

Skate and Ray Management Options Recommendations by STECF Working Group

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Terms of Reference

- ▶ 1. To consider the appropriateness of the current EU and UK approaches in terms of ensuring the sustainable exploitation and conservation of all skates and rays species falling under the SRX group TACs.
- ▶ 2. To consider the appropriateness of using single species sub-TACs as an alternative to the current SRX group TACs.
- ▶ 3. To consider the possibility of developing bespoke management plans as a replacement to SRX group TACs.
- ▶ 4. To consider progress made in underpinning the exemption to the landing obligation and next steps, by species and by gears, by assessing catch data, discard survival rates, methods for improving avoidance, selectivity and survival.
- ▶ 5. To consider transparent criteria to classify skate and ray species as prohibited species.



Tor 1 and 2

Generic TACs

- ▶ Used in all Ecoregions
- ▶ Brexit issue
 - ▶ EU - Takes average of advice for relevant stocks
 - ▶ UK - Sums up advice for all stocks
- ▶ Pros and cons to both methods.
- ▶ Not a million miles apart in total, but how do they affect individual stocks?

Complicated

- ▶ Within ecoregion stocks e.g North Sea
- ▶ Straddling stocks e.g. rjn.27.678abd, rjh.27.4a6
- ▶ Advice based on previous TACs rather than on landings or advice
- ▶ ICES system esp. Cat 5 stocks

Decision

- ▶ UK method more conservation minded.
- ▶ Better followed 'spirit' of the advice
- ▶ Method used in December negotiations.

ICES System

- ▶ Category 1 - Full assessment, reference points, forecast - No skate or ray stock
- ▶ Category 2- Full assessment, reference points, partial forecast. 3 - Cuckoo ray in 678abd, undulate stocks
- ▶ Category 3 - Trends based assessment, proxy reference points. Multiple stocks
- ▶ Category 4 - Partial assessment ,bycatch species only - no skate or ray stocks
- ▶ Category 5 - No assessment, Only catch data available. Multiple stocks
- ▶ Category 6 - No assessment. Limited data available. Some stocks, mainly already protected.

ICES system

- ▶ ICES Category 5 advice inevitably leads to zero catch advice.
 - ▶ Assessed management plan can override this OR
 - ▶ More data to improve stock assessment

Alternative approaches to Generic TAC

- ▶ Use of different splitting methods
 - ▶ Where landings come from rather than previous TACs
- ▶ Separating Category 3 stocks from Category 5 and 6 as an interim step.
- ▶ Simulations based on different stock sizes

Tor 3 -Management Plans

- ▶ Theoretical plans - what could they include?
- ▶ What has been proposed in the past?
- ▶ Who needs to be involved?
- ▶ Include in EU-multiannual plans (EU - MAP) and build on previous work/projects

ToR 4 - consider progress made in underpinning the exemption to the landing obligation and next steps, by species and by gears, by assessing catch data, discard survival rates, methods for improving avoidance, selectivity and survival.

- ▶ Didn't look at catch data.
- ▶ Lots of progress everywhere else since last assessed
- ▶ In particular - Lot of work done on survivability in last few years.
 - ▶ Survivability estimates now available for almost all species.
 - ▶ Generally 'high', some exceptions.
- ▶ Some work complete on each of other topics. North Sea particularly well covered.

- ▶ Better explained by others today.

ToR 5. - To consider transparent criteria to classify skate and ray species as prohibited species.

- ▶ Examined in detail. Long look at how the Prohibited Species List has been used in the past.
- ▶ Nobody happy with it!
- ▶ Currently highly relevant due to new ICES advice.
- ▶ Difficult to amend due to being part of the Technical Measures legislation.
- ▶ Overcome by events - Spurdog

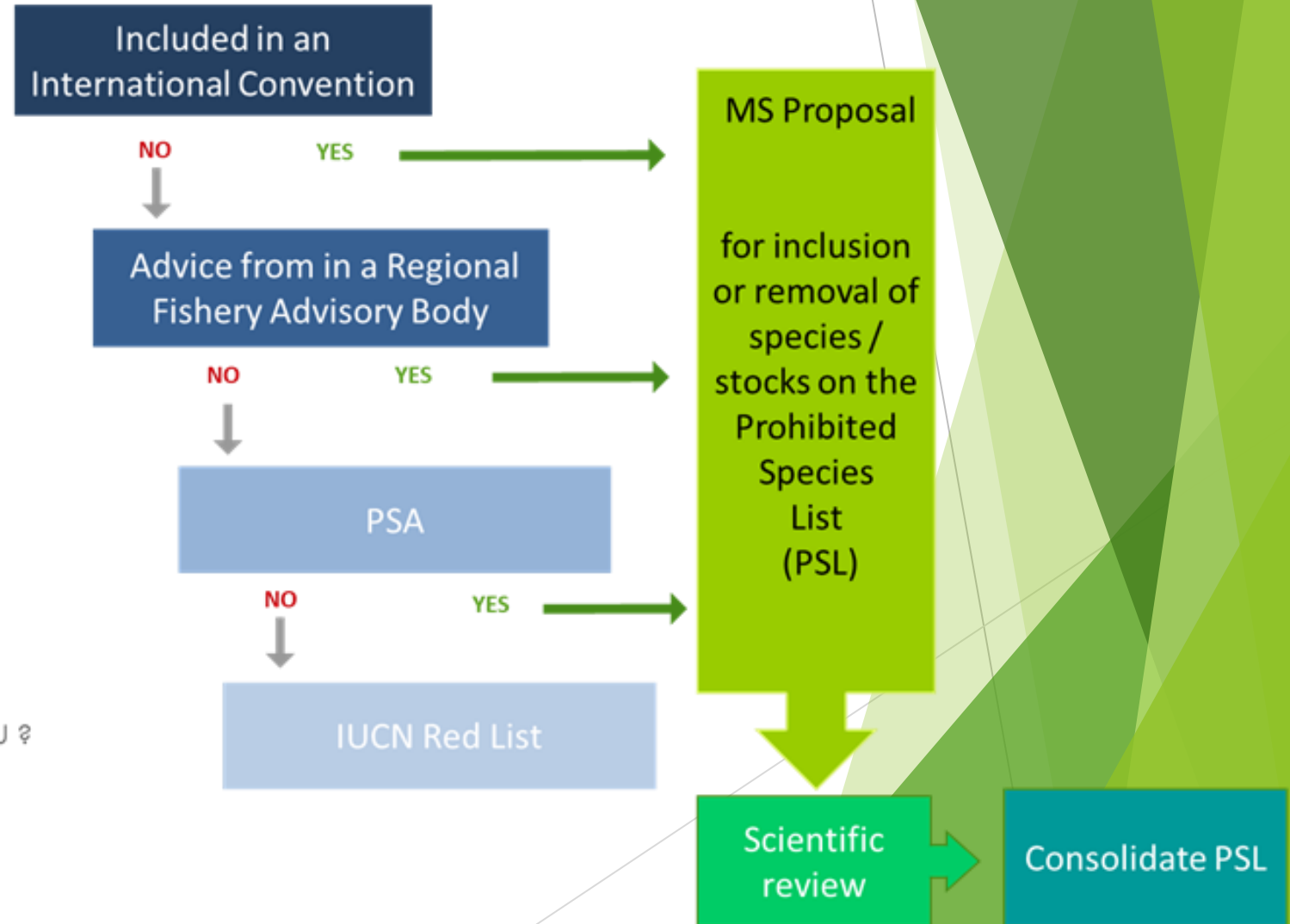
Decision Tree

Species subject to a ban, prohibition or regulation which stipulates that the fish should be returned to the sea unharmed from : OSPAR, HELCOM, Barcelona, Cartagena, Washington, Bonn, Abidjan, Nairobi or any other.

Species subject to a 0 TAC advice, an advice of reducing the catches to lowest possible level close the fishery, to prohibit directed fisheries, to reduce the fishery to the lowest possible level, or similar advice from a RFMO, even where such advice is given on a data-limited basis.

Species listed as high risk in Productivity Sensitivity Analysis (PSA) peer reviewed publications

Species listed in Red List IUCN as EX, CR, EN and VU ?



Conclusions relevant for today

- ▶ Switch to single-stock advice, over next 2-3 years.
- ▶ Some disagreement at higher level

ToR 3. Management plans

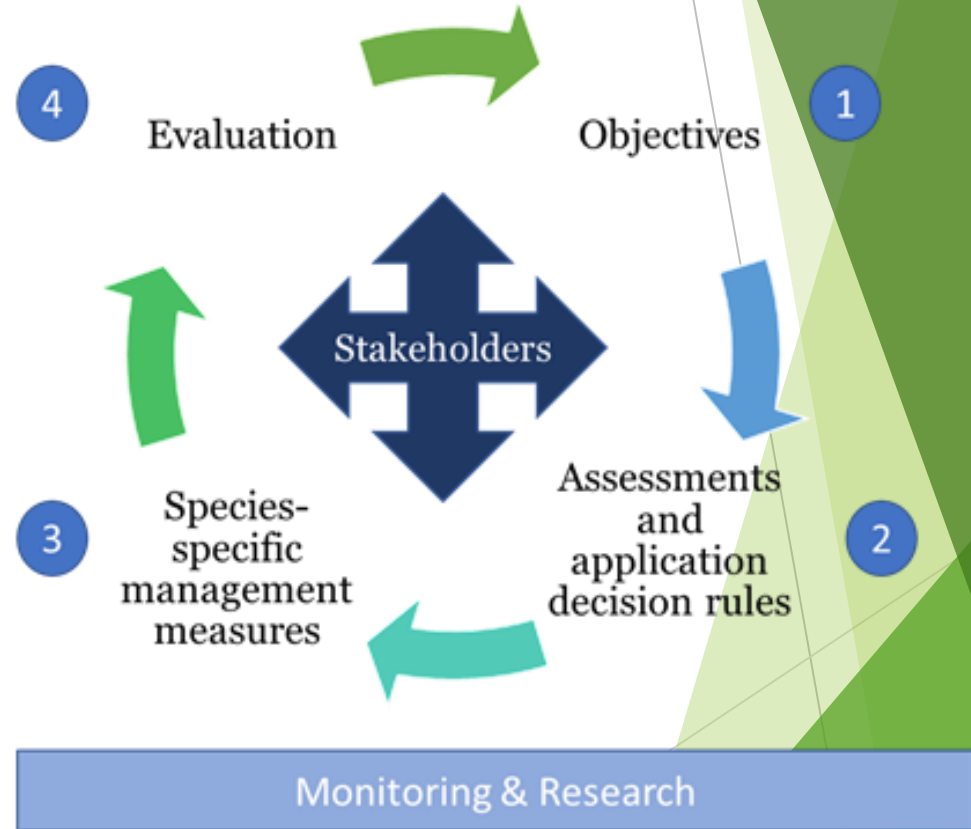
Ongoing changes

- ▶ ICES changing assessment methods
 - ▶ Cuckoo and undulate rays 'upgraded' in 2022
 - ▶ New Category 2 advice in 2023
- ▶ New methods for Category 3 stocks
- ▶ Changing pictures for stocks, and changes in scale for advice.

Stakeholder meetings

- ▶ Science is only part of the process
- ▶ Practicalities
- ▶ Alternative management measures
- ▶ Closed areas/seasons
- ▶ Minimum/maximum landings sizes
- ▶ Gear/Effort restrictions
- ▶ Restrictions work, but are hard to stomach

Specific bespoke management plan for skates and rays



Roadmap

- ▶ First step is to set initial single TACs for Category 2 stocks for 2025. Minimum first step, but achievable.
- ▶ Stakeholder meetings
- ▶ Scientific meetings
- ▶ Multinational involvement - EU/UK/Norway etc.
- ▶ Combine with alternative management measures (ToR4 - Management plans) where appropriate

- ▶ Don't let it stall this time! Personally involved since 2010.

Thanks!

- ▶ Questions now, or questions over coffee.