

REPORT
North Western Waters Regional Advisory Committee
Working Group 3
3rd July 2008
Madrid (ES)

Chairman: Daniel Lefèvre
Rapporteur: Jim Portus

- The Chairman, Daniel Lefèvre, welcomed delegates to Madrid and moved the adoption of Agenda. Approved.
- He welcomed Commission official, Ken Patterson, to the proceedings and took the opportunity for delegates to discuss the fuel crisis. Colleagues from around the EU each gave their assessment of the crisis. Fleet capacity compared to quota opportunity was widely acknowledged as one factor, but high engine power and low fuel efficiency in some sectors was a greater problem for some than for others. The slow rate of fleet adaptation over years has compounded the difficulties. There are cases where fleets have adapted, but then must move to fish in novel areas and fisheries, thereby causing knock-on effects remote from their traditional grounds. EU aid must be approved and provided to achieve solutions; else catastrophic collapse in the ports' infrastructures is a real threat. Chaotic and involuntary tie-ups would exacerbate rather than help the situation. In some extreme cases, up to 50% of certain fleets are expected soon to be laid-up. The European Fishing Action Group earlier this year re-convened, first in Brussels then again in Luxembourg, drawing together partners from many States. It is certain that, unless the EU Commission and Council intervene, the disquiet will grow leading to greater disruptions than so far witnessed. Concern was expressed that any agreed aid package should be applied equitably across the EU.
- Mr Patterson responded. Awareness of the problems is acute in the Commission. Any agreed aid package must, however, be for long term benefit and strategically applied. The opportunity has to be taken to adapt fleets that exceed resources, in some cases by 30% to 40%, as part of the drive to MSY. The EU Council will soon consider changes to EFF that would enable decommissioning, smaller engines, assisted tie-up schemes, etc.
- The Chairman expressed his concern that human resources might expire before the necessary interventions. Short and long-term measures are required, implemented with immediacy to avoid losses from which the sectors may not recover. A NWWRAC Opinion will be drafted by Bertie Armstrong, after the Working Group sessions.

Report of Manchester meeting 13th March 2008:

- The Chairman moved the adoption of the Report: approved.

Review of ICES Advice 2008 for VIId&e (Channel Sea) – Martin Pastoors

N.B. Please see Martin Pastoors' PPT on the NWWRAC Website.

- Generic advice was first given. There now is only one integrated committee, ACOM. There is a new timetable and new data workshops will be introduced in 2009. Scientists will consider the “big picture”, making comparisons between fisheries and ecosystems. For many stocks there is no new advice.
- Of the stocks of importance to WG3, advice is not new for Plaice, but is new for Sole and Cod.
- Sole 7d: See PPT and advice. 34% reduction in TAC implied!
- Sole 7e: Misreported catches are accounted. The Plan implies for 2009 -20%F of reference period average. ICES evaluated in 2006 the targeted Mortality, F0.27. ICES has not yet evaluated the plan. Trends are uncertain, but present mortality is not sustainable. Precautionary Advice this year implies around 300T TAC for 2009. Recovery Plan method gives 650 tonnes for 2009 = 15% reduction of TAC. Implied TAC changes are not happening as simulated. Intention is to conduct full assessment of the Plan later this year.

Discussion: The original simulations looked at a range of F targets. Reduce F in 3-years steps. Implied TAC reductions also 3 years steps. F 0.27 target was adopted by Council. Regulation differs from the models and F 0.27 would now be met much more rapidly than modelled, with implied damaging socio-economic consequences.

Commission says F increasing and TACs too high. Effort limits not limiting F. TAC must reduce further to save this stock. ICES requested to evaluate the plan this year in time for the negotiations.

UK industry response: Not rejecting the advice, but concerned about using older data, retrospective bias and rapid shift to F0.27. Only asking for a graduated approach to achieve F0.27, as modelled in 2006 and as approved by the NWWRAC. Account of greater than necessary TAC changes must be taken. Socio-economic damage inflicted would be felt in the fleets, in the ports and beyond.

- Cod 7d. Unaccounted removals applied. B increasing. F is well down now. Precautionary Approach no longer recommends zero catch to get to Bpa. High catch rates of juveniles. Time series data now being gathered. A debate has started amongst Member States about splitting 7d Cod away from 7bk. Ireland and Spain don't want 7d to be split from 7bk for reasons of lost access rights. ICES provides advice as required.
- Commission statement about 7fg Cod. Applied for new assessment of 7fg Cod for 2008. Intention of increasing TAC by 20% at July Council.
- 7d Plaice. Assessment for trends. No changed perceptions. Advise no increase for catches.

- Plaice 7e Assessed for trends and not abundance. Similar to last year. Repeat of last year advice. Reduce catch. TAC well above landings. Advice take action, but acknowledge link to 7e Sole Plan.

Review of EC Non-Paper on Cod in the Eastern Channel – discussion on response and way forward

- Celtic Sea Cod: non-paper. 7d separation from 7bk. In proportion to N Sea Cod, but not tied to it. Commission working on it. Advice for 2009 is under the rules of present Policy. Mid-year advice 7.8% increase (7d) on initial 2008. Under Precautionary Approach, no longer advising a zero catch. Proposals for revising Cod Recovery Zone measures. Suggested to include it in the same Long Term Management Plan as other Cod stocks.
- **Discussion:** Effort has been reduced by crisis of the sector. Not an emergency. Proposals are not proportionate with regard to the state of the stock. Must have access to this fish. Need to look at Technical Conservation Measures as well as the Plan. Must not include this stock in the CRZ plan. We must continue present regime. We have had decommissioning and now have a fuel crisis. Proposals would increase discarding that does nothing for Biomass. Reduce discards by setting higher by-catch percentage, or land them without revenue and without increased quota to count them. Some fleet sectors are modifying gear voluntarily to reduce discards. Any proposed reductions of discards must account for these improvements.
- Responses to the TCM proposals were due by 30th June.

Development of proposal for Scallop Management in Area VII to be reviewed and endorsed by Executive Committee

- Colleagues in France proposed some time ago harmonisation of technical measures, in particular in 7d. There has been little progress.
- However, in the draft Technical Regulation to replace 850/98, the Commission proposes reduction in scallop size to 10cm in east. Minimum size is presently 11cm in east, 10cm in west. There are two different stocks. In the French fishery, the ring-size is 92mm. The French seek support to keep scallop size at 11cm.
- **Discussion:** Concerns were expressed about Commission motives. There appears no scientific reason for a reduction in size. Regrettably, the French fishing sector has been working on the fuel crisis and no paper was prepared for the WG3 meeting to consider. Objections initially were raised to the French suggestion that a proposal should now go forward to the Executive without WG3 consideration.
- However, the RAC Executive must enter a response to the Technical Regulation proposals and, as there appeared no support for the proposed and contradictory reduction in 7d to a 10cm scallop size, it seemed reasonable to support the French on this issue.
- French colleagues agreed to submit in writing to WG3 their proposals for scallop management.

Discussion on MPAs in French waters:

- The Chairman gave apologies for Olivier Abellard who could not attend. Opinions about the French MPA sites are sought. A presentation will now be made at the October meeting.
- **Discussion:** The identification and establishment of MPA sites is a trans-national matter. Areas closed cause fishers to move to other areas, possibly in another State. Some considered that common management methods along the coast are essential. Consultations initially were friendly, but now the presumption is against the fishers. It is important to change this to presumption in favour of fishers. The impact of certain activities should be proven to damage and to be unsustainable rather than industry having to prove it is not. ICES could not offer guidelines about burden of proof. Each MPA should have an exit strategy. Areas closed to fishing could be used for wind farms, etc.

Agreed proposals to put forward to the Executive Committee:

- On 7e Sole: request a graduated, stepped approach to achieve target F0.27, as modelled in 2006 and as supported then by the NWWRAC. Take account of the socio-economic effects when proposing bigger than necessary TAC changes.
- Cod 7d: support WG1 response to proposals.
- Replacement of 850/98: Scallop minimum sizes. Maintain 11cm for scallops in 7d.
- MPAs: Presumption in favour of fishing before creating MPA closed areas.

The meeting was adjourned at 13 h.

Chairman: Daniel Lefèvre
Rapporteur: Jim Portus
20 July 2008