

## WKFLAT 2009

### **Benchmark Workshop on Flatfish Meeting Report for the NWWRAC**

6 to 13th of February 2009  
ICES headquarters  
Copenhagen

Rapporteur: Luc Corbisier

Chair: Tony Smith (Australia)

ICES coordinator: Jan Jaap Poos (The Netherlands)

#### **Objectives:**

- Evaluate the appropriateness of data and methods to determine stock status, taking agreed or proposed management plans into account.  
The evaluation shall include consideration of fisheries-dependant, fisheries independent data for the use of the current and proposed assessment.
- Agree and document preferred method of evaluating stock status.

#### **Stocks to be assessed;**

1. North Sea Plaice	Geerts Aarts
2. Plaice VIId	Joel Vigneau ( only present on 6 & 7/02 )
3. Plaice VIIe	X
4. Sole VIId	Willy Vanhee
5. Sole VIIe	Sven Kupschus

*The benchmark WG will report for the attention of ACOM by 6 March 2009.*

#### **SOLE VIId:**

-Landings are taken by France (50%), Belgium (30%) and England (20%)

-Estimates of the incoming year class were based on two surveys but since 2007 the UK part of a survey has not been conducted.

#### ***1) Current Stock status and assessment:***

- SSB above Bpa
- Fm since 2001 around Fpa= 0.40
- Recruitment very low for the last 3 years

ICES classify the Stock as having full reproductive capacity but at risk of being harvested unsustainably.

## **2) Evaluation of the survey data**

- The impact of the missing UK data was investigated and no significant changes in outcome of stock status were detected.
- A horse power correction for the Belgian Beam trawl fleet was applied to convert nominal fishing effort to effective fishing effort.
- Attempt to create a French effort series for trammel nets.
- Spatial distribution of effort and landings only known from BE & UK (=50%)
- Discard data missing but not relevant (around 5% by weight and 10% by numbers)

### **CONCLUSION:**

***The Benchmark WG does not see any improvement to be made to the assessment.***

### **SOLE VIIe:**

- Landings are taken by UK (75%), France (24%) & BE (1%)
- Stock deemed to be in poor condition as a result of overfishing.
- Since 2007 under recovery plan (stepped Fm reduction with LTM target of  $F=0.27$ )
- Recent assessments have indicated an increase in F.
- Limited migration from VIIId to VIIe by younger sole (new tagging required)

## **1) Current stock status and assessment**

- SSB below Bpa
- Fm above Flim
- Recruitment variable but below Bpa

## **2) Evaluation of the survey data**

- Estimates of fishing effort from the commercial data series needs to be revised as it is based on historical estimates of the relationship between horsepower and catching capacity.
- The inclusion of commercial data into the used assessment models jeopardises the conclusions on Fm, SSB and recruitment.
- The uncertainties in the assessment of the stock started only the last four years!!

***CONCLUSIONS: WKFLAT 2009 recommends that the reference points (F&B) are revised once a new analytical assessment has been accepted.***

***New assessment methodologies (fully statistical models) should be investigated.***

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO ICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO IMPROVE THE PROCESS OF BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT**

- Notice given for the WG meeting too short.
- Lack of prior preparation.
- ICES should provide all data bases needed to allow assessment being carried out without relying on data requests to national laboratories.
- Data quality on discards appears to be inadequate now that the key survey (the UK Young Fish Survey) has been terminated.
- For some assessments there is a mismatch between current assessment and biological reference points.
- Where there is substantial uncertainty in the assessment the advice should include ranges on best estimates of key management quantities.
- WKFLAT endorses the recommendation of WKROUND to consider setting a day prior to the benchmark meeting for the industry and the scientists to discuss developments in fisheries and interpretation of data.

### **CONCLUSION:**

**ACOM should draw lessons from the first two Benchmark Workshops.**