



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
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MINUTES

Focus Group Landing Obligation

Virtual

Monday 29 January 2024

10:00 – 11:30 CET

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair Emiel Brouckaert welcomed all participants to the meeting. Apologies were received from Alexandra Philippe (EBCD), Kenatea Chavez-Hey (ANOP) and Arthur Yon (FROM Nord).

Action points from the last meeting (12 October 2023) include:

1	The Secretariat will draft a letter to the Commission based on the AC response to the UK consultation on discards.
	Letter sent to COM on 21 November, response received on 14 December – discussion under item 2
2	The Secretariat will work on comments received and share an updated version of the response to the TMR questionnaire with members.
	Response to TMR questionnaire submitted on 24 November, awaiting reply. Recent NWWAC participation at STECF expert working group on technical measures (EWG 23-15).
3	The Secretariat will update the choke traffic light spreadsheet and share it with AC members for further comments. The Secretariat will start drafting advice with the information currently available.
	Draft spreadsheet and advice shared with members on 24 November. Spreadsheet further updated with 2024 fishing opportunities and shared ahead of this meeting.
4	Secretariat to get in touch with DG MARE asking them to elaborate on the request to ACs regarding providing data on the landing obligation as included in the CFP Communication.
	Question included on the list for next Inter-AC meeting on 6 February.

The Chair proposed that in future meetings the FG addresses items such as:

- The follow up of the recent workshop with EFCA on 16 January and the EFCA report on evaluation of compliance with the landing obligation
- The Commission's reply to the NWWAC advice from 30 of June on difficulties with the landing obligation in view of the upcoming consultation on the evaluation of the landing obligation
- The outcomes of the STECF EWG 23-15 on the Technical Measures Regulation, held on 22-26 January
- Work by the NWW Member States Group on any Joint Recommendation in relation to the



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new Discard Plan 2024-2027, for example in relation to spurdog, lemon sole and brill

The Secretariat added that NWWAC representatives attended the recent STECF EWG 23-15, where the AC position on technical measures recently submitted to the Commission through a dedicated questionnaire was put forward to STECF experts. The Secretariat also attended the last MS Technical Group meeting on 26 January, where MS expressed their intention to work on Joint Recommendations on spurdog and lemon sole. Work on the definition of directed fishing, and in particular in relation to squid, is also in the pipeline.

Dominic Rihan confirmed that these are indeed topics that are being discussed by the MS. Regarding squid, the priority is currently to have a harmonized approach with the North Sea Member States.

John Lynch, who attended the STECF EWG, confirmed that he referred AC views from the questionnaire, pointing out cases where technical measures contradict each other or clash with other regulations, such as article 15 of the CFP. Socio-economic issues were also raised, especially in relation of lack of flexibility in the Technical Measures Regulation, where fishers can be disadvantaged if the gears they are using don't fall exactly into the derogations. He also agreed with the Chair regarding the need to follow up on the discussions at the EFCA workshop held on 16 January. Looking at the new Control Regulation, there seems to be an absolute intention to implement REM measures on all vessels. He was concerned to hear that when EFCA presented the risk analysis for the NWW demersal fleet even the most selective gears in the CFP were categorized as high risk.

The Chair added that it would also be interesting to hear the MS and Parliament's points of view on the control of the landing obligation and in particular on DG MARE's position as presented at the EFCA workshop.

ACTION POINT: The Focus Group will continue following issues related to the implementation of the new Control Regulation, the upcoming evaluation of the Landing Obligation, the evaluation of the Technical Measures Regulation and the development of Joint Recommendations on the new Discard Plan by the NWW MS.

2. DG MARE's response to NWWAC letter following up on AC response to response to UK consultation on the discards reform

The Secretariat asked participants how to best react to DG MARE's response to the abovementioned letter.

The Chair felt there was an important aspect to consider in DG MARE's reply, which is the reference to the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF) which will be the forum for discussions on the UK approach to discard management. He proposed that this is raised at the upcoming meeting of the Inter-AC Brexit Forum, planned on 5 February. The NWWAC should request the Commission to be kept informed on the matter. The upcoming evaluation of the landing obligation could also be a good occasion to continue raising these issues.

ACTION: The issues raised in the NWWAC letter to the COM on the input provided to the UK discard



consultation and the Commission's response will be followed up in the upcoming Inter-AC Brexit Forum meeting on 5 February.

3. Draft advice on choke risk in the NWW

The Secretariat shared the choke spreadsheet on screen. The document had been updated with TAC information from the latest Fishing Opportunities regulation. Participants went through the spreadsheet identifying where updates/additions were needed.

Celtic Sea stocks:

- Important to raise the issue related to the separate TAC for whiting 7d from whiting 7b-k.
- Choke risks will be possibly addressed for sole following the benchmark in preparation by ICES.
- Participants agreed to keep the choke risk high for plaice 7fg despite the survival exemption in place, because the existing TAC does not match the amount of unavoidable catches.
- Add reference to the impact of recreational fisheries in relation to pollack.

West of Scotland:

- Choke risk for haddock 6a has decreased to low, because the TAC was set at a considerably higher level than previous years.
- Participants pointed out that ling is complex to manage. There mostly aren't fisheries targeting this stock, therefore it is mainly a bycatch issue.
- Anais Mourtada will come back to the Secretariat with a comment on the exemption for silver smelt.

Channel:

- Choke risk for whiting in 7d has decreased to low due to the increase in the TAC and the exemption in place.
- It was pointed out that, in preparation for TAC alignment, while the TAC is still there for plaice 7d,e, the fishing opportunities regulation includes footnotes indicating maximum catches for 7d and 7e.

Irish Sea:

- For both cod and whiting, highlight the need for improving discard reporting.
- The Secretariat will check minutes from previous meetings to confirm comments on haddock regarding the need for an exemption.
- Choke risks will be possibly addressed for sole following the benchmark in preparation by ICES.

The Chair added that it is important to include brill, turbot and lemon sole to the choke analysis, considering the TAC alignment and the implications this will have. Choke risk for lemon sole is likely to be high, as it is very difficult to avoid lemon sole below 28cm.

The Chair also pointed out that, considering the period of the year when this advice will be released, this work should be addressed to NWW Member States to feed their work on the Discard Plan and



point out difficulties remaining with chokes and exemptions.

ACTION: Secretariat to update choke traffic light spreadsheet and advice paper and share with FG members for review.

4. Action points and closure of the meeting

1	The Focus Group will continue following issues related to the implementation of the new Control Regulation, the upcoming evaluation of the Landing Obligation, the evaluation of the Technical Measures Regulation and the development of Joint Recommendations on the new Discard Plan by the NWW MS.
2	The issues raised in the NWWAC letter to the COM on the input provided to the UK discard consultation and the Commission's response will be followed up in the upcoming Inter-AC Brexit Forum meeting on 5 February.
3	Secretariat to update choke traffic light spreadsheet and advice paper and share with FG members for review.

5. Participants list

Name	Organisation
Emiel Brouckaert (Chair)	Rederscentrale
John Lynch	IS&EFPO
Mo Mathies	NWWAC
Anais Mourtada	CNPMEM
Aodh O'Donnell	IFPO
Mikel Ortiz	OPP LUGO
Irene Prieto	OPPF-4
Dominic Rihan	BIM
Matilde Vallerani	NWWAC