they had caused the Commission some disappointment because they had failed to deliver any useful outcomes.
- Commission favoured a days at sea approach to effort.
- The Commission does not reject the principle of a capacity cap. However it was concerned about the possibility of increasing effort and invited the NWW RAC to provide evidence that this will not happen.
- On the proposed effort regime the Commission had only heard negative comments but not constructive proposals.

The industry felt that the overall reduction in effort in recent years was linked to the Trevoise Closure and TAC controls. It was felt that this demonstrated a change driven by industry with out a days at sea regime.



It was observed that the Commission's objective based on ICES advice seemed to be at a minimum to maintain effort at current levels and in reality reduce effort levels by 10% in 2011 based on an historic reference period. Current management measures in this area are already delivering that objective (a significant overall reduction (KW/days) in all gear categories).

It was acknowledged that there had to be a clearer explanation of how a capacity cap would work in practice.

The Spanish delegation also reminded the need that the fleets neither targeting nor catching cod should not be affected by the measures adopted under this plan or effort regime.

Action: Paul Trebilcock to prepare a draft response to the Commission. It should incorporate the comments raised during the debate; address the clarification of a capacity cap alternative and point towards the development of a fit for purpose LTMP.

3. Guidelines for the elaboration of a long term management plan for Celtic Sea Demersal Stocks

3.1. Presentation of Discussion Paper – Colm Lordan (Marine Institute)

Colm Lordan presented an alternative approach to developing a fit for purpose Long term management Plan (LTMP) for the Celtic Sea (available on the NWW RAC website for information).

Key points included:

- Stocks in this area are very productive but exploitation rates or patterns were not optimal at present
- LTMP Models in other parts of the world exist and seem to be working. These might offer useful guidance and experience in the development of a LTMP for this area
- The NWW RAC should take ownership and develop a LTMP in collaboration with fishermen, scientists and managers.
- Profitable and sustainable fisheries must be a core objective of any LTMP
- Discard levels in this area remain poorly assessed and would need to be assessed properly and addressed
- An effort regime as described by the Commission does not necessarily need to be the focus of a LTMP
- A LTMP should include adaptive management mechanisms



- Data poor stocks are already being managed by LTMP in other fisheries using performance indicators rather than absolute trigger figures
- It was not necessary to have a complete new data set to begin this process. Data deficiencies would need to be dealt with and addressed in a LTMP. It would be possible to develop a “traffic light” system and associated rules
- Need to think about how an alternative approach would fit in to the current management regime and regulatory framework. Links with the current Commission non-paper on Nephrops, the Biologically Sensitive Area and other management plans need to be carefully considered
- Funding requirements to carry out the necessary development work would need to be addressed

3.2. Discussions from the floor:

The following comments were made by the participants:

- MSY in relation to diverse mixed fisheries remained an unclear and not well defined concept
- The Commission’s non-paper was clearly not a serious LTMP proposal
- There was general enthusiasm about the approach presented by Dr. Lordan as it offered a framework that gave the NWW RAC a mechanism and strategy to develop a fit for purpose LTMP proposal
- Very strong opinion it was important to get the objectives clearly defined and agreed at the outset
- Need to learn lessons from other fisheries and identify what has worked and what has not delivered and the associated reasons for these outcomes
- Conflict between fishing industry and fisheries managers is not normally about objectives but the timeframe or trajectory and the choice of management instruments
- Any LTMP needs to be developed on the basis of understanding economics as well as science
- Should a LTMP be concerned with ICES area VII_{fg} or entire ICES area VII?
- The Commission’s views on this approach would be interesting



- Victor Badiola agreed to circulate a presentation from a recent international conference held in Santander that looked at the issues and challenges of an MSY approach and ecosystem based approach to fisheries management.

Colm Lordan added that MSY and the possibility of achieving it in multi-species fisheries across all species was indeed very complex but that this was something that a LTMP should attempt to address. It was suggested that the objective should be to fish as close as possible to MSY on key species whilst ensuring that other stocks were in a position to support exploitation at MSY levels at some point.

He also underlined the need to move away from total allowable landings regime, address discards and assess options around total allowable catches.

Finally he agreed that clearly defined and agreed objectives were essential before addressing detail.

The Commission commented on the discussion:

- A LTMP was necessary
- Issues surrounding relative stability need to be considered
- The role of the NWW RAC in terms of function, capacity and structure should be considered
- The Commission would continue its own thinking on this issue with the focus on an effort regime based on days at sea

There was disappointment from the floor at the Commissions' sceptical reaction to the NWW RAC proposal to develop a holistic approach within a sensible and achievable timeframe.

There was a need to be strategic and in these terms the Commission non-paper was not fit for purpose and required a total re-think.

It was felt that the Commission should be supportive of NWW RAC initiative that has the objective of delivering long term benefits and such the Commissions reaction was found disappointing.

ACTION: Propose to the NWW RAC Executive Committee to convene a small scoping group to define key objectives, develop terms of reference for development work, identify partners to assist with required work and maintain momentum on this issue. It was suggested Colm Lordan, Barrie Deas, Sean O'Donoghue, Jacques Pichon, Emiel Brouckaert, Hugo González and Paul Trebilcock constitute the first meeting.

ACTION: NWWRAC secretariat to look for sources of funding based on the outcomes from the scoping meeting mentioned above.



ACTION: Victor Badiola agreed to circulate a presentation from a recent conference held in Santander that looked at the issues and challenges of an MSY approach and ecosystem based approach to fisheries management.

4. Initiatives to improve data quality in Celtic Sea

Barrie Deas presented a paper on data deficiencies in stock assessments. This paper is available for information on the NWW RAC website.

Key points were:

- Lack of analytical assessments for many stocks for which ICES are asked for advice
- Need to identify problem areas and put into place remedial measures
- Need to do something to avoid situation getting worse
- There are three main players; scientists, fishing industry and fisheries managers
- It is important to not engage in duplication.
- A NWWRAC data deficiencies task force could add a distinctive layer of value and address problem areas
- Proposal to meet with key officials from ICES to understand their thinking on this issue and if such a task force could make a positive contribution

Colm Lordan welcomed this paper as positive and thought that ICES would welcome the opportunity to discuss and develop this concept further. Focus should be on data requirements and subsequent use of such data.

The Commission response was less positive stating that ICES already identify data gaps on a spread sheet each year (this would be made available on the NWWRAC website). The main reason for the lack of analytical assessments and data issues (the Commission believed) was due mainly to misreporting of catches and discards.

ICES benchmark meetings that were ongoing were thought to be extremely important factor on this issue.



It was felt that ICES spreadsheets on data gaps were a good starting point but where the task force could add value would be identifying and developing remedial measures to address these gaps.

ACTION: Propose to the NWW RAC Executive Committee to establish a steering group to drive this forward. The following recommendations were also agreed; an initial meeting with ICES involving Barrie Deas was seen as a necessary first step. A clear structure and terms of reference were essential from the outset.



Annex I. List of attendees

1	Jacques Pichon	ANOP-FROM Bretagne-PMA (Chairman)
2	Paul Trebilcock	Cornish FPO (Rapporteur)
3	Kenneth Patterson	DG MARE - European Commission
4	Colm Lordan	Marine Institute (Scientific Expert)
5	Els Torreele	ILVO Vlaanderen (Scientific Expert)
6	Víctor Badiola	OPPAO-CEPESCA
7	Iwan Ball	World Wildlife Fund
8	Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
9	Luc Corbisier	SDVO
10	John Crudden	European Anglers' Alliance
11	Barrie Deas	NFFO
12	Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM
13	Marc Ghiglia	UAPF – ACFA observer
14	Hugo González	ANASOL-ARVI-CEPESCA
15	André Gueguen	OPOB
16	Daniel Lefèvre	CRPM-Basse Normandie
17	Jesús Lourido García	Puerto de Celeiro S.A.-CEPESCA
18	Joe Maddock	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
19	Eduardo Míguez López	EAFPA
20	Lorcan O'Cinnéide	Irish Fish Producer's Organisation
21	Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Association
22	Eibhlin O'Sullivan	Irish South and West Fish Producers' Org.
23	Conor Nolan	NWWRAC Secretariat
24	Alexandre Rodríguez	NWWRAC Secretariat
25	Joanna McGrath	NWWRAC Secretariat