



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

MINUTES

WORKING GROUP 3 (ENGLISH CHANNEL)

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

**Wednesday 3rd of July 2019
08:30 – 10:00**

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair, Pascal Coquet, opened the meeting and welcomed the members, observers, ICES and COM representatives to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Kenny Coull 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. Mr Portus to forward the link to reports that were referenced during the meeting for further distribution to the WG members.

Links have been provided and reports are available on the NWWAC website.

2. A Focus Group on Seabass to be organised to further discuss and recommend management options.

Work in progress, 12 members have expressed their interest in participating in the FG.

ACTION: Sea bass Focus Group Terms of Reference to be prepared for discussion/approval at the Executive Committee meeting in Dublin.

3. Members are invited to send their comments and experience on scallop dredgers to the Secretariat

Work in progress, to be discussed in September at Dublin meeting.

ACTION: action point from Madrid meeting is ongoing.



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2. ICES advice for the English Channel

Mr Ghislain Chouinard (ACOM Vice-Chair) presented the advice for English Channel stocks on behalf of ICES. Advice for sole in ICES division 7d 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:

- Explanation was required on discards for plaice in 7d not being taken into account in the assessment but being considered in the production of the advice. What are the discard rates used based on?

The advice from last year, which took into account the discard rate, has been adjusted for this year advice. The discard rate is based on observers.

- Mr Chouinard was requested to explain again the advice on sea bass which he had presented the day before during Working Group 2, as it included divisions 7d and e.

Sea bass advice for 2019 was revised as an error was found in the computation of the early part of the LPUE series. This resulted in a rescaling of the assessment and reference points were recalculated, but in the end the 2019 advice only changed slightly. It did result in some change in the anticipated proportion between the commercial and recreational catches. The advice for 2020 is based on MAP. The stock is now estimated to be slightly above B_{lim} , fishing pressure is estimated to be below F_{MSY} and recruitment is poor. In terms of the stock size, the situation is not good as the stock is below $MSY B_{trigger}$ and anticipated to remain near B_{lim} . The projection assumes that F_{2019} is 0.088 and is anticipating SSB in 2020 will be slightly above B_{lim} . The advice for 2020 is between 1634 tonnes and 1946 tonnes, where 1946 is the maximum of the lower range as the stock is below $MSY B_{trigger}$ and thus the upper range is not provided. In terms of the projections for 2020, the proportions for discards based on model estimates is lower than what has been observed in recent years

There are a number of assumptions in the sea bass advice. The estimate of recreational catches for example, is based on the fishing mortality for recreational fisheries in 2012 when the estimate of recreational catch was available.

Once the stock is above B_{lim} , ICES provides advice based on a reduced fishing mortality with the criteria that at the end of the forecast year the stock should be at or above B_{lim} . What ICES anticipates with fishing at 1946 tonnes in 2020 is that the biomass would be reduced by about 5% at the beginning of 2021, coming back down very close to B_{lim} . It is something important to consider when discussing fishing opportunities for next year.

- The estimated 74 tonnes of sea bass discards for 2020 come from a theoretical calculation with the model. However, based on facts, currently discards are above 400 tonnes. Discards are a consequence of the LO and we knew year classes from 2013 and 2014 were slightly better than the average, so discards increased inevitably, and the phenomenon will keep on growing. This year the ICES recommendation on catches and landings is higher than the one from 2017, so there is margin for manoeuvre. Measures need to be found to make sure that



those discards, which are inevitable catches, can be landed and valorised.

If discards are actually higher than in the estimates, it is important to make sure that the sum of landings and discards does not exceed the total included in ICES catch scenario for 2019.

- Explanation was requested on the model used for assessing cod and on the strong retrospective impact on the stock biomass and mortality.

There is a consistent difference between the model estimates based on fisheries and survey data, from one year to the next suggesting that the fishing mortality is higher than what was estimated previously. The causes of this bias are not fully known, several factors could be involved, such as increase in natural mortality or changes of fishing activity that couldn't be recorded in the assessment. A workshop (WKFORBIAS) will be held in the autumn to examine the issue of bias in the assessments, identify the acceptable bias level, and to better understand the causes producing the bias.

- Clarification was asked on the recorded increased effort on cod and on the fleets involved, as in France the effort has decreased.

ICES provides the estimate for the whole stock and this comes from the model in use.

- If a reduction in the stock biomass has been noted and it is not attributed to the fishing effort but to other mitigating factors, does that mean that controlling the effort won't lead to reach MSY?

It is not necessarily that something else affecting the stock, it could be that the assessment is not capturing all the dynamics, it might be some data that is not incorporated, such as unknown additional catches. This needs to be investigated, before jumping to the conclusion of throwing away all current reference points. A benchmark would look at the assessment and review the diagnostics of the retrospective. ICES uses the data available and is transparent in communicating when information is missing in an assessment, when there is awareness about it.

- When assessing the stock, is the biomass assessed first to then calculate what the fishing pressure is, based on how much is taken out from the stock? In this way you consider the fishing pressure responsible for the biomass. However, fishing activities remains the same for months and there is no change in efficiency from day to day, it's a slow process. The biomass might be going down and therefore a greater proportion of the biomass is caught, but it's not deliberate: it's not a change of fishing pressure, rather of fishing mortality.

Normally, if fishing pressure is maintained, then also fishing mortality stays the same, except if a vessel gets more efficient and thus catches a larger proportion in the same amount of time. When the stock abundance is calculated, if the proportion of fish that is taken out of the stock is higher, this is interpreted that there was some increase in effort.

- Concerning the issue with abundance modelling, even after being aware of this uncertainty the abundance of some of the stocks might still be overestimated. For how many stocks this is actually happening?



The stocks characterised by bias that is strong are probably 10 out of more than 180 ICES assesses every year. These include the Celtic Sea cod and whiting, cod in 7a, and to some extent cod in subarea 4.

- Considering the uncertainty about fishing mortality for cod in the southern area of the English Channel, could climate change be an issue to consider? IPBES figures are projecting a decrease in fisheries productivity and an increase fishing mortality. Is this something ICES is envisaging to put into modelling, something managers have to reflect on in their decision-making.

The ecosystem overviews that ICES provides try to address this aspect to some extent. However, the IPBES report is more of a long-term prediction, it is something that is more difficult to estimate year over years. Whenever a Benchmark is done, dynamics in terms of the recruitment relative to biomass are examined. If recruitment stays low, then this is taken into account. This would change the dynamics forecasts for the future, impact MSY and productivity can be expected to be reduced. In addition, observed changes in maturity, growth and recruitment are factored in when doing the assessments.

- Many points have been made mentioning the uncertainty around fishing mortality and discard data, yet the discussion should also involve actions to be taken to improve data collection and monitoring.
- It could be useful, when looking for explanations on declines in the stock, to look outside the fishing activity and consider for example the increase of some predators populations.

In stocks where there are estimates to include, this can be taken into account. Changes have been noted in some of these populations, for example ICES advice for cod in 6a mentions the impacts of predators.

- Why was the advice for sole in 7d postponed until November?

There was an issue with the database calculating the catch rate. The problem occurred before the assessment was made and problems are now being fixed.

- Three sub population have been identified by a study within the sole stock in 7d, each with very different dynamics. They should be taken into consideration in the advice so that the trends are reflected properly.

Mr Chouinard will check with the colleagues in charge of the assessment about sub-populations, but normally assessments are based on the stock as a whole. This case would be examined and addressed at a benchmark. However, it may be very difficult to split the data and study the 3 sub-populations separately if they exist. It is only possible to take sub-populations into account in some cases, it is first important to see whether these sub-populations mix with one another during the year.

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

ACTION: Advice Drafting Group 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 ExCom 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 ExCom has to decide if a FG or an Advice Drafting Group will be set up to develop the advice and which the Terms of Reference should be. (ToR were already agreed for an ADG on LO from last meeting in Ghent on 19 July 2018).

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

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

1	Sea bass Focus Group Terms of Reference to be prepared for discussion/approval at the Executive Committee meeting in Dublin.
2	Members are invited to send their comments and experience on scallop dredgers to the Secretariat. To be discussed in September at Dublin meeting
3	Advice Drafting Group to collect input/comments from members on the presented ICES advice to develop an advice on the fishing opportunities for 2020.
4	Update of the Choke Identification Tool by the Secretariat.

Annex 1 – List of Participants

NWWAC WG 3 members	
Pascal Coquet (Chair)	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
John Lynch	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Ciaran Whelan	Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation
Geert Meun	Stichting van de Nederlandse Visserij
Paul Trebilcock	Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation Ltd.
Barrie Deas	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation (UK)
Jim Portus	South Western Fish Producers Organisation Ltd. (SWFPO)
Oscar Sagué	International Forum for Sustainable Underwater Activities (IFSUA)
David Vertegaal	European Anglers' Alliance
Irene Kingma	Dutch Elasmobranch Society
Julien Lamothe	Association Nationale des Organisations de Producteurs (ANOP)
Lionel Bottin	Comité Départemental des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins du Calvados (CDPMEM 14)
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Caroline Gamblin	Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins (CNPMEM)
Pedro Santos	EBCD
Stephane Pinto	Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins (CRPMEM) Hauts de France
Delphine Roncin	FROM Nord (Fond Régional d'Organisation du Marché du



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Dominique Thomas	CRPM Bretagne
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne (LPDB)
Franck Le Barzic	Coopérative Maritime Bretagne Nord (COBRENORD)
Dominique Thomas	Organisation de Producteur Coopérative Maritime Etaploise Manche Mer du Nord (OPCMEMMN)
Thierry Kerzerho	Comité Départemental des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins du Morbihan (CDPMEM 56)
NWWAC observers	
Patrick Murphy	Irish South and West Fish Producers' Organisation
Norah Parke	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation
Jenni Grossmann	ClientEarth
Debbie Crockard	Seas at Risk
Jean Christophe Vandevelde	The PEW Charitable Trusts
Fintan Kelly	BirdWatch Ireland
Lydia Chaparro	Fundació ENT
Other Observers	
Elsa Tudal	Direction des pêches maritimes et de l'aquaculture
Ghislain Chouinard	ICES
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