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REPORT

Meeting between the NWWAC and the NWW High Level Group Meeting

Dublin
13th February 2018

Introduction

Emiel Brouckaert (EB, Chairman of the NWWAC Executive Committee) and Heather Hamilton (HH, Vice-chair of the NWWAC Executive Committee; Client Earth) attended the NWW Member States High Level Group as invited NWWAC representatives, in Dublin on 13th February 2018.

Summary of the meeting

The Member States Group (MSG) set out the focus for the joint recommendation (JR) in a [letter](#) to the NWWAC in January. The MSG stressed the importance of a JR as otherwise the Commission would have to draft the discard plans which may result in fewer flexibilities.

The chair emphasised the need for close collaboration with the AC to meet the deadline of the JR, which is due in May, and was calling for consensus advice. The JR should be comprehensive and properly use the flexibilities set out in the basic regulation. The work on the Choke Mitigation Tool (CMT) has shown the significant challenges that are ahead. .

EB gave an overview of the objective of the Advice Drafting Group meetings on the LO which was to look at options for high risk choke species, such as *de minimis*, high survival, technical measures and other options not in the toolbox. If time permits, the AC would also look at options for category 2 choke stocks, situations of zero national quota, as well as deep sea and pelagic bycatch.

Alternative management such as TAC removal or interspecies flexibility was being considered. Even with all of these options it still would not be sufficient to solve choke problems for all species and discussions on how to implement the LO would not be easy. EB confirmed that they had no mandate to go into detail on the possible solutions but that the AC would work together to find common ground and produce AC Executive Committee approved advice.

The Chair advised focusing on the JR as unless agreement is achieved this opportunity would be lost. Other issues should be set aside for now and reviewed by the MSG across fisheries after the JR.

The Commission representative explained that they would promote selectivity, but further work on technical measures is required. The NWWAC should focus on the technical measures for relevant fisheries where improvements are still possible. The representative emphasised that the content of the JR should be based on one consensus AC opinion, to ensure progress. Once this work would be completed, residual choke situations should be looked at and other possible improvements. The Commission would like a list of all measures already taken by the industry in terms of technical measures, area closures and other positive efforts. The EC would welcome advice on deep sea species.

The UK representative thanked the AC for the CMT. They are eager to have the ACs advice on exemptions and technical measures, because this would ensure all fleet segments have the opportunity to respond to proposals.

In response to a question on the NWWACs involvement in the STECF, and whether they will be examining high survival and *de minimis* provisions, EB confirmed that the STECF meeting would be looking at technical measures.

The Spanish representative referred to selectivity and high survival as options. They were also interested in alternative measures, like improving swapping to resolve chokes and in particular to resolve zero quota stocks.

The Scottish representative was concerned about placing too much importance on the STECF group meeting. Selectivity was clearly a key tool, and a review will be needed to evaluate how selectivity could be further improved but also the wider issues such as economic and social considerations have to be taken into account.

The Commission representative confirmed that there would be one multi annual plan for the North and South western waters. They are in the concluding stages of finalizing the proposal that is intended to be adopted at the end of March. The Commission would present the proposal to the Council working party in April. The Commission and co-legislators had been negotiating the North Sea plan and the content and mechanism was agreed upon apart from a couple of words on ICES advice.

The Western Waters Multi Annual Plan (WWMAP) established a plan which is a carbon copy of the North Sea Multi Annual Plan (NSMAP) that deals with target species with MSY and bycatch species with precautionary advice. The MAP allows for stakeholders and Member States to agree on:

- Technical measures
- Article 12 deals with cooperation with third countries, which would include the UK after March 2019
- Article 1 lists the target demersal species including northern hake, seabass and nephrops.

The Commission were hopeful that the AC would agree a common position on the WWMAP so that trilogies could begin quickly. As the WWMAP is almost identical to the NSMAP the process should not take as long, and the deadline for political agreement would be January 2019.

In response to the question on why there was only one plan for the western waters, the Commission representative said that there had been an impact assessment carried out on the option of having two plans and the number of fisheries crossing the border line. The results showed that the two

plans would have been identical apart from the target fisheries. The Commission's opinion was that it made no difference to the management, with Member State Groups and ACs continuing to be separate. The Commission was sure that the Parliament understands the timelines involved in the process.

The French representative made reference to the use of real time closures (RTC) such as used by the Faroese. RTCs could be useful when the selectivity ceiling is reached, and there is a willingness of the industry to implement this measure. EB confirmed that he would suggest this measure to the ADGLO.

Conclusions and Actions

The focus of the MSG is to produce the Joint Recommendation for 2019. They would welcome AC advice that should be a consensus position.

The Commission gave an update on the status of the Western Waters Multi Annual Plan and informed they would welcome advice on deep sea species and input for the management of skates and rays.