

PROPOSED Focus Group meeting on Sharks, Skates and Rays scheduled for Friday 16th
September in Madrid

Briefing Document to NWWRAC
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Background

On the 6th July 2011, the Irish industry put forward a discussion document to the NWWRAC. This document was an outline draft for discussion on management of the ray and skate fishery in Sub-areas VI and VII. This document led to much discussion and ultimately it was proposed that the NWWRAC would convene a focus group on management of rays and skates, but also sharks, in VI and VII.

Initial discussions at the NWWRAC on 6th July

At the meeting on the 6th July, the Irish discussion document was presented by Caitlin Ui Aodha of the Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation. The document was broadly welcomed, but it was felt that more work was required, with further consultation across the RAC membership. Among the items arising from the discussion were :

- Common skate is now divided into two species. The French industry is concerned that only one of these may be considered extirpated, and therefore the current ICES advice (not considering the species separation) may no longer be valid
- Undulate ray is an important catch for the French fishery. The EC management legislation is more conservative than the ICES advice. This needs to be explored further.
- Any proposals for separate TACs for different species or species groups needs to be based on reliable data.
- It was probably too late to produce anything in time to influence the 2012 TAC proposals.

Suggestions for the proposed focus group :

I suggest that the following are among the main items that may be considered by the focus group.

Rays and skates

- Development of a TAC decision rule that could be used in the future. Current EC proposals would imply a 25% TAC decrease each year. An alternative to this is required.
- Discussion of the scientific basis for the ICES advice for rays and skates, and how it may be further improved.
- Achieve exploitation in line with a variant of MSY by 2015.
- In collaboration with ICES, further develop a suite of additional technical measures to achieve sustainable exploitation and afford maximum protection to the depleted species

Sharks and dogfish

- Consider stakeholders' views on current ICES advice and EC management regulations.
- Discuss rebuilding measures for porbeagle shark and spurdog.