

ICES MIRAC REPORT 2012

ICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ICES 2012/ACOM:03

Report of the Annual Meeting between RACs and ICES (MIRAC)

23–24 January 2012

The Hague, Netherlands



ICES

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

CIEM

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l'Exploration de la Mer

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1 Opening and welcome

The Director of the Directorate 'Animal Food Production and Animal Welfare' in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, Henri Kool, welcomed MIRAC to The Hague and the new Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation by invitation of the Pelagic RAC. He underlined that cooperation between scientists, fishermen and NGOs leads to better policy. He noted that understanding has improved, not only because the parties are meeting each other, going out to sea together and learning of each other's work, that more information is collected on fishing boats and that transparency in ICES is a good step forward. He insisted that good cooperation is needed in 2012 as there are many challenges, particularly with the revision of the Common Fisheries Policy. He expected that the focus of scientific work would be on developing and evaluating long-term management plans.

2 Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with the addition of two additional items under AOB (see Annex 2).

3 Tour-de-table of participants

Participants introduced themselves and their organization. There were 30 participants, including five observers (GAP 2, CEPESCA, Seas-at-Risk and CFCA).

4 ICES Advisory Services 2011: Cooperation with RACs

ICES is trying to be responsive and attend RAC meetings when they are requested to.

There was a demonstration of ACOM Forum on SharePoint to which the RACs now have access. One can edit the settings to receive alerts when new comments/messages are posted. Access permissions are reset annually and RAC members were encouraged to let ICES know if they wanted their access permission to be renewed.

5 RAC: Review of Cooperation with ICES 2011

5.1 Involvement of stakeholders in ICES (PeIRAC)

PeIRAC has been happy with cooperation with ICES in 2011. As observers it's important to be included in the follow-up in ACOM from the first to the last stage of advice, as ACOM does not always accept the outcome of a workshop verbatim. The Chair's advice is to follow the ACOM Forum and go to the meeting overview and Advisory Workplan for 2012 on SharePoint (<http://groupnet.ices.dk/Workplan/default.aspx>).

5.2 Regarding the follow-up of the 2011 MIRAC meeting (PeIRAC)

5.2.1 Format of advice (stock status table vs. quality rating of advice)

RACs have asked for quality rating of the advice for some time. It's not a simple exercise as the link between the quality of the assessment and the subsequent advice is not always direct, e.g. we do not know if the fishing mortality is 0.4 or 0.8, but if the target is 0.2, we know we need to reduce substantially. ICES has begun and will continue to progressively implement data compilation and verification workshops in the benchmarking process. A scorecard developed by WKACCU is filled in to evaluate data quality of the input data. PGCCDBS has been asked to go to the next step and advise on how to use the scorecards with regard to quality of the assessment. It is important to understand that uncertainty in data, uncertainty in assessments, uncertainty in advice, and urgency of advice are different things.

PeIRAC stated there is a problem with the representation of status stock in the pictogram. Classic example is blue whiting, herring and mackerel. One would assume that blue whiting was in a healthy state while herring and mackerel would be in bad status, while the reverse is the case.

ICES will continue to work on the development of a system to rate the quality of the assessments.

5.2.2 Educational workshop for stakeholders "Introduction to Assessments"

DG Mare informed that training is given to DG Mare officials. DG Mare is ready to open this training to members of the RACs. DG Mare does not have a budget to invite, but can pay for the training. There was a broad discussion on exactly what, how and how long to a course to give in terms of training; at what level do we want this training. ICES will organize a WebEx to discuss this in more detail with Ciaran Kelly, ICES and representatives of the RACs.

5.3 Review of cooperation between ICES and NSRAC–NWWRAC in relation to data

The North Sea RAC is preparing a discussion/position paper on MSY in a mixed fishery context and gave an update on the mixed fisheries/multispecies conference that will be held jointly by the BSRAC, NWWRAC and NSRAC 30th and 31st May 2012.

The NS and NWWRACs are not yet ready for another meeting with ICES. RAC members will report on the work done so far at their February meeting, and RAC will subsequently contact ICES to schedule another meeting if needed.

SWWRAC has written to ICES with the same type of initiative.

6 ICES: Benchmarking workshops: feedback from the workshops in 2011 and information on the planned workshops for 2012 and 2013

The Benchmarks for 2012 and those coming up for 2013 were presented.

6.1 Evaluation and reflection on the role of the stakeholders in ICES benchmark process (NWWRAC)

PelRAC asked about incorporating non-quantifiable information in the benchmarks. How is it going to be incorporated into the benchmarks? This is qualitative rather than quantitative and if the stakeholder dialogue with the scientists is there and is good, then it's useful e.g. where the fishing boats are. The issue is how to capture industry knowledge in a useful and systematic way. PelRAC gave an example from its organization with so-called annual fisheries reports on a regional level. The process is filling the gaps!

BSRAC gave the example of the ICES/BSRAC meeting (August 2011) on the salmon advice for the Baltic; a helpful process, but there are still differing opinions. How do we get to a common understanding? How do we go about organising this process e.g. sprat and flatfish in the Baltic.

NWWRAC are evaluating and reflecting on the role of the stakeholders in the ICES benchmark process. This was another reason to work on good preparation before the benchmarking because it's clear that it's important to insert wider considerations in the models; there are the problems of incorporating fisheries knowledge and of ecological knowledge. So the advantage of a data preparation and data verification workshop before the actual assessment benchmark meetings.

From the perspective of the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA) compliance is to avoid unfair competition. The CFCA is interested in long-term and short-term approaches, reference fleets, reference catch, CCTV, etc. They want to assess what are the real catches, cross checks between VMS and some other source of data, to compare with fishermen fishing in the same area.

7 Advisory plan 2012

7.1 New initiatives in 2012 (data poor and mixed/multispecies)

WKFRAME3, WKLIFE, WKFREQ have been/will all be held early in 2012. ACOM Vice-chair Carmen Fernandez presented how WKFRAME3 has produced a preliminary outcome on how to improve/develop models on how to advise on data poor stocks.

ICES is trying to be helpful and consistent to alleviate the problems with the systematic 25% reduction in TACs if data are insufficient.

The basic idea was to improve the old table (the so-called trends table) from ICES on stocks without quantitative forecasts, taking into account e.g. with life-history traits, and to quantify rates of decrease/increase in stock trends. (Biomass trigger point to trigger the response). This is preliminary work. The tricky point will be with "R" (the trend in biomass).

It was noted that age-based assessments may not be feasible nor desirable for all stocks.

WKLIFE will be held 13th–17th February in Lisbon about the factor F (i.e. to quantify exploitation and Fmsy proxy) and to develop Harvest Control Rules.

NWWRAC asked DG Mare what will happen in 2012 with data poor stocks; DG Mare has not made any decision yet.

ICES is planning to provide advice in July for mixed fisheries in the North Sea and to provide advice based on multispecies assessments for the Baltic. WKMULTBAL will be held during the first week of March to do a short version of benchmarking for the Baltic multispecies assessment(s). The plan is that this evaluation workshop will identify methodologies to formulate the advice. There will be a meeting of WGBFAS in the second week of April.

The STECF meetings on multispecies advice are planned in March and June.

The intention is to come up with a more integrated approach. See Document 7i on SharePoint; table overview of timelines. For the Baltic there are species interaction models "ready to go" (but the ICES and STECF meetings will take place as mentioned above).

7.2 MOU issues: Popular version of the ICES advice

Work is on going to develop this; expect the document to be very brief.

7.3 Presentation of the Advisory Workplan

Overview on the SharePoint, Document 7iii, is a pdf of the table of activities for 2012 as it stood at the time of the meeting; this will be continuously updated, so you have to keep revisiting it.

One specific activity called the overall Framework of ICES advice was highlighted. This is all about establishing the whole framework for the advice before getting into the advice season, and it will be released with the first body of advice, which is for the Baltic at the end of May 2012.

7.4 Advice for Celtic Seas Ecoregion: WKFREQ (6–8 March 2012) will have an effect, frequency of assessment and advice for discussion

Significant number of data poor stocks.

8 Points from the RACs

8.1 The basis for advice: LTMP vs. MSY (raised by PelRAC)

PelRAC see a problem for ICES because of the horse mackerel issue where Norway had objected to using the management plan. Did Norway have a scientific basis for their objection? PelRAC feels this undermines the independence of ICES. ICES did use the management plan to provide advice on mackerel even though there is no coastal states agreement.

ICES provided advice on horse mackerel based on the MSY framework, but PelRAC stuck with the management plan. The Council decision also agreed on that.

ICES sent out a list of all management plans to all those competent parties involved with an interest in the stock. ICES asked if they could agree that this could be the basis for the advice; not if they could actually agree to the plans. In that process, Norway objected to the horse mackerel. If there was an objection, ICES would fall back on the MSY transition.

Three background documents have been uploaded on SharePoint to give more information on this.

8.2 Data poor stocks

These had been dealt with earlier.

8.3 New type of request to develop and evaluate HCR options—how does this fit into the benchmarking for blue whiting that will happen in February 2012

PelRAC asked how the process fits together. It was explained that the Benchmark has to come first. Then look at HCRs. ICES has an agreement with DG Mare that ICES helps the PelRAC to explore options for HCRs. But Norway did not want to join in the process as they think the EU and Norway should make a joint request to ICES. And in that process the RACs and other stakeholders would be consulted. If there was a joint EU–Norwegian agreement on this (i.e. a request from public authorities of EU Member States and Norway), then ICES could set up a consultative process with the RACs. The status now is that such a request will have to be agreed on, or that the PelRAC makes its own proposal.

8.4 Stakeholder involvement in the drafting of requests

PelRAC found scoping meetings to be very useful in helping formulate requests exactly as intended; otherwise, ToRs for workshops may not be appropriate. There were two workshops on North Sea herring, of which the last was felt to be too limited in its scope, not allowed to put forward an extra option. Once ToRs are decided, workshop has to follow.

ACOM Chair suggested that DG Mare can interact with the RACs to get more input to the requests. ToRs for workshops are basically copy paste of the requests.

Scoping workshops are becoming more routine; they don't always take place, but they could be used to try to flesh this out and look more closely at the requests.

8.5 Participation of RAC members in ICES meetings: a more collaborative approach between scientists and stakeholders? (NWWRAC)

Observers are allowed in all stages of the advice preparation process, except in assessment working groups. DG Mare underlined the role and behaviour of observers at ICES WGs; this role must be respected.

ACOM Chair clarified that at workshops everyone is a full participant and not an observer. But once you move into the ACOM process, then stakeholders are there only as observers.

ICES has developed training for expert group chairs because of this development of widening and increasing transparency of the advisory process. This is part of the process of how to engage in the process of working with stakeholders.

9 AOB

9.1 The external review of ICES

The reform of the advisory system was set up in 2008 and the review was initiated as an external review team working on their own. The ICES Council has ownership of this review. A presentation of this is on the SharePoint. A series of question is asked to the reviewers, which consists of four people who have not been directly involved in ICES; two from the fisheries and two from the environment.

ICES will encourage the team to contact the stakeholders and stakeholders can also approach the team through Kjartan Hoydal. But the priority of the review is on the recipients of advice and the policy drivers for ICES advice. But stakeholders are an important part of that.

DG Mare pointed out that collaboration between science and stakeholders is crucial; RACs was one of the best things to come out of last CFP reform, and funds for science–industry partnership is part of the EMFF.

9.2 Strategic initiative on assessments

ACOM Vice-chair Carmen Fernandez verbally presented the status and progress on ICES Strategic Initiative on Stock Assessment Methods (SISAM) initiative. SISAM is designed to ensure that ICES scientists can apply the best methods when developing management advice. Other RFMOs and national fishery organizations have a similar goal, so success of SISAM will have benefits for the entire international fishery science community. SISAM will contribute to the improved application of assessment methods, but it must be recognized that “best methods” is not a static definition. Rather, the set of available methods will continue to evolve and improve in response to lessons learned in their current application. SISAM needs to do more than define the current state-of-the-science, it should help chart the future course of this scientific enterprise. Long-term success in application of the best methods is an iterative, multi-step process. Future actions are among other things to:

- identification of the current set of available methods;
- guidance in the selection of the most appropriate methods for a particular application.

9.3 Communication with RACs: what is the status of Inter–RAC

ACOM Chair asked if there is any perspective in having a central communication point through one RAC to all the RACs, as used to be the case with Inter-RAC.

The SWWRAC explained how the RACs go about this. They try four times a year to have conference call meetings to discuss administrative issues as well as meetings, etc. Also an exchange of information. Inter-RAC only deals with administrative issues, and occasionally joint seminars. For the time being, ICES will continue to contact the RAC Secretariats individually.

9.4 Stakeholder participation at the Annual Science Council

This started with the Young Fishermen participation at the ASC in Helsinki, Finland 2007 and has carried on annually. Should this continue? Agreement that it should, though PelRAC questioned the usefulness of this for the RACs

10 Chair's report

- 1) RAC members find it difficult to follow what is happening in ICES in terms of Review Groups, Advice Drafting Groups, ACOM WebEx's, etc. The Advisory Workplan file at <https://groupnet.ices.dk/Workplan/Workplan/Meeting%20Overview%20and%20Advisory%20Workplan%202012.xlsm> on SharePoint includes an overview of the advisory process and this should help. When one is registered as an observer, registration is automatic for the other steps.
- 2) ICES will continue to advance on the quality considerations based on WKACCU scoring card. The categorization of stocks according to the data available will also help understand the uncertainties, but uncertainties could also be referred to in formulating the advice.
- 3) Educational workshop for stakeholders: ICES will arrange a conference call with Sean, Ciaran, Søren Anker and J-J or Poul to discuss in detail what the needs are.
- 4) MSY in mixed fisheries: NWWRAC, NSRAC, BRAC are jointly organising a meeting to be held at DTU-Aqua in Copenhagen 30 May–1 June. SWWRAC will be informed. ICES will be invited.
- 5) NWWRAC initiative on data poor stocks: RACs will contact ICES after their meeting in February to set the next meeting of the DDRAC. SWWRAC starting a similar process. If there are problems when looking for data, let ICES know.
- 6) Stakeholders' role in benchmark workshop: having a data compilation and data verification meeting a few months before the actual benchmark assessment meeting is likely to help in inserting data and information from stakeholders. May also help to incorporate ecological knowledge in the assessment.
- 7) Stock categorization: RACs are appreciative of ICES effort to make progress on this and remove the threat of a 25% decrease in TAC for stocks without quantitative forecasts. But they advise to move carefully.
- 8) Horse mackerel request: it may be possible to answer the specific request without having a second workshop, but ICES needs to evaluate if the management plan is precautionary in the long term as well. May need a benchmark or an inter-benchmark process. ICES needs to verify if statement "precautionary in the short term" is still valid.
- 9) Frequency of assessment; need to identify the type of assessment we are aiming for, keeping that age-based assessments are not necessarily desirable in all cases.
- 10) ACOM Forum: the ICES Secretariat should remind observers that they have to re-iterate their request every year.
- 11) External review of ICES advice: if RACs want to contribute to the review, they should contact Kjartan Hoydal, the Chair of the panel.
- 12) Blue whiting Harvest Control Rule; technically, ICES could evaluate a HCR if requested by only one recipient of advice, but this could complicate things politically.
- 13) A mechanism to ensure that the request for advice should have a high probability of answering the management question should be found be-

tween the RACs and those who make the request. Scoping workshops may help clarify the request and flesh out the ToRs.

- 14) ICES will consider whether it is useful to send the table of management plans again, to identify those where there is agreement they could be used as the basis for advice.
- 15) Assessment working groups remain closed to observers, but all other steps are open to observers. Participation in Review Group may be complicated, but participation in ADGs has been constructive and useful.
- 16) Strategic Initiative on Stock Assessment (SISAM): good initiative, ICES will include updates on SISAM when advice is presented.
- 17) ICES will continue to interact with all the RAC Secretariats.
- 18) Stakeholder participation at the ICES Annual Science conference is not necessarily the best way to inform about ICES work. ICES need to identify what the objectives are of having stakeholder participation at the ASC. This is seen as being useful in general, but not necessarily for the RACs. Improving communications between ICES and RACs could be more useful (COMFISH project).
- 19) The PelRAC and NWWRAC asked that WG chairs attend the presentation of ICES advice.
- 20) LDRAC may ask ICES for advice in future.

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Annex 2: Agenda

Monday afternoon

- 1) **Opening and welcome** The Director of the Fisheries Department, Henri Kool, welcomes us to The Hague and the Ministry;
- 2) Adoption of agenda;
- 3) Tour-de-table of participants;
- 4) ICES Advisory Services 2011: Cooperation with RACs;
- 5) RAC: Review of Cooperation with ICES 2011.
 - 5.1) Involvement of stakeholders in ICES (PelRAC);
 - 5.2) Regarding the follow-up of the 2011 MIRAC meeting (PelRAC).
 - 5.2.1) Format of advice (stock status table vs. quality rating of advice);
 - 5.2.2) Educational workshop for stakeholders 'Introduction to Assessments';
 - 5.3) Review of cooperation between ICES and NSRAC-NWWRAC in relation to data deficiencies for data poor stocks in western waters: state of play and way forward. Presentation by NWWRAC on experience of working with ICES and the work progress to date as well as future challenges.
- 6) **ICES: Benchmarking workshops:** feedback from the workshops in 2011 and information on the planned workshops for 2012 and 2013;
 - 6.1) Evaluation and reflection on the role of the stakeholders in ICES benchmark process (NWWRAC).
- 7) Advisory Plan 2012;
 - 7.1) New initiatives in 2012 (data poor stocks, mixed/multispecies fisheries);
 - 7.2) MoU issues: popular version of Advice; overall Advice overview.

Tuesday morning

Continuation of Agenda pt. 7

- 7.3) Presentation of Advisory Workplan;
- 7.4) Advice for Celtic Seas Ecoregion: WKFREQ (6–8 March 2012) will have an effect, frequency of assessment and advice for discussion.
- 8) Points from the RACs;
 - 8.1) The basis for ICES advice: e.g. LTM plans vs. MSY approach (PelRAC);
 - 8.2) Advice for data poor stocks (PelRAC);
 - 8.3) New type of request (to develop and evaluate HCR options) from the Commission to ICES (PelRAC);
 - 8.4) Stakeholder involvement in the drafting of requests to ICES. (PelRAC);
 - 8.5) Participation of RAC members in ICES meetings: a more collaborative approach between scientists and stakeholders? (NWWRAC).

- 9) AOB;
 - 9.1) External review;
 - 9.2) Strategic initiative on assessments;
 - 9.3) Communication with RACs: what is status of Inter-RAC?;
 - 9.4) Stakeholder participation at the ASC. Is this something the RACs want to continue?
- 10) Chair's summary and Closure.