



North Western Waters Advisory Committee

Working Group 3 (Channel) FOCUS GROUP VIId SOLE

Wednesday 3rd June 2015

1000-1430

BIM Dun Laoghaire, Dublin

Chairman: Emiel Brouckaert

Rapporteur: Jim Portus

1. Welcome, apologies & introductions:

The hosts, BIM welcomed delegates from France, UK and Belgium. The full list of participants is appended (Annex I). Emiel Brouckaert took the Chair. Jim Portus agreed to be rapporteur.

2. Approval of the Agenda and AOB:

3. Introduction, State of Play:

Emiel reminded the group about the ICES advice in 2014:

- Poor recruitment in 2012 and 2013.
- F rising well above F_{pa} towards F_{lim} .
- B declining since 2012, although still above $MSY B_{trigger}$.
- Advised -60% cut for 2015 TAC to achieve F_{MSY} in 2016.
- -44% would be needed for F_{pa} .

In the end the Council accepted -28% with proviso that France and Belgium introduced national measures to cut F . At the Commission's request, the Member States with 7d sole quota agreed to propose a management strategy for the stock during 2015.

At the GAP2 meeting in Port en Bessin (12th Feb 2015) there had been an ad-hoc opening discussion about what information was needed to guide the establishment of NWWAC advice for a LTMP.

At the WG3 meeting in Bilbao (23rd April 2015) there had been more intense discussions, including with Commission officials. Agreement had been reached about this "Focus Group" and its aims.

A Commission letter to the NWWAC dated 18th May indicated urgency for the AC to provide advice that builds on the 23rd April discussions. It hinted that the preliminary ICES advice for 2016 will be for a further 24% cut in TAC to achieve F_{MSY} in 2016. Time is of the essence.



The group discussed briefly the need for rapidity, acknowledging that advice should be appropriate to the problem and proportionate, proposing a solution that is effective in outcome, yet flexible to provide for change should the stock recover more quickly or even deteriorate.

4. Views in the Member States concerned:

The chairman asked for input from each Member State industry representative. The Belgian measures (BTT with 3 meters of lengthening piece with 120 mm mesh) have been evaluated by STECF for efficacy and contribution to recovery. It is clear that a full quantitative analysis of benefits cannot be evaluated until a full year has passed. ILVO is recording the selectivity improvements achieved from the 120mm extension pieces. So far they have noted 40% reduction in under-sized fish in the hauls, but 16% of fish that are larger than the conservation reference size are being lost. STECF concluded in the April plenary ([section 5.5](#)) that the suggested modification of the trawl extension committed to by Belgium can potentially result in a reduction in the catch of small fish without dramatically affecting the catch of fish above the MLS.

The UK pointed out that smaller inshore trawlers in the UK fleet do not use extension pieces and could not comply with this measure.

The French industry forwarded a letter with the national legislation in place to protect sole:

- National fishing licenses for all fisheries when > 300 kg / year (between 2011-2013)
- For licensed fisheries VMS is obligatory – only 3 exemptions for vessels without superstructure
- Effort is limited for BTT and netters (10% reduction days at sea compared to 2014). Additionally.
- Effort for netters is limited through net length (1 km/1m boat length, before no legislation was laid down, rule of thumb was 1.2 km/m vessel). In 2014 the North Sea cod MP effort restrictions were in place (number of licenses and length of nets) as well as market management and voluntary actions of week closures for instance, in Boulogne a voluntary Sunday closure is in place for vessels that are member of POs.
- All year closures of 4 nursery areas in the 3 mile zone (a fifth was proposed but not closed in 2015 as deemed too far from VIId)
- ‘Bonne pratique’ cooperation with scientists on data, self-management by controlling each other, and staying well away from nursery closures. They also ensure quick discarding to improve chances of long-term survival.

The UK mentioned there are a number of national measures inshore of 6 miles, managed by the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA) that are designed to assist the conservation of spawning aggregations. These are not specific to sole.

The UK also stated that the most important approach for the protection of sole was TAC management. Technical measures may not be implementable for all métiers and effort

management has been shown in the past not to work sufficiently. Areas for closure are difficult to define, and closures may displace effort into other vulnerable areas.

5. Development of NWWAC Advice on Management Measures:

After discussion about the efficacy of each measure the group focused on the task of providing NWWAC advice for a long-term, multi-annual plan, building on the temporary measures, but ensuring only useful, appropriate and proportionate measures are promoted. The chairman uses a PPT presentation suggesting the lay-out of the advice and topics to be mentioned.

There is no “one size fits all” solution in a fishery pursued by several métiers in each of the involved Member States. The binding obligation is to reach F_{MSY} as soon as possible and latest by 2020 now that 2015 first deadline is past. Advice must be presented in terms of achieving that obligation. Compliance with the social and economic obligations of the CFP is also essential. The new Landing Obligation may present difficulties, but exemption for high survival might be available for at least some métiers. It was acknowledged that the NSAC is exploring multi-species MAPs for the N Sea and that Area VIId may be included as part. Concerns were expressed that F_{MSY} is not well defined and for this stock has never been achieved even in history when fishing effort was considerably lower. Management has been seeking to limit activity to F_{pa} for decades.

Ifremer scientists provided some guidance about likely ICES advice for 2016. The French industry could also present work done by Ifremer on a number of scenarios to reduce fishing mortality. One of the options used a constant TAC after initial 14% cut in 2016 which showed to reach F_{MSY} by or before 2020. It was noted that measures aimed at reducing the numbers of mature fish taken from the biomass, i.e. by cutting the TAC, have an immediate beneficial effect, whereas improving selectivity for immature fish takes longer to boost biomass.

The group was impressed by the Ifremer analysis and presentation and recommended building its suggestions into the NWWAC advice.

6. Next Steps:

The Chairman, rapporteur and the NWWAC secretariat agreed to work up a draft document based on these Focus Group discussions.

The resulting draft document would be presented to the focus group and then to the ExCom for consideration and, if agreed for submission to the Commission and to STECF for evaluation before the middle of June.

The meeting adjourned at 1430.



ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Representative	Organisation
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Kevin Charlot	Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins
Daniel Lefèvre	Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins de Basse Normandie
Olivier Leprêtre	Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins du Nord / Pas de Calais / Picardie
Richard Brouzes	Copeport Maree OPBN
François Hennuyer	FROM Nord
Denis O'Flaherty	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Francis O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers Organisation
Barrie Deas	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
Dave Cuthbert	New Under Ten Fishermen's Association
Jim Portus	South West Fish Producers Organisation
Bill Brock	South West Fish Producers Organisation
Iain Glasgow	DEFRA
Laurent Markovic	European Commission
<i>Conor Nolan</i>	<i>North Western Waters Advisory Council</i>
<i>Barbara Schoute</i>	<i>North Western Waters Advisory Council</i>