

Non-binding guidelines for RACs' involvement in contributing to Long Term Management Plans under the Common Fisheries Policy framework

1. Background

What are long term management plans?

Whereas Recovery Plans or Management Plans are well defined by the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation (see Reg 2371/2002, articles 5 and 6), long term management plans are still lacking a clear definition though a wide range of fisheries are (or will be) managed under these plans.

- **RACs are asking the European Commission to provide a clear definition of Long Term Management Plans**

Long-term management plans could help achieving the political objective of moving depleted stocks towards Maximum Sustainable Yield (following the EU commitment at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002), whilst at the same time providing greater stability, economic and social benefits for the fishing industry and the civil society.

The enforcement of long-term management plan could also allow avoiding yearly bargain on TACs and quotas. It would provide a framework for each fishery, agreed for a longer period, thus giving much more long sight both to the fishing industry and the civil society.

Why RACs have to be involved in this process?

Gathering all the different stakeholders around a fishery, Regional Advisory Councils have a major role to play in this process. The stability and predictability that long-term planning is supposed to provide, are clearly positive qualities. It would reduce the costs of decision making and it is good for business.

Nevertheless moving towards this process needs the best possible coordination (in terms of time schedule and means available) between the European Commission, national administrations, the scientific community and the Regional Advisory Councils.



2. Objectives

To follow on the three pillars of sustainable development, objectives are at the same time biological and environmental (maintaining the natural structure and function of ecosystems and their productivity), economical (profitability of the fishing sector both upstream and downstream of the chain of custody), and social ones (working conditions and employments).

Even the MSY ecological target varies depending on the fishing pattern. One stock could have different MSY levels depending on the way it is exploiting.

That is to say that a lot of work remains to be done to better define these objectives. It seems that setting the objectives will depend on the level and range of participation from the stakeholders. The process of designing these objectives lies on governance which should be understood not as a technical exercise where expert knowledge is the only type of knowledge that counts but as a socio-political process where no-one can claim superior expertise.

“... based on a model of planning as an argumentative process in the course of which an image of the problem and of the solution emerges gradually among the participants, as a product of incessant judgment, subjected to critical argument” (Rittel and Webber 1973, p. 162).



3. RACs' means to implement a long term management plan : building a step-wise approach

The philosophy that underpins this process is that precise destination is less important than moving in the right direction. The “one size fits all” which is convenient to bureaucrats is a recipe for failure. RACs are supporting a fishery by fishery approach. It should be understood that different routes exist to high and stable yield.

Stage 1: defining the fishery (the management unit)

The fishery could be structured into either ecological, distribution or specific units. Their boundaries are not determined by terrestrial administrative boundaries. The fishery could be either at a smaller scale than the RAC's area (nephrops, anglerfish,...) or at a larger one (northern hake, tunas,...).

Stage2: building the trust through stakeholders involvement and participation

RACs gather a wide range of interests on marine resources and are therefore in a pivotal position for the implementation of LTM. Drawing up an initial shared diagnosis integrating all the factors pertaining to marine resources (fishing, pollution, climate) would allow to set up long term goals.

- **Setting up a framework for consultation** bringing upstream and downstream industry stakeholders close together, and where all parties concerned with the future of the fishery.
- **Setting up a management body** led by a coordinator (full-time employee) ensuring exchange worth as well as the broadcasting of all the information available to interested parties, and making the liaison between the management body, the managers and science.

Here lies a funding issue RACs have to solve. They therefore have to explore different potential sources: EU fundings (structural funds), Member States' increased participation (rather low for the moment), membership fee (still very low compared to the global budget), ...

Stage 3: implementing the long term management plan

- **Drawing a shared diagnosis** on the state of the fishery (economical – grounds profitability analysis, social – activity spread out evenly along the coastline and job creations, ecological – capture levels and ecosystem conservation). The baseline must be recognized by the RAC, the managers (European Commission and Member States) and the local authorities.



- **Committing to a roadmap** defining sustainable fishing practice objectives over the period of the long term management plan.

The philosophy of the roadmap supposes flexibility in the process. Adaptive management is necessary to manage a highly variable activity (regarding at the same time social, ecological and economical aspects).

The roadmap should help to balance long term objectives with short term viability while at the same time facilitating a move away from crisis management.

- **Defining progress indicators** making it possible to measure management measures effectiveness in attaining set goals.

In conclusion, the long term management plan should eventually lead to a list of measures like TACs, technical measures, capacity reduction, discard reduction, effort control.



4. Institutional framework: a need for closer relationships between RACs, Science, and the Managers (European Commission and Member States)

Working with Managers

Following the roadmap's idea, there should be place for flexibility in implementing long term management plan. The current consultation period leaving only few months for RACs to send their advice to the European Commission is far too short. Building trust and consensus between stakeholders is a long way but avoiding it will drive the regulation to a risk of inapplicability.

Besides, fishing activity is a highly variable activity regarding ecological, social or economical aspects. Therefore the management should allow a flexibility that fits to this inherent variability.

Working with scientists from the different disciplines

RACs would like either to look for independent advice or enforcement of the dialogue with the current scientific procedure (through MoU between EC and ICES). But it is not a one way relationship. The scientific information should be fully understood by the fishing sector as well as the information coming from the fishing sector (catch data but also empirical knowledge) should be included in the scientific process. The fishing sector could also express scientific issues.

RACs also want that the description of the fishing activity is being completed also by economists and sociologists as far as the fishing activity not only is harvesting a natural resource but is also an economical and social activity.

In conclusion, regular consultation between all the parties should make it possible to establish an adaptative type of management capable of ensuring the achieving of set goals.