



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
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MINUTES

WORKING GROUP 1 (WEST OF SCOTLAND)

**Room 21.04 “Jacob Van Artevelde” - Virginie Lovelinggebouw (VAC)
Koningin Fabiolalaan, 9000 Ghent**

Tuesday 2nd of July 2019

13:30 – 15:00

1. Welcome and introductions

The ad-hoc Chair, Irene Kingma, opened the meeting and welcomed the members, observers, ICES and COM representatives to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Alex Kinninmonth in advance of the meeting. The agenda was adopted as drafted.

Action points from the minutes from the previous meeting in Madrid on 12th March 2019 were discussed:

1. The Secretariat to look into potential funding options to support a genetic study on cod in the west of Scotland and adjacent areas

The Secretariat had discussed this action point together with the Executive Committee Chair and Vice-Chairs. It was agreed that it is not the role of the AC to initiate independent scientific research. However, the AC could provide support to the scientific experts conducting the research.

A member intervened stressing the importance of the AC being involved, as there is a big stock identification issue for cod in ICES division 6a and in the North Sea. According to them, the AC should at least push for genetic sampling and research to be part of the Data Collection Framework. If the AC wants to make any progress in relation to cod in 6a, information on the stock genetic is fundamental and the study needs to start as soon as possible, given the two to three years time-frame needed to get results.

The Secretariat agreed in respect of the importance of this work and of the AC recommending COM and the interested MS to consider it. However, undertaking this research is not a task for the AC, but rather for a research institute.

ACTION: the AC to write a letter to the COM and the MS stressing the importance of undertaking a genetic study on cod in the West of Scotland and adjacent areas. In particular, a recommendation has to be provided to the COM to include stock genetic research in the Data Collection Framework.



A member expressed her agreement with the chosen procedure, believing a standard procedure should be set up for such cases, for this episode not to create a precedent in the AC.

It was then pointed out by a member that this topic had been brought to the AC since MS and research institutes were not keen to undertake this research. MS have not tackled this issue into account because they have different priorities from the industry. However, the fishermen he represents view this as a significant element to push forward. He thus proposed a cod genetics project group to be created in the AC to take the burden off the Secretariat. The project group would steer the DNA sampling work, which would be paid for by contributions unrelated to the NWWAC.

Another member mentioned that almost 3 years ago the COM was already contacted on this respect and a positive response was received from ICES. The intention was to set up a project group for a research funded primarily by the industry, with the AC being the sponsor of the study, not actually funding it but trying to get the project off the ground. In his opinion, the positive letters received from ICES should be revised.

The Secretariat replied that if a research needs stakeholders inputs, the AC would be more than available to help. However, it is important that the AC stays a consultative body and should not commission primary research.

The COM representative intervened indicating two projects which could serve as relevant examples for the cod genetic project group development: one on skates and rays which saw a significant involvement of the French industry and got funded by Interreg; another on cod tagging in the Irish Sea from the Irish Marine Institute, which was funded by Horizon 2020 via the EASME agency.

ACTION: The Secretariat to look at old letters sent concerning the cod genetic study and replies received, to see if new ones need to be sent to COM.

The members willing to create the cod genetic project group should prepare a document outlining the functioning model of the body, the funding scheme and the guidelines on the cod genetics study. This has then to be sent to the Secretariat to be discussed at the next NWWAC meeting in Dublin.

The Secretariat also has to circulate among members an expression of interest in participating in the cod genetic project group.

2. ICES advice for the West of Scotland

Mr Ghislain Chouinard (ACOM Vice-Chair) presented the advice for West of Scotland on behalf of ICES.

After the presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions and invited members to provide specific feedback that will form the basis of the NWWAC response to the fishing opportunities for 2020.

The following discussion points arose from the audience and were addressed by Mr Chouinard:

- Concerning haddock in ICES division 6a, no joint survey with the North Sea has been done yet. Is it being considered to add such a combined survey to the assessment?



Decisions regarding adding a new survey are usually considered during benchmark meetings. The current survey in use is the IBTS, but if another survey became available there is the possibility that it would be added in the assessment.

- For what concerns cod in ICES division 6a, the advice doesn't mention the stock ID issue, which is rather quite important. If the stock ID is not considered and clarified, the advice could actually be based on a stock that doesn't exist in reality and thus meaningless.

Stock ID uncertainty was kept into consideration in the report from the working group this year, as it was an issue back in time when the stocks delineation was defined. It would be good to re-examine this topic again, especially to understand whether cod in 6a is linked to the cod stock in 4, 7d and 20, in light of the improvement made in stock genetic research.

- Cod in 6a is definitely a very difficult stock to assess and in the inter benchmark report it was mentioned that there are great uncertainty sources coming from commercial data. What lead ICES to keep this stock in category 1 and has ICES envisaged the possibility to downgrade this stock to category 3?

There was a study from independent researchers showing that the status of the stock was apparently improving, and they had different hypothesis in support of this. The inter benchmark was intended to assess this piece of work to see if it was necessary to review the assessment. Some changes were made to the assessment and resulted in some revision of stock status, showing slightly higher biomass levels, but stock abundance clearly below B_{lim} . Indeed, many uncertainties can be mentioned, but without detailed information it is also quite hard to quantify these uncertainties. Therefore, the advice is based on the diagnosis that comes from the assessment of the stock: is there a persistent bias? For cod in division 6a there is no significant bias, so that's why the assessment category was kept. In this case, even with more information on uncertainties, the advice would not be different, as the stock assessment still does not show significant improvement.

- Cod stocks show a downward trend in many cases: has ICES investigated the cause of this decline?

The answer to this question would be different for each stock. A stock revision downward might be the result when there are strong inconsistencies between catch data and survey information, or it might be because of assumptions on selectivity, which are usually based on the average of the last 3 years.

- Catch data from the cod stock assessment were questioned as fishermen experienced having to discard significant quantities of fish in the past years. Are undeclared catches taken into consideration when doing the assessment?

The ICES advice is based on the data available. In some cases, it is known that there are undeclared catches and estimates can be derived for the assessment to base the advice.

- Were the latest implementations of new and more selective gears and the different targeting of year classes considered in the preparation on the advice for cod? Was their effect on the biomass taken into account in the assessment? There have been improvements in selectivity,



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but the assessment does not show an increase in biomass. Could this be because of the assessment model not being appropriate?

When doing the assessment, data on selectivity that was observed in recent times are used. If selectivity changes gradually, it is most likely not impacting the quality of the assessment. If it is changing dramatically, it can cause an issue and the biomass might be underestimated or overestimated comparing to the previous year. Moreover, using larger mesh size does not produce higher biomass immediately, the stock still needs time to recover.

- In terms of category 6 stocks, in which Rockhall cod stock is, is there a purpose scientifically of setting a TAC? The Rockhall cod is aligned to the Faroe stock and no small juvenile fish has been caught by fishermen in Rockhall. Yet there are three TAC of 1% of the target species, thus when the first TAC is reached, the whole fishery closes down. According to ICES, is it still appropriate to set category 6 TACs to this stock?

Setting the TAC is a different process than preparing the scientific advice. ICES provide advice and TACs are set separately by the relevant authorities. When information on catches is lacking or when there is no new data, ICES approach for category 6 stocks consists in reducing the advice progressively.

- What has ICES done in terms of quality assurance for the advice compared to last years?

There have been incremental changes. When preparing the advice, bias is consistently evaluated across the stocks. Moreover, a transparent assessment framework has been put in place to document the process and the quality of the assessments can be checked. Expert groups have also been reminded to examine attentively numbers and methods when doing the auditing.

- ICES had issued an advice to a request to remove the TAC for the Greater silver smelt. At first the reply stated that ICES could not provide an advice on whether removing or keeping the TAC would have resulted in lower or higher sustainability respectively. Why ICES decided to keep the TAC finally?

This was part of a request from the COM to the EC on whether removing the TACs in some stocks would have caused an issue. Looking at the stocks, for those on which ICES had clear information it was advised on whether the TAC could be removed or not. For those where information on whether the TAC was needed or not was lacking, the precautionary approach was applied and it was advised to maintain the TACs, otherwise there could be the possibility of fishing effort increasing significantly and the stock becoming overfished.

The COM also reiterated that setting TACs involves political reasons as well, comparing them to the scientific advice from ICES can cause confusion.

The Chair then invited members to send further comments and questions on the presented ICES advice to the Secretariat, which would then gather and forward them to the presenter.

- **Drafting advice to inform the development of the EU TAC proposal**

ACTION: The Secretariat to collect input/comments from members on the presented ICES advice to develop an advice on the fishing opportunities for 2020.



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3. Choke Avoidance Best Practice

At the previous NWWAC meeting in Madrid, the COM informed the Executive Committee that they would appreciate a new advice from the AC on how to deal with choke issues and identify the new choke risks stocks.

The Executive Committee has to decide if a Focus Group or an Advice Drafting Group will be set up to develop the advice and which the Terms of Reference should be (ToR were already proposed at Ghent meeting last year).

A member highlighted the importance to define the different responsibilities in avoiding the choke effect. Vessels, MS, COM all have responsibilities in this regard. It is not clear to him who the advice would be addressing and what it would cover. Also, he underlined that the tool is actually identifying possible choke species, while the word “mitigation” involves interventions of various kinds and from different actors. Therefore, “Choke Identification Tool” would be a more appropriate name.

Another member pointed out that notwithstanding the work done last year on choke identification, not once did Rockhall cod came up as an issue, questioning the usefulness of the tool.

The COM intervened pointing out that last year the AC did a very good job with the choke mitigation tool, which was extremely useful. If that work could be repeated, it would be very helpful for the COM. It is important for the COM to look at what has been put in practice since last Council meeting and to have feedback on it from stakeholders. The input they wish for is both on choke identification, the AC opinion on what was implemented by the COM and what is relevant for 2020. New staff will be involved in DG MARE in the next future and the AC advice and feedback would be very much appreciated.

ACTION: Update of the Choke Identification Tool by the Secretariat.

4. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	The AC to write a letter to the COM and the MS stressing the importance of undertaking a genetic study on cod in the West of Scotland and adjacent areas. A recommendation has to be provided to the COM to include stock genetic research in the Data Collection Framework.
2	The Secretariat to look at old letters sent concerning the cod genetic study and replies received, to see if new ones need to be sent to COM. The members willing to create the cod genetic project group should prepare a document outlining the functioning model of the body, the funding scheme and the guidelines on the cod genetics study. This has then to be sent to the Secretariat thus it can be discussed at the next NWWAC meeting in Dublin. The Secretariat also to circulate among members an expression of interest in participating in the cod genetic project group.
3	The Secretariat to collect input/comments from members on the presented ICES advice and provide a draft response to the fishing opportunities for 2020.
4	Update of the Choke Identification Tool by the Secretariat.



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Annex 1 – List of Participants

NWWAC WG 1 members	
Irene Kingma (Chair)	Dutch Elasmobranch Society
Mike Park	The Scottish White Fish Producers Association Ltd (1)
Barrie Deas	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation (NFFO)
Ciaran Whelan	Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation
Patrick Murphy	Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation
Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
Paul Macdonald	Scottish Fishermen's Organisation
Francis O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers' Organisation (IFPO)
Seamus Bonner	Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation
Kenny Coull	The Scottish White Fish Producers Association (2)
David Vertegaal	European Anglers' Alliance
Jean Christophe Vandevelde	The PEW Charitable Trusts
Purificación Fernández	Asociación Nacional de Armadores de Pesca de Gran Sol (ANASOL)
José Luis Otero Gonzalez	Lonja de La Coruña S.A.
Luis Francisco Marín	Organización de Productores de Pesca (OPPAO) Pesqueros de Lugo (OP-LUGO)
José Manuel Fernández Beltran	Organización de Productores Pesqueros de Lugo (OP-LUGO)
Juan Carlos Corrás Arias	Pescagalicia-Arpega-Obarco
Pedro Santos	EBCD
Julien Lamothe	Association Nationale des Organisations de Producteurs (ANOP)
Caroline Gamblin	Comité Départemental des Pêches et des Élevages Marins (CDPMEM)
Jerome Jourdain	UAPF
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne (LPDB)
Thierry Kerzerho	Comité Départemental des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins du Morbihan (CDPMEM 56)
NWWAC Observers	
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
John Lynch	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Geert Meun	Stichting van de Nederlandse Visserij (Dutch Fisheries Organisation)
Paul Trebilcock	Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation
Jim Portus	South Western Fish Producers' Organisation (SWFPO)
Fintan Kelly	BirdWatch Ireland
Jenny Grossmann	Client Earth
Erwan Quemeneur	Comité Départemental des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins des Cotes d'Armor (CDPMEM 22)
Dominique Thomas	Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins (CRPMEM) de Basse Normandie
Lionel Bottin	CDPM 14
José Luis Otero Gonzalez	FREMSS
Lydia Chaparro	Fundació ENT
Norah Parke	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
Paul Fletcher	SFO
Other observers	
Ghislain Chouinard	ICES



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Elsa Tudal	Direction des pêches maritimes et de l'aquaculture
Jonathan Shrives	European Commission
Juana Poza Poza	Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación
Secretariat	
Michael Keatinge	Executive Secretary NWWAC
Mo Mathies	Deputy Executive Secretary NWWAC
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary NWWAC
Monica Negoita	Executive Assistant (Finance and Administration) NWWAC