

MIRAC 2009
26-27 January
ICES Headquarters
Copenhagen

Summary Point
Prepared by the Chair

Review of Action Items from MIRAC 2008

- **Several Action Items addressed the need for better planning and coordination. The response has been generally positive, but we can always do better. Open lines of communication (two way) are important.**
- **MIRAC expressed disappointment about:**
 - Communications on ICES/STECF Workshop on management plans**
 - Lack of progress on “Traffic Light” representation of uncertainty**
 - Slow progress on use of fishers’ data (or knowledge) as input to advice**

“Traffic Light” representation of uncertainty

- **Objective and transparent representation of uncertainty is desirable**
- **Context matters- e.g., data limited assessments with simple models may yield more reliable advice than data rich assessments with state of the art models**
- **Uncertainty about what???**
 - Stock size and F**
 - Trends in SSB and F**
 - Classification of fishery**
 - TAC advice relative to objectives**

“Traffic Light” representation of uncertainty

- The RACs feel strongly that ICES should prepare a user friendly framework to communicate uncertainty
- ICES will *consider* options (e.g., a workshop) for preparing such a framework, recognizing that stakeholders and managers must participate in order to get the context right
- For 2009, make sure that classifications in summary tables are supported by text and analyses

USE OF FISHERS DATA (KNOWLEDGE)

- All agree in general, but the devil is in the details!**
- The cooperative spirit is strong (exemplified by interest in data compilation and benchmarks), but it will fade (or worse) without tangible progress**
- Political correctness needs to be replaced by candor. Scientists must be free to say “no”, and fishers must be free to say “why not” or why not do it “this way.”**

USE OF FISHERS DATA (KNOWLEDGE)

- Need a roadmap. It may be worth driving on a slippery road, but only if it goes where you want to go!**
- Progress depends on building mutual realistic expectations between member state scientists and industry. ICES is only a facilitators/process manager.**
- ICES could participate in a RAC initiated workshop with industry to clarify expectations, consider a framework for cooperative research, and identify “low hanging fruit” (opportunities to demonstrate success quickly).**

REVIEW OF 2008

- **Generally positive in terms of relationship between ICES and RACs. Good spirit on both sides**
- **Too many meetings, everyone stressed**
- **RACs continue to feel a need to have direct access to scientists in some situations**
- **RACs understand and appreciate their observers status (e.g., ADGs), but in some cases feel hampered in making constructive contributions (want to be more than a “fly on the wall”). ICES welcomes stakeholder observers, and they should be made to feel welcome (not seated at the back of the room).**

BENCHMARK WORKSHOPS

- **This is a new process with only one workshop so far. The initial reaction of the MIRAC is positive.**
- **Stakeholders' appreciated the opportunity to participate, but:**
 - **Would have benefitted from clearer guidance.**
 - **ICES conveners of Benchmarks might organize scoping meetings with RACs well in advance (months) to identify problems and issues, and opportunities for input to the Benchmarks.**
 - **8 days is too long for most stakeholders. RACs should focus their input on the first few days.**

BENCHMARK WORKSHOPS

- **It is important that there be feedback to Stakeholders on their input. If it is not used, why? Is there a way forward to use it in the future, or should they consider some other type of input?**
- **Concern was expressed that the Benchmark approach to updating data and methodological inputs to advice might be too ridged. What happens if problems or opportunities for improvements are identified between Benchmarks?**
- **ICES responded that it will take more experience with Benchmarks to know if this (the previous bullet point) is actually a problem, but if so, processes will have to be established to deal with it.**
- **The status of participants in Benchmarks was discussed. Are they expected to represent RACs and is this realistic? ICES indicated that it does not care who participants at Benchmarks represent. What's important is the merit of the data and ideas they bring to the Benchmark, not where they come from. This applies to scientists as well as stakeholders.**

MANAGEMENT PLANS

- **RACs, ICES, EC all recognize importance of MPs. They are a priority.**
- **Need to decide on:**
 - **the scope of MPs. Are they more than single stock HCRs? How many should there be? What's their priority?**
 - **process for developing plans. What are the roles and responsibilities of scientists, managers, stakeholders including RACs.**
 - **evaluation models. They need to be practical to address the backlog of unevaluated MP. They need to be available interactively during plan development.**
 - **Evaluation criteria. Precautionary approach is not specified fully enough to stand allow as the basis for evaluation. Risk criteria are up to managers (taking account of stakeholders), not scientists.**

MANAGEMENT PLANS

- **MPs should not assume that science “stands still.” Don’t use specific numerical values in HCRs that should be subject to revision and improvement as science advances (i.e., use Bmsy, not 150,000 tones).**
- **Plan performance needs to be monitored, and “fixed” if plan isn’t working.**
- **User friendly guidelines for management plans would be valuable. ICES noted that the reports of SGMAS over many years collectively formed the bases for such guidelines. It is worth considering publishing such guidelines as in the cooperative research series.**

TIMING OF ADVICE

- **RACs are generally positive about most advice being issued in the first half of the year.**
- **Pelagic RAC wants advice on pelagic stocks earlier in the year.**
- **Shifting pelagic advice earlier in the year is primarily a workload issue. It is only possible if member countries agree as the workload falls on their scientists.**
- **The Commission has not requested earlier advice on pelagics.**
- **ICES has no plans to shift the timing of pelagic advice**

USER FRIENDLY ADVICE SUMMARIES

- **The importance of clear user friendly summaries of advice was discussed.**
- **A good example of summaries prepared by France was circulated.**
- **ICES noted that it was working on an improved summary, and it would be circulated for comment.**
- **It was also noted that simple user friendly summaries would be at odds with schemes to more fully display complex issue of uncertainty about advice. Even if the summaries express uncertainty (e.g., color coding), people will only focus (and extract) the information in the summaries that serves their purpose. Simple user friendly summaries make it easier to do so.**

PRESS RELEASES

- **Some RACs expressed concern that ICES press releases put too much emphasis on bad news.**
- **ICES noted that there were no press releases about fisheries advice in 2008, but it felt it should issue press releases in the future.**
- **It is better for ICES to get a balanced message out, rather than waiting to react to someone else's spin.**

OTHER ISSUES

- **RACs still feel the need for direct access to “science” in some situations, although they acknowledge that the Commission has been reasonably responsive by passing on their requests to ICES.**
- **Some RACs noted that language is a problem in the communication of ICES advice (English is difficult for many of their members).**
- **Appreciation was expressed specifically for Martin Pastoors’ presentations to RACs. ICES indicated it will continue to give high priority to these presentation, but it acknowledged that Martin will be a hard “act” to follow.**

OTHER ISSUES

- It was noted that descriptions of regulations in some advice documents are not accurate. ICES noted that it was assigning staff to oversee the preparation of this information to improve accuracy and consistency.
- Some RACs feel they still need to be briefed on “ICES principles” (the concepts, data, models, processes behind ICES advice).
- RACs indicated they would like better access to the “living” meeting schedule ICES maintains. It is password protected out of courtesy to some of the people identified in the schedule, but ICES is investigating ways to make it more accessible to RACs.
- A workshop involving RACs and ICES is being planned to address data and science needs in preparation for 2010 advice on deepwater fisheries.
- Support for “young fishermen” at ICES Annual Science Conferences was discussed. RACs generally favored this opportunity. Everyone was pleased with the participation in 2007 (Helsinki), but disappointed with 2008 (Halifax). We’ll see how it goes in 2009 (Berlin). The MIRAC continues to endorse a program for fishers’ participation in ASCs, although the criteria of “young” may not be appropriate. Also, it may be unrealistic for active fishers to spend an entire week at ASCs. The RACs need to consider fishers that attend RACs can share their experience broadly with the RAC community.