



REPORT ON EC STAKEHOLDER MEETING ON THE REVISION OF THE DCR DATA COLLECTION REGULATION – BRUSSELS, 16 January 2014

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Organiser:	European Commission - DGMARE
Participants:	Wide range of Stakeholders representing; Member States, European Parliament, Commission Services, RAC's, RFMO's, NGO's, Regional Sea Conventions, ICES & EFARO
Purpose:	To discuss the key improvements planned for the revision of the Data Collection Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008) in the context of the revised CFP

AGENDA AND REPORT

The meeting was opened by Bernhard Friess (Directorate Atlantic, Outermost Regions and Arctic) who pointed out that we were approaching the final steps in the consultation process defining the framework for data collection. The aim is to present, in a comprehensive way, the Commission's thoughts on the review and revision of the Data Collection Regulation (DCR) and that they were very interested to hear the views of all present.

Context for the Proposal

The final compromise on the CFP reform defines several objectives and principles for fisheries data collection and these are to be taken into account as the Commission proposes amendments to the Data Collection Framework Regulation. Among issues highlighted by BF were:

- Reg. EC No. 199/2008 will continue to be the legal base for Data Collection but must be amended.
- Revised DCF to take into account the principles in Article 25 of the CFP Basic Regulation plus other objectives and principles of CFP (MSY, Landings Obligation, Sustainable fishing, regionalisation, aquaculture).
- DCF also modified regarding financial provision (EMFF) in light of Lisbon Treaty.

He stressed that consultations had been ongoing for two years with Member States, STECF, RCM's and end-users such as ICES.



Objectives of the Revision

The proposal for a revised DCF regulation will aim at improving data collection and availability under the reformed CFP, while retaining much of the existing system to ensure continuity and reliability of scientific data. Key objectives of the revision of the DCF Regulation were outlined in the papers provided in advance of the meeting and were used as the basis for setting the following discussion groups:

- A. Scope of the Data Collection Framework
- B. Assessing Impact on Ecosystems
- C. Improving Data Quality
- D. Simplification and Rationalization
- E. Improving Availability of Data
- F. Strengthening Regional Cooperation

Subgroup Discussion

Participants were then divided into 4 sub-groups and given 2 sessions of 40 minutes to consider a series of questions / proposals (for each topic) designed to help discussion on key areas of change to DCF. Each group were allocated a chair and reporter so that key outcomes of the discussions could be summarised in plenary and serve to inform DGMARE as they further develop revision to the DCR. Given that there were four separate groups, no detail is provided here on the group discussion.

Plenary

This session was opened by Lowri Evans (Director-General of DGMARE) who stressed that the revision of DCR and infrastructure was one of the most important things that they will do this year and went on to express the thanks of Commissioner Damanaki.

Reporters then provided brief summaries from their respective groups with following points being noted.

Scope of Data Collection:

- Regulation should include access for observers and consideration be given to separating from control.
- Sampling programmes should be defined / harmonised regionally.
- Concern expressed regarding resources required for aquaculture data collection. Suggested a pilot study to assess data to be collected.
- Data quality standards need to be assured in an international / regional context.
- End-users need to critically examine their needs
- Collection of additional data only if use is identified.



Assessing Impact on Ecosystem:

- Agreed on the need for improved availability and harmonization of data on impacts of fisheries on ecosystem.
- Avoid duplication with other Regulations.
- Have to be clear on data requirements for descriptor / indicators.
- Impact study needed to evaluate sampling design for various by-catch studies.
- Agree with concept that data should be collected on the effect of mitigation measures to avoid incidental by-catches.

Improving Data Quality:

- Important that sampling programmes are developed appropriately to meet end needs (incorporating best practice methodologies) rather than developed to meet a general statistical ideal.
- MS should establish a minimum sampling effort (in line with regional plans).
- Don't overdo further quality controls by MS.
- Competence of Regional Coordination Groups will be unclear for some time.
- Regarding evaluation, note that STECF and Commission are also end-users.

Simplification and Rationalization:

- Greatest workload included, data calls, DCF annual reporting, collection of otoliths for non-age based assessments, sampling of oceanic fleets, recreational fisheries.
- Obligation for data collection on small scale fleets may be better served by Pilot Studies.
- Always take into account time series.
- Differing views expressed on criteria for prioritising requirements at National and Regional level.

Improving Availability of Data:

- Ensure coherence with other EC initiatives (& fundamental within revised DCR).
- Interoperability and compatibility key for IT.
- Quality of data must be according to end-user requirements.
- Accessing of control data at National level is less problematic than Regional.
- Database tools needed immediately for RCM's.
- Concern expressed about scientific data being used for control purposes.
- Guidelines may be required on what can be included in confidentiality statements.



Strengthening Regional Cooperation:

- General agreement on questions posed.
- Tools required for management at Regional level.
- Correct people need to be involved regarding good governance and decision making.
- Be aware of additional costs and burden on MS.
- Need to define “end-users” in the context of responsibility for deciding which data should be collected.
- RCG (or RCM’s) should coordinate how to provide data in context of requirements of DCR.

During open discussion there were many points raised and in some cases, clarity provided. Points noted from this session were:

- With regard to definition of “end-user”, DCR gives usage;
 - As a device regarding fisheries management
 - In interest of public debate and policy development
 - Scientific interest.
- DCR also creates supplementary costs for MS and this should be recognised.
- Concern for budget availability for new requirements under the framework and urge caution regarding new initiatives such as freshwater aquaculture.
- Encourage all to consider how MSFD and DCR can work together to provide a more joined up view on fisheries in the ecosystem.
- Lack of emphasis on compliance. The chair reminded that compliance issues would be addressed through different means.
- Difficult to consider the competencies of Regional bodies which have yet to be set up.
- Need to prioritise what we collect and deliver in relation to cost and resources.

In her closing remarks, Lowri Evans stated that there was a great deal of thinking to be done by the Commission regarding the political context. She noted the concerns regarding national resources but stressed that national discussions with financial authorities were needed to provide feedback to the Commission for further consideration. She went on to say that the new DCR needs to be fit for the reformed DCF but also recognise the shift to ecosystem approach at Commission and National level. She then observed that there had been little discussion on costs and benefits and said this would be required for supporting application for DCR. However, given the rigid format of the agenda and questions, no time or opportunity allowed for consideration of this matter in sub-groups. She then finished by noting:

- Participants should continue to think what the revised DCR means in practice.
- No overlap between Eurostat and DGMARE requirements.
- Expansion and direction was quite clear.
- Need to identify what (politically) was lower priority, and stop.
- Be more proactive and provide examples of simplification in order that politicians can decide.



- ICES/COM – recognise not all stocks need to work to data hungry assessments.
- Studies and pilots should serve to inform now.
- Commission does now need to consider issues on data availability (as raised by many).

Closing Remarks

Bernhard Friess thanked all for their participation, reminding that the detailed reports from sub-group work would be helpful as they move forward. He then added:

- Recognised the need to make case to European Legislators that this would be a cost effective proposal considering both new and reduced input.
- Huge process to feed MSFD process (to date) but a well thought DCR was essential for coordination.
- Anonymous VMS data for use needs coordination to fully utilize this information.
- Overall context of budgetary discipline was mentioned and appropriate use of EMFF would support public expenditure.
- Team will keep in touch regarding consultation as experience and comments drawn from participants were invaluable.