

Report to the NWWRAC Executive Committee of the meeting of Working Group 3 Channel ICES Areas 7d and 7e, held in Paris on Friday 3rd November 2006:

1. **Regarding ICES advice for TACs and Quotas for 2007:**
2. **Plaice 7d:** WG3 urges that, unless ICES advice can be given unequivocally then the Commission should propose a TAC that is neither reduced nor based on average catches. There are implications of potential social and economic damage to fishing communities with no obvious benefit accruing to the stock involved.
Plaice 7e: Interim measures imposed for the benefit of 7e sole in 2005 and 2006 and the proposed long-term arrangements from 2007 for that stock have been providing and will continue to provide for 7e Plaice the necessary constraints on Fishing Mortality leading to improved Biomass. The combined TAC 7d,e Plaice for 2007 should be no lower than for 2006.
Sole 7d: The response of WG3 to the Executive Committee is to support the advised TAC for 2007.
Sole 7e: A long-term management plan (MAMP) for this stock is supported. Its practical application in and beyond 2007 should be based on the interim effort limitation arrangements established in the Annex to the TAC and Quota Regulation for 2005 and 2006, with the caveat that métiers maintaining a lower than 5% bycatch of 7e sole should continue to be excluded. Its long-term target should be a Fishing Mortality corresponding to Maximum Sustainable Yield, $F_{max}=0.27$.
7b-k Cod: The fishing fleets based in ICES Areas 7d and 7e take Cod only as a small untargeted bycatch of other operations in a mixed demersal fishery. Any vessels, whatever gear type they use, that operate in Area 7d and continue to take less than 5% Cod in their catches should be excluded from the provisions of the North Sea Cod Recovery Plans/ Zones. WG3 supports the response to the Executive Committee of WG2 (Celtic Sea) in relation to Cod7e-k, the Trevoise Box and its associated measures.

Regarding the 7e Sole long-term Management Plan (MAMP):

The WG3 provides the Executive Committee with this revised Opinion for consideration and submission to the Commission:

1. The NWWRAC, in considering the need to establish a MAMP for the sustainable exploitation of the stock of sole in the Western Channel, proposes a target Fishing Mortality of $F_{0.27}$. This target is consistent with the achievement of high long-term yield and provides low risk of depleting the Biomass.
2. The NWWRAC remains concerned that excessive caution might be unnecessarily damaging to the fleets in the western Channel where there is a mixed fishery. At very low Fishing Mortality target levels the fleets might not be operating optimally or to maximum sustainable yield. The target Fishing Mortality adopted in the MAMP should therefore be the highest possible that will achieve the objectives of the plan and provide sustainable economic, environmental and social conditions as specified in the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.
3. The practical application of the MAMP for 7e sole in and beyond 2007 should be based on the interim arrangements established in the Annexes to the Quota Regulation for 2005 and 2006, with the caveat that métiers maintaining a lower than 5% bycatch of 7e sole should be excluded.
4. Where the MAMP requires effort reports from Member States, those reports should only be required for the effort deployed by the fleets and gears specified in the relevant Annex to the TAC and Quota Regulation.
5. By way of derogation from Article 5(2) of Commission Regulation (EEC) 2807/83... the permitted margin of tolerance when estimating quantities retained on board of 7e sole should be 10% of the logbook figure. This lower percentage should apply only to the 7e sole and not to other species taken.
6. Where weighing of landings is required by the MAMP the term "scales authorised by the Member State" should be used.
7. Where the MAMP requires the skipper of a fishing vessel to provide assistance to inspectors there should be due regard paid to the safety of the vessel and its crew.
8. The NWWRAC asks the Commission to acknowledge the contribution to date of the fishing industry in all involved Member States to secure the future sustainability of this stock. The measures already taken in 2005 and 2006 to reduce fishing effort and to remove surplus capacity from the fleets have had a significant cumulative and beneficial effect on this Sole stock and on 7e Plaice.

Regarding the Conference on Scalping held in London on 10th October:

WG3 provides to the Executive Committee the following advice:

9. Requests that the NWWRAC commissions a seasonal and spatial study to ascertain in various white-fish fleets of Belgium, France, Ireland and the UK, the levels of by-catch of scallops taken.
10. Requests the NWWRAC to co-ordinate trials on scallop ring sizes and to examine the pros and cons of harmonisation across the EU.
11. Requests the NWWRAC to initiate a study of the French proposal to close seasonally Area 7d and parts of area 7e to scalloping, to determine the likely impacts, costs and benefits of such a proposal on the fleets affected and the stocks of scallops involved.
12. Requests the NWWRAC to consider the questions arising from the practice of soaking scallops prior to sale and to determine whether this is a matter for the RAC or for some other forum.

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