

Towards a mixed demersal fisheries management plan in the Irish Sea (ICES subdivisions VII_a): framework and objectives

Draft for Discussion – July 2013

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1. Rationale - Broad objective

The main objective of this paper is to develop with the stakeholders and scientists an appropriate, workable and effective management plan (henceforth, MP) for Irish Sea mixed demersal fisheries (subarea VII_a) during 2013/2014. The MP will have an initial transitional developmental phase in 2014. The key drivers for the MP are objectivity, transparency, inclusively and evidence based decision making.

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Following the transitional developmental phase a long-term management plan will be developed.

The transitional developmental MP will be based on biological, economic and social objectives as outlined in points 4-6. In addition the overarching Governance will have to be addressed in the context of any proposed new structures.

2. Framework for the elaboration of a management plan: questions to be addressed

2.1. Where are we now?

- Fleets (number of vessels, gears, areas where they operate)
- Stocks
- Trends
- Socio-Economics (turnover, direct and indirect employments generated...)
- Marine spatial planning (interactions between fishing grounds and Marine Protected Areas, windmill parks, other marine users...)

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Towards a Multi annual management plan for mixed demersal fisheries in the Irish Sea (VII_a)

Definition of management framework and objectives



2.2. Where do we want to be in 5-10 years time?

- MSY subject to ecosystem and mixed fishery considerations
- Achieving fishing mortality targets for key indicator stocks
- Fleet renewal without subsidy
- Results based management
- A high degree of self regulation
- Reduce discards to lowest possible level
- Full scientific information, no more missing relevant data for managing the fisheries
- New LTMP substitutes entirely other rules and regulations and is not an addition to already existing ones
- Have evolved towards Ecosystem based management of the Irish Sea, having due consideration for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

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2.3. What are the management measures that will deliver this?

- Technical measures
- Closed areas
- Fleet structure policy/capacity reduction
- Quotas
- Fisheries Science Partnerships / Self-sampling
- Others

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Definition of management framework and objectives

3. Procedure for the adoption of a management plan

1. The development of a draft management plan through collaborative work between scientists, economists and stakeholders.
2. This work will define a number of options that could deliver our objectives.
3. Each option will be accompanied by an assessment that will analyse the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. This will be used to inform the various trade-offs that will be required in adopting a final plan.
4. All options will be discussed with the stakeholders (ports, regional and NWWRAC meetings).
5. The draft LTMP will be refined in light of the comments made by key stakeholders.
6. The LTMP will be discussed within the North Western Waters RAC and, if agreed, adopted as NWWRAC advice.

4. Definition of objectives - Biological considerations

4.1. Transitional Objectives:

1. To have an agreed common understanding of all stakeholders on the state of stocks in the mixed demersal fisheries in the Irish Sea including the geographical area covered - i.e. ICES sub-areas VIIa
2. The plan will concentrate initially on the key species in terms of catches namely Norway lobster, cod, haddock, sole, plaice and whiting taking into account the interaction with other Irish Sea stocks (herring) and those with a wider distribution area (megrim, monkfish, hake, skates, Pollack).
3. Put a discard elimination programme in place with defined reduction targets, timescales and measures to be adopted to achieve the targets as agreed in the 2013 CFP. This programme will start with Cod, Sole and Nephrops.
4. Follow the scientific advice for MSY in transition by 2015 where applicable and available for the stocks highlighted in the two above. As the MP is based on mixed demersal stocks choices on the appropriate MSY targets will have to be decided.

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Definition of management framework and objectives

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For stocks where MSY transition catch options are not available use an innovative new adaptive approach to define the desired overall fishing mortality.

5. To work with scientists to redress data quality and quantity issues to ensure more robust assessments and management targets.
6. To work with ICES to find new and innovative approaches to utilise fishermen information that are both qualitative and quantitative.
7. Develop a suite of indicators and risk assessment framework for species of lesser importance (by-caught) in the mixed fisheries.

8. To identify vulnerable species and habitats impacted on by mixed fisheries and adopt a Management Plan accordingly.

9. To examine and identify other influences upon stock dynamics, including the development of offshore energy projects.

10. To address the issues associated with unaccounted for mortality of cod and other Irish Sea stocks.

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4.2. Long-term objectives:

1. To have new adoptive assessment methods that are readily supported by all stakeholders.
2. To minimise discards of in all mixed demersal fisheries in the Irish Sea.
3. To adapt a Total Allowable Catch rather than a Total Allowable Landings management System.
4. To manage mixed demersal fisheries in the Irish Sea on the basis of total allowable catch.
5. To ensure at least 75 % of the catch biomass is fished at or below MSY targets or other appropriate target for mixed demersal fisheries.
6. To ensure that the remaining 25 % of the catch biomass is fished at sustainable catch levels based on a risk assessment framework.
7. To develop a framework for a fully documented fishery with the reversal of the burden of the proof.

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Definition of management framework and objectives



8. To have in place a fully verifiable operational documented fishery system.
9. To protect vulnerable species and habitats through specific measures such as Marine Protected Areas and other technical measures.

5. Definition of objectives - Economic considerations

5.1. Transitional objectives

1. Adopt measures to ensure a viable fleet.
2. Optimise the economic return to the fishing industry.
3. Prevent the expansion of effort in the Irish Sea through a capacity limitation.
4. Develop co-management framework including rights based management mechanisms.
5. Promote efficiencies and reduce carbon footprint.
6. Develop an economic model and performance indicators for the fishery.

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5.2. Long-term objectives

1. A viable fleet that is capable of renewing itself without subsidies.
2. Maximise the economic return from the resource for the sector whilst maintaining sustainability of the stock and habitats.
3. Ensure cost effective management of the fishery and high levels of compliance.
4. Encourage maximum commercial flexibility and administrative simplicity for industry participants.
5. An operational integrated biological-economic model that has a set of key performance indicators.

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Towards a Multi annual management plan for mixed demersal fisheries in the Irish Sea (VIIa)

Definition of management framework and objectives



6. Definition of objectives - Social considerations

6.1. Transitional objectives

1. To define an appropriate set of social criteria that is relevant to mixed demersal fisheries in the Irish Sea.
2. To define the parameters to be measured based on the appropriate set of social criteria.
3. To engage the fishing industry and other stakeholders in defining one and two above from the start and also on the data collection, assessment and management process.
4. To adopt measures to strengthen the resilience of the vulnerable fishing dependant coastal communities.
5. To develop a social model and performance indicators.

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6.2. Long-term objectives

1. A defined set of social criteria.
2. Quantifiable and measurable parameters.
3. Sustainable fishing dependant communities.
4. To provide a range of incentives for participation in a fully documented fishery.
5. Incentives schemes the norm and appropriate disincentives for breaking the rules.
6. Operational biological-economic and social model that has set of key performance indicators for the mixed demersal fisheries.

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Definition of management framework and objectives

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