



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

MINUTES

WORKING GROUP 2 (CELTIC SEA)

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

**Tuesday 2nd of July 2019
15:30 – 17:00**

1. Welcome and introductions

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

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

Action points from the minutes from the previous meeting in Madrid on 13th March 2019 were discussed:

1. The NWWAC to recommend an ICES working group to look at the effects of seismic activity on fish stocks and review the potential to harmonize exploitation patterns in protected areas.

ACTION: The Secretariat to follow up on this action point. Most likely, such a working group already exists.

2. Recommend a joint meeting with the NWW MSG to proposed selectivity measures in the Celtic Sea and discuss further potential measures.

ACTION: The Secretariat to mention this in the letter to be sent when the new presidency settles in.

3. Ask ICES for updates on the status and participation at the Benchmark meeting on cod, whiting and haddock in 2020.

ACTION: The Secretariat to regularly notify members about upcoming ICES meetings (especially benchmarks on cod, haddock and whiting). In case a member is interested in participating on behalf of the AC, he/she should let the Secretariat know.



2. ICES advice for the Celtic Sea

Mr Ghislain Chouinard (ACOM Vice-Chair) presented the advice for Celtic Sea stocks on behalf of ICES. Advice for *Nephrops* (FUs 16-17-20-22), anglerfish (3.a,4,6) and skates and rays will be available in the autumn.

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:

- A fair summary of the situation for sea bass would be that even though there has been a dramatic reduction in fishing mortality, time is still needed for biomass to recover and for proper recruitment to come through. Is this correct?

Indeed, in terms of the fishing mortality, estimates show a reduction. Sea bass is a complicated stock to assess. There are a number of assumptions made. The assessment could be improved with good data from recreational catches, which are lacking and currently estimated from 2012 data.

- A quality assurance issue was raised for the advice on cod, whiting and plaice. It was pointed out that, in the advice, ICES recognised that the assessment of SSB and F and the retrospective analysis have poor reliability. However, ICES issued the advice anyway, aware of the possibility it could significantly change next year. When these problems were recognised, bringing huge concerns to the reliability of the assessment, was any quality control done? The situation is very similar for whiting, where recruitment data doesn't look fine. In the report it is explained this happened because the survey didn't pick up the catches of ages 1 to 3 in the previous three years. Was this quality issue addressed? Without this retrospective bias in the previous year, there wouldn't be such a decline in the SSB now. Looking at sole in 7h, j and k, recruitment in the past was very poor, while now it looks very strong. However, there is very little data supporting this assessment, which is category 3. Was any quality control done for this?

Once surveys are done, there is an expert group revising the results. Concerning whiting, indeed the survey didn't detect three year classes, but there was no indication there was something wrong with the survey, this is why it was not rejected. The absence of these year classes suggest that they are poor. In retrospect, if they are detected in future surveys, these estimates can be revised upwards even though not seen at first. The benchmark for cod, whiting and haddock will be an occasion to review, analyse and update the assessment for next year, but this advice is the best that could be provided at this time. Regarding cod, there was consideration of using the assessment in a relative sense because of the magnitude of the bias found, but the result would have been the same in terms of the advice.

- The COM asked about weather fisheries dependent data are used in the model and how. Considering for example catches of cod in the Celtic Sea from the past two years, they have dropped considerably: how is this included into SSB modelling?



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Catches are included in the model. There will be a workshop in autumn, the WK for bias, where the adequacy of assessments with bias will be discussed, providing better guidance for quality assurance for these cases.

- For plaice, cod and whiting, the scientific advice is, as was last year, with 0 TAC. Last year, ICES defined an advice regarding bycatch criteria and landing obligation. Has this been discussed between ICES and COM this year? It would be important for the AC to have this information, in light of the advice to be provided on fishing opportunities.

Last year this was a technical request ICES received from the COM. The COM has regular interactions with ICES, an annual agreement with ICES producing the catch advice, and planning meetings about when technical requests can be submitted. The COM representative indicated that the COM is aware of the issue of bycatch TACs as ICES warned there would have been 0 TAC advice for several stocks. A technical request on this is planned, but it is very likely that proposal figures for the bycatch TAC advice won't be available when the COM proposal on fishing opportunities comes out in November unfortunately. This will be probably solved as a "non-paper" that will go to Council later. The mixed fisheries advice for cod haddock and whiting in the Celtic Sea won't be available until later, so this work will be postponed, but it is going to be discussed between COM and ICES.

- Concerning plaice in 7h, j and k, there is an issue with the management unit of this stock: in the report of the working group it is said that catches for 7h should be linked with the stocks of 7e, f and g and a request was made for more flexibility between these stocks, has ICES been addressing this issue and how?

A benchmark is already planned for 2020, where the existing information will be examined concerning the management unit and the delineation of stocks. By that time, additional information may be available, allowing for a revision of the stock's limits and the management unit. If not, the benchmark will analyse what information is required and what needs to be done to get a better delineation of the stock. At the moment, there are not enough analytical data to be able to analyse the flexibility issue.

- There was an inquire about the robustness of the 2019 discard figure for sea bass. The catch advice has doubled from 2018 to 2019 and at the same time discards, which were high in 2018, are now reported to be very low.

The estimates of the discards in the projections are based on the model. It is noted that they are lower than the recent estimates. This is an issue that should be examined further.

- Coming back on whiting, it was pointed out again that figures do not look reliable and the correctness of the model used was questioned. The current dramatic change in biomass is a consequence of the three year classes missing in the past assessments, why was not this issue forecasted by ICES?

The advice was reduced for two main reasons: first because biomass has declined, secondly because biomass in the recent year is also below B_{lim} . If the stock is just below B_{lim} , as in this case, the ICES advice rule stipulates that any catch should result in the stock being at least at B_{lim} at the end of the projection year. When the stock is above $MSY B_{trigger}$, the full F_{MSY} can be used; when the stock is between F_{MSY} and B_{lim} , a reduced F below F_{MSY} has to be applied; and when the stock is below B_{lim} , an even lower fishing mortality needs to be used, so that the stock will get back to B_{lim} by the end of the



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forecast year.

- A question was raised on the rationale for including in the Celtic Sea two Irish Sea statistical rectangles (33E2 and 33E3) for cod and whiting.

Geographically, the two rectangles are contiguous to the Celtic Sea. The issue of the stock delineation is addressed at the Benchmark, to make sure the limits of the stock are still valid.

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.

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).

ACTION: Update of the Choke Identification Tool by the Secretariat. The update should consider both new information on stock situation and a toolbox of measures that can be used to avoid the choke effect.

This is the start of a piece of work that would take record of what has been done, what has worked and what can be improved. The AC could begin by making an evaluation of how successful the *de minimis* and high survivability exemptions have been.

It should be taken into account that the catch advice is dramatically changing from how it was when the Tool was first prepared and that what was not a choke species then is likely going to fast become one.

There are two main aspects in the update of the Tool: the update with information on the new advice and the stock situation which could bring to different categorisation of the species; the toolbox of measures that can be used per stock and applied per every choke situation. The main input from the AC working groups is to check whether any tool or attempt to use a tool has been added to what is on the Tool listing.

The timing of this piece of advice should also be considered. Feeding in to the beginning of next year, into the JR process, might be a useful thing.

A point was made about the AC disappointment concerning the tight timing for commenting on this



year JR, which was not enough for the AC to reach consensus and resulted in the delivery of a discussion paper. Time and space should be granted to allow such a multi stakeholder organisation to have discussions and provide a unanimous advice. A question was made on whether it necessary to have JR on discard plans annually.

The COM replied that indeed the process doesn't appear to work very well and other ACs have raised the same concern. The COM needs to discuss this timing issue with the MSG and solve it whether with a tacit agreement on internal deadlines, or with a more formal deadline structure. It's important that stakeholders feel included in the process and the COM will work to establish a more formal structure including AC advice timing.

In theory this doesn't need to be an annual process, exemptions could have a 3 years term. However, last year many of them were rejected by STECF and MS got a compromise with temporary exemptions for one year while collecting more data for getting approval. This was supposed to be a pragmatic approach but in the end the process got stuck in it.

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

1	The Secretariat to follow up on contacting ICES to recommend a working group to look at the effects of seismic activity on fish stocks and review the potential to harmonize exploitation patterns in protected areas about this. Most likely, such a working group already exists.
2	Recommend a joint meeting with the NWW MSG to proposed selectivity measures in the Celtic Sea and discuss further potential measures. To be proposed in the letter to be sent when the new presidency settles in.
3	The Secretariat to notify members about upcoming ICES meetings (especially benchmarks on cod, haddock and whiting). In case a member is interested in participating on behalf of the AC, he/she should let the Secretariat know.
4	The Secretariat to collect input/comments from members on the presented ICES advice to develop an advice on the fishing opportunities for 2020.
5	Update of the Choke Identification Tool by the Secretariat. The update should consider both new information on stock situation and a toolbox of measures that can be used to avoid the choke effect.

Annex 1 – List of participants

NWWAC members	
Paul Trebilcock (ad-hoc Chair)	Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation (CFPO)
John Lynch	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
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
Francis O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers' Organisation (IFPO)
Barrie Deas	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation (UK)
Mike Park	The Scottish White Fish Producers Association
Jim Portus	South Western Fish Producers Organisation Ltd. (SWFPA)
David Vertegaal	European Anglers' Alliance
Fintan Kelly	BirdWatch Ireland



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Purificación Fernández	Asociación Nacional de Armadores de Pesca de Gran Sol (ANASOL)
Luis Francisco Marin	Organización de Productores de Pesca (OPPAO)
Juan Carlos Corrás Arias	Pescagalicia-Arpega-Obarco
José Luis Otero Gonzalez	Lonja de La Coruña S.A.
José Manuel Fernández Beltran	Organización de Productores Pesqueros de Lugo (OP-LUGO)
Julien Lamothe	Association Nationale des Organisations de Producteurs (ANOP)
Erwan Quemeneur	Comité Départemental des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins du Finistere (CDPMEM 29)
Caroline Gamblin	Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins (CNPMEM)
Olivier LeNezet	Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins (CRPMEM) de Bretagne
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne (LPDB)
Franck Le Barzic	Coopérative Maritime Bretagne Nord (COBRENORD)
Thierry Kerzerho	Comité Départemental des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins du Morbihan (CDPMEM 56)
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
NWWAC Observers	
Geert Meun	Stichting van de Nederlandse Visserij (Dutch Fisheries Organisation)
Norah Parke	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
Irene Kingma	Dutch Elasmobranch Society
Jenni Grossmann	Client Earth
Jean Christophe Vandevelde	The Pew Charitable Trust
Pedro Santos	EBCD
Lydia Chaparro	Fundació ENT
Dominique Thomas	Comité Départemental des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins des Cotes d'Armor (CDPMEM 14)
Mathieu Vimard	Organisation des Pêcheurs Normands (OPN)
Dominique Thomas	Organisation de Producteur Coopérative Maritime Etaploise Manche Mer du Nord (OPCMEMMN)
Jerome Jourdain	UAPF
Delphine Roncin	FROM Nord
Other observers	
Ghislain Chouinard	ICES
Elsa Tudal	Direction des pêches maritimes et de l'aquaculture
Jonathan Shrives	European Commission
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