

Report from: Kenny Coull

Report date: 12 June 2014

Event: Advice Drafting Group North Sea (ADGNS)

Place: ICES, Copenhagen, Denmark

Date: 3 – 6 June 2014

Organiser: International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

Participants: Ghislain Chouinard (Canada - Chair); ICES Secretariat; Chairs of WGNSSK, WGMIXFISH, WGBFAS, HAWG; Several invited experts; Claus Sparrevohn (Observer – Danish Pelagic Producers Organisation); Kenny Coull (Observer - NWWAC),

Purpose: To prepare draft advice for fish stocks in the North Sea Ecoregion

BACKGROUND

The annual ICES advice process for fish stocks consists of several stages. The Advice Drafting Groups consider the reports from the (stock assessment) Expert Groups, together with the outcomes from the Independent Review Groups and prepare draft advice for consideration by the Advisory Committee. Industry stakeholders are permitted to attend the Advice Drafting Group meetings as Observers.

REPORT

Briefing from ICES Secretariat and ADG Chair

The meeting was opened by the Chair, who went on to explain that we were to provide catch advice for 36 North Sea fish stocks based on the assessment work conducted by WGNSSK, WGMIXFISH, WGBFAS, HAWG and WGNEW.

ICES Secretariat then provided a presentation to outline the process that was to be followed.

- The group should ascertain that advice is consistent with the scientific results, consistent in interpretation and presentation and answers the request fully.
- The single stock advice should be based on the assessment as presented by the Expert Groups but where changes are proposed, the ADG should produce technical minutes that include the rationale.
- Format of advice to be based on one of the following (in order);
 1. Management Plan
 2. MSY (or transition to MSY)
 3. Precautionary approach
 4. Implement Data-limited stocks procedure
- Scenarios in Outlook table could include several options, but limit to 10.
- Review text, figures and tables in advice documents.

Presentation on Advice

For each stock, a representative from the relevant Expert Group (Assessment Working Group) provided a brief presentation or insight which described the stock, assessment and basis for advice. This was generally accompanied by a series of relevant standard graphs and plots as well as highlighting key issues relevant to the assessment and advice.

Data-Limited Stocks

Where stocks are regarded as data limited, they were categorised according to adopted ICES approach which is intended to move in the direction of sustainable exploitation, having due regard for the species biological characteristics and uncertainty in information. Advice could then be fixed for a specified time period unless important new knowledge changed the perception of the stock. The development of this process has allowed for more flexibility to provide appropriate and relevant advice.

Fishers Survey

As no Fishers Survey information was available for 2013, it was agreed that a simple sentence stating “Results of the 2013 Fishers Survey were not available” should be included in the relevant species advice sheets.

Drafting of Advice (and Summary Information)

Initial preparation of Advice and Supporting Information sheets had been conducted prior to the meeting (ICES Secretariat, Expert Groups and allocated member of ADG). The Advice Drafting Group visited each stock in turn. After confirming the top line advice was in line with the defined protocols, consideration was then given to the information contained in the Stock Status section. The group then considered the text and information provided and where appropriate agreed on required changes and updates.

Mixed Fisheries Advice

The Chair of WGMIXFISH-NS presented on the methods and process followed for developing advice in relation to mixed fisheries advice. However, as a result of discrepancies with information provided for single species advice for haddock and whiting (notified during the meeting) it was agreed that the mixed fisheries assessment (and advice) would have to be revisited once the single species assessments had been rerun.

Landings Obligation

While it was agreed that a standard text relating to the “landing obligation” should be included in each stock sheet, subsequent discussion on consistency between approaches taken by different Advice Drafting Groups suggest that this matter will be revisited.

Summary

Given that the Advice Drafting Group adhered to a well defined process, there was a generally a very high level of acceptance of the top line advice on catches and landings. Opportunity was provided for frank and open discussion on text, tables and figures contained within the advice and supporting information sheets. From a Scottish perspective, amendments were made to text which reflected recent changes in selectivity and discard rates as well as recognising that a parallel observer sampling scheme run by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation should be more closely aligned with that of Marine Scotland to provide more robust data to be used for ICES assessments. One important point of note was that while the ADG accepted the assessment for Northern Shelf haddock (2014 Benchmark proposed that stocks be assessed as IIIa, IV and VIa combined), they disagreed with the rationale for allocating catch to each management unit. An alternative option was offered for further consideration.

While detailed notes were taken on outcomes for each stock, these will not be distributed as further consideration within the ICES structure has to be given before advice is released.