



REPORT

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council Focus Group Meeting on Celtic Sea Demersal Fisheries BIM Dublin, 22 March 2012

Chairman: Jacques Pichon

**Co-Rapporteurs: Barrie Deas
and Alexandre Rodríguez**

(Substituting for Paul Trebilcock)

1. Welcome

Attendance / Apologies

The Chairman, Jacques Pichon, opened the meeting by welcoming the participants for their attendance. He passed on the apologies received from Paul Trebilcock, Hugo González, Jesús Lourido and NGO representatives Iwan Ball, Kara Brydson and Debbie Crockard.

Opening remarks

The Chair observed that the Focus Group had met five times in the course of the last two years and that significant progress had been made in developing a stakeholder led multi-annual management plan for mixed demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea (i.e. ICES subdivision VIIIfg).

Nevertheless, the process appeared to have stalled, as it had proven difficult to convert the Commission's assurances of the availability of funding and assistance in preparing the scientific (biological, ecological, environmental), economic and social underpinnings, into reality. An exchange of correspondence with the Commission had yet to reach conclusion. In the meantime both ICES and STECF were engaged in work on the development of aspects of multi-annual management plan that could have direct or indirect relevance to the Celtic Sea and the work of the NWWWRAC.

NWWWRAC Focus Group on Celtic Sea Demersal Fisheries

BIM Dublin, 22 March 2012



A further complexity had arisen with the need for additional technical measures to reduce discards in the light of strong incoming year-classes of cod, haddock and whiting in the Celtic Sea.

This was the background against which the Focus Group must make progress, beginning by bringing clarity to its aims, objectives and working procedures.

Adoption of Agenda

The Chair proposed to include a reply received from the Commission on the 9 March in relation to the proposal submitted by the NWWRAC advocating for the introduction of additional technical measures to improve gear selectivity and reduce discards of haddock, whiting and cod stocks in a wide part of the Celtic Sea (subdivision VIIg and part of j).

The Chair suggested dealing with this issue under item 2 – exchange of views and coordination of the work priorities between the NWWRAC and the European Commission.

The members of the Celtic Sea Focus Group (FG) present at the meeting agreed with this addition and adopted the agenda without further changes.

2. Commission's work plan towards technical measures and a multi annual management plan for demersal species in the Celtic Sea

2.1. Technical Measures

The meeting was advised that the Commission had indicated that it would accept seven out of nine of the NWWRAC proposals for technical measures. However, it was of the view that two of the measures suggested (i.e. derogation for vessels under 15m and catch composition rules in relation to whiting) would amount to a relaxation from the EU Technical Conservation Regulation (850/98) currently in force and therefore could not be accepted. After discussion, the group agreed that the problem lay with the drafting of the NWWRAC advice as the intention had been to strengthen the conservation regime and increase selectivity and as such it was difficult to see how additional measures could be construed as a dilution of the existing regime.

The Group noted that ideally the EU should come forward with an early proposal for a Community measure (albeit through co-decision procedure should take longer in terms of time).



Regarding the other possible options, it was agreed that:

- Commission's emergency measures on this issue would set an unwelcome precedent as there was no serious threat for the conservation of the stocks.
- National measures would face inevitable problems of uneven application and enforcement.

Actions:

- It was agreed that Sean O'Donoghue should examine the NWWRAC text to ensure that it delivered the RAC's intention in this regard. This clarification could then be transmitted in a reply to the Commission within a period no longer than three weeks, given that the December Council Statement says that Member States must act no later than April 2012.

- It was agreed that it would be helpful to refer to the scientific basis for the RAC's advice; and also to amend those lines of the text where it is proposed that *"square mesh panel (is) positioned between 9m and 12m from the codline"* to be replaced by *"square mesh panel (is) positioned at a maximum distance of 12 meters from the codline"*, to be consistent with Regulation (EC) 850/98¹.

2.2. Multi-annual Plan for demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea (subdivision VIIIfg)

The Commission is supportive of this initiative lead by the NWWRAC, as it would be the first example of a "bottom-up" management plan in a mixed fisheries context. However, the Commission's representative urged the NWWRAC to come up with fully-fledged formal proposal underpinned by science that should be ready before the end of the year at the very latest. It was noted that the Commission might also be able to assist financially by launching a study to look at those socio-economic components of the plan identified by the NWWRAC. It was stated that this study would only cover socio-economic considerations that are linked to impact assessments, since any requests on biology of the species should be channelled through ordinary request to ICES and/or STECF.

¹ This proposal was made after the meeting by Mrs. O'Sullivan and agreed by the Focus Group members.



3. STECF work plan in relation to a multi annual management plan for the Celtic Sea

The STECF representatives (Norman Graham and Sarah Kraak) reminded that an expert working group has been scheduled in mid-June in Edinburgh, which will do a scoping of mixed fisheries plan for the Celtic Sea².

He also advised to adjust the NWWRAC calendar in line with STECF so the NWWRAC advice can feed into the STECF scoping meeting in June and use it as a forum to exchange views on this matter. The STECF plenary meeting will take place in July and a formal proposal of the NWWRAC could be submitted beforehand for consideration, if ready.

The Chairman thanked the Commission and the STECF representatives for their interventions and opened the floor for comments from the members.

4. Towards a mixed demersal fisheries management plan

4.1. Exchange of views from the floor

After extensive discussion, the Group agreed:

- That it is important to obtain clarification from the Commission in relation to the material scope of the Celtic Sea management plan, i.e. whether they are envisaging a mixed fisheries (including biological, economic and technical interactions) or a multi species (limited to interactions between species) approach for a management plan.
- On the importance of integrating the RAC's advice on its multi-annual plan for the Celtic Sea with the ongoing work in ICES and STECF on mixed fisheries and multi-species approaches by participating in the ICES and STECF processes and taking note of the emerging conclusions. It was important to avoid duplication of existing work.
- To reapply to the Commission for funding to build the scientific underpinning necessary for the development of a coherent and comprehensive multi-annual management plan for the demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea.

² Link to STECF meeting: <http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/stecf/ewg07>



To this end it was necessary to:

- Define with some precision the scientific questions and data deficiencies the RAC project would address;
 - Describe the terms of reference of a project necessary to collate the data in a form useful to the development of a plan;
 - Identify the type of partners necessary to undertake the project;
- That the main focus of the project would be the socio-economic ramifications of *different management options*, taking account of different fleet characteristics (e.g. composition, distribution, seasonality...), upstream and downstream consequences; economic and ecological objectives.
 - That the integration of biological and economic modelling represented the most significant challenge.
 - That Norman Graham and Sarah Kraak would produce an initial draft terms of reference and outline for the project to be subsequently revised by the economic experts from France; and finally circulated among Focus Group members for comments.
 - That it would be helpful if the Commission would provide an indication of its expectations or aspirations for a stakeholder-led multi-annual management plan and what questions the project might usefully address.
 - That although some time had been lost, this was ground breaking work.
 - Funding for scientific underpinning was critical.
 - NWWRAC advice in several spheres had already and would continue to feed into the work on the multi-annual plan.
 - To approach the scientific institutes in each relevant member state individually and/or through a NWWRAC request for information on the extent and type of socioeconomic data held and whether that could be made available to the NWWRAC project.
 - To explore fall back sources of finance if it appeared that the Commission route would not deliver.

NWWRAC Focus Group on Celtic Sea Demersal Fisheries

BIM Dublin, 22 March 2012



Actions:

- Commission to provide clarification in relation to the material scope of the Celtic Sea management plan, i.e. whether they are envisaging a mixed fisheries or a multi species approach;
- NWWRAC to reapply to the Commission for funding to build the scientific underpinning necessary for the development of a coherent and comprehensive multi-annual management plan for the demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea.
- Norman Graham and Sarah Kraak to produce an initial draft terms of reference and outline for the project to be subsequently revised by the economic experts from France; and finally circulated among Focus Group members for comments.
- The Commission to provide an indication of its expectations or aspirations for a stakeholder-led multi-annual management plan and what questions the project might usefully address.

4.2. Socio-economic considerations

A presentation was received from Pierrick Olivier, on behalf of Jean François Bigot from ICEP-University of Nantes, who was not able to attend. Mr. Olivier presented an economic approach to fisheries management. It was agreed that this work was relevant to the development of a multi-annual management plan insofar as it highlighted:

- The interdependence of fisheries and markets through wealth creation;
- Balancing the three pillars of sustainability;
- The problems of heterogeneous data sources;
- The importance of defining management objectives as well as its timeframe;
- A mechanism for negotiating 'trade-offs' between different objectives;
- Transitional costs.

It was noted from one member that this methodology has already been successfully applied for the cases of two management plans for anchovy and nephrops in the Bay of Biscay.



In terms of shortfalls, the group identified the following needs:

- Detailed information is required on economic effects in main fishing ports as a result of fishing activities in subdivision VIIIfg. The NWWWRAC should aim to gather economic impacts at national level.
- Enhanced dialogue between stakeholders, scientists and economists is essential. The Commission might help by organising a technical meeting to identify common work methodologies and to define protocols for the integration and validation of biological and economic data. This is a complex and evolving process that will require a reasonable period of time (at least one year) as well as adequate resources.
- In addition, there is a lack of social objectives and corresponding data gaps.

As a result of all the above, the Group concluded that additional funding is needed to develop a project or hire an economic expert that might be able to identify, coordinate and analyse relevant data sources from different Member States as well as EU technical and advisory bodies.

4.3. Biological considerations

The scientific advisor to the Group (Colm Lordan) said that there were no significant changes on fleet composition, stock trends or effort levels since last summer. It was noted that, following WKROUND, Celtic Sea haddock and cod had achieved full analytical assessment. More details are likely to come after the WGCSE in May.

5. Funding issues and available options

The Secretariat (Alexandre Rodríguez) informed the attendees that some new information had been received from the Commission concerning funding for projects to develop a management plan for the Celtic Sea.



The subject “*scientific support to a stakeholder initiative on a management plan for demersal stocks in the Celtic Sea*” was included as item under chapter 2.3.1. “Studies for carrying out the Common Fisheries Policy” for the DG MARE work programme for grants and procurement 2012³

This funding is subjected to procurement procedures (“call for tenders” – LOT projects) and it will be depending on budget available (1.5 million euros).

It was reiterated that the NWWRAC would be expected to identify their needs and draw the terms of reference that would be presented to DG MARE on this area, so it might be considered for inclusion in the call for tender. The terms of reference should include a tentative timeframe, staff needed, framework and objectives, deliverables, as well as links to other projects or science-fisheries partnerships and proof of coherence with CFP objectives. It might also include a request to develop a methodology that allows integration between biological and economic data.

However, it was made clear by the Commission that no fund shall be directly granted to NWWRAC because EC budgetary rules do not allow so. The Group suggested that the Commission might assist in the process by providing a template explaining what their requirements would be.

The Secretariat informed the attendees that it has also established contact with coordinators of some existing EU projects such as GAP2 -“*Connecting science, stakeholders and policy*”- in order to look for additional sources of funding in case the Commission’s application is not successful. The members agreed that this possibility is worthy to explore.

Actions:

- **Commission to provide the Secretariat with a template explaining what information would be required from the NWWRAC to launch a call for tender.**
- **Group to draw terms of reference to develop a proposal that meets the requirements laid by the Commission in accordance with Chapter 2.3.1. of Commission’s funding programme for 2012.**
- **Secretariat to resume contacts with project coordinators from GAP2 and similar EU projects to explore the avenue of additional sources of funding.**

³ Link to Commission’s decision COM(2011)9769 final, of 20/12/2011:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/contracts_and_funding/annual_work_programme/index_en.htm



6. Timetable for the completion of a draft plan

This item has already been dealt with under items 2 and 4.

7. Presentation on a new approach to fisheries management

Sarah Kraak, from the Marine Institute in Ireland, presented a study published in ICES Journal of Science under the “*Food for Thought*”⁴ section. This study proposes an alternative approach to fisheries management through the introduction of real time incentives (RTI) understood as fishing credits.

This system of fishing credits would replace the current TAC and quota system as conceived now. The idea is to allow more flexibility to fishermen to decide in real time where they want to fish, in balance with the vulnerability or need of protection for each specific fishery ground.

The main features of the presentation were:

- It is an incentive-based rather than a top-down approach.
- Priorities will be defined by managers and stakeholders jointly.
- It is based upon a finer spatio-temporal scale than current management areas.
- It uses new technologies (VMS, electronic logbooks...) to monitor levels of RTI consumption.
- It integrates commercial species targets with ecosystem considerations.
- Use of selective gears would be encouraged in the form of additional fishing credits.

The Group agreed that this proposal presented a useful tool that deserved further consideration and reflection. This is still an early stage and practical aspects need to be carefully analysed in detail beforehand such as alteration of relative stability keys, increase in fishing intensity in some “lighter-coloured” areas or control problems with different types of gears.

⁴ Article: “21st century fisheries management: A spatiotemporally explicit tariff-based approach combining multiple drivers and incentivising responsible fishing”. Sarah B. M. Kraak, Dave G. Reid, Hans D. Gerritsen, Ciarán J. Kelly, Mike Fitzpatrick, Edward A. Codling and Emer Rogan.



8. Summary of Action Points by the rapporteur

Technical measures for the Celtic Sea:

- Sean O'Donoghue to draft reply to the Commission on technical measures addressing the two questions posed in the letter and clarifying NWWWRAC position within a period no longer than three weeks. Scientific evidence will be added where possible and a slight amendment will be made regarding to the SMP distance from the codline to be consistent with TCM regulation currently in force.

Proposal for a Management plan for demersal species in the Celtic Sea

- Commission to provide clarification in relation to the material scope of the Celtic Sea management plan, i.e. whether they are envisaging a mixed fisheries or a multi species approach;
- NWWWRAC to reapply to the Commission for funding to build the scientific underpinning necessary for the development of a coherent and comprehensive multi-annual management plan for the demersal fisheries in the Celtic Sea;
- Norman Graham and Sarah Kraak to produce an initial draft terms of reference and outline for the project to be subsequently revised by the economic experts from France; and finally circulated among Focus Group members for comments.
- Commission to provide guidance on its aspirations for the above plan and the questions it would like to see addressed by a stakeholder-led project
- Secretariat to draft a letter to scientific institutes asking for access to socio-economic data (where approaches are not being made individually by Focus Group members)



Funding

- Commission to provide to the Secretariat with a template explaining what information would be required from the NWWRAC to launch a call for tender.
- Group to draw terms of reference in accordance with Commission's requirements in line with Chapter 2.3.1. of Commission's funding programme for 2012.
- Secretariat to resume contacts with project coordinators from GAP2 and similar EU projects to explore the avenue of additional sources of funding.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:50 h

NWWRAC Focus Group on Celtic Sea Demersal Fisheries

BIM Dublin, 22 March 2012



Annex I. List of attendees

MEMBERS		
1	Jacques Pichon (Chairman)	Pêcheurs de Bretagne – France
2	Barrie Deas (Rapporteur)	NFFO – United Kingdom
3	Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale – Belgium
4	Kenny Coull	Scottish Fishermen's Federation – Scotland UK
5	Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM - France
6	Alan McCulla	ANIFPO – Northern Ireland UK
7	Francis O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producer's Organisation – Ireland
8	Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Association – Ireland
9	Eibhlín O'Sullivan	Irish South & West FPO - Ireland

EXPERTS AND OBSERVERS		
10	Pierrick Olivier	RICEP – University of Nantes
11	Norman Graham	Marine Institute / STECF
12	Michael Keatinge	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
13	Sarah Kraak	Marine Institute / STECF
14	Colm Lordan	Marine Institute / ICES
15	Ian Lawler	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
16	Laurent Markovic	DG MARE – European Commission
17	Daniel McDonald	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
18	Jo Loussouarn	ANOP-FROM Bretagne – France

NWWRAC SECRETARIAT		
19	Alexandre Rodríguez	Executive Assistant - Fisheries Policy

NWWRAC Focus Group on Celtic Sea Demersal Fisheries

BIM Dublin, 22 March 2012