

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS

Resources and relations with stakeholders

Interinstitutional relations and dialogue with the sector, programming and evaluation

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FIFTH RACs COORDINATION MEETING

Brussels, 11 December 2007

DEBRIEFING

1. ON ON-GOING CONSULTATIONS AND FOLLOW UP OF ADVICE

In 2007 the RACs sent more than 60 letters of advice to the Commission, a considerable increase in comparison to previous years. Six RACs are now operating and the Mediterranean RAC is likely to be set up in the spring. The Commission launched 9 consultations in 2007 and respond to 48 letters of advice within less than 3 months. Some replies are still in progress.

Regarding impact assessments, the Commission places great emphasis on stakeholder consultation. This is usually limited to RACs and ACFA, but the Commission can also opt for public consultation on the Internet.

One RAC sent its advice to M. Barroso. The Commission advised RACs to address their recommendations to M. Fotiadis to avoid any loss of time due to administrative procedures relating to the handling of the President's correspondence.

The RACs expressed satisfaction with their relations with the Commission and acknowledged the effort made by the Commission to respond to their requests. They admitted that correspondence between the Commission and the RACs had increased and that procedures had improved.

However, some points of criticism were raised.

The Pelagic RAC noted that, once scientific advice had become available, there was often no time for the RACs to submit recommendations to the Commission, as the Commission tended to act on the advice immediately. It therefore insisted on the establishment of a mechanism by which discussions between RACs and the Commission would be ensured before the Commission started interacting with others. The Pelagic RAC also complained that its recommendations were often unsatisfactorily reflected in the Commission's work, and pointed to advice it had given on herring and horse mackerel.

The NWWRAC and the BSRAC noted that different rules applied to the RACs and to the Commission. The Commission is entitled to a period of three months, within which it

must respond to the RACs, whereas the RACs are often requested to respond to the Commission within a month or sometimes even less. They insisted that the same delay should apply to the RACs as to the Commission. A minimum of 2 months is needed in order to translate Commission documents and consult members.

The NSRAC remarked that inter-RAC coordination meetings should no longer be scheduled for December, since Chairmen were often unable to attend meetings then.

Responding to the Pelagic, the NWW and BS RAC concerns, the Commission underlined the logistical problem behind it and highlighted the difficulty of striking the right balance. On one hand, complete scientific advice is needed to conduct comprehensive consultations; on the other hand, once the scientific advice becomes available, the Commission is often required to act quickly, leaving no room for a further consultation. The Commission undertook to try and make progress on this front. In 2008, most of the scientific advice will be available before the summer.

Responding to the Pelagic RAC's dissatisfaction with the manner in which their advice was taken into account, the Commission explained that it had defended the RAC's advice on herring in its negotiations with Norway, but that the agreement with Norway was a compromise, so that the advice could thus not entirely be reflected in the agreement. Regarding horse mackerel, the Commission explained that TAC proposals would normally only be based on management plans once such plans had been agreed, and it was therefore not in a position to base its proposal for 2008 on the management plan proposed by the Pelagic RAC.

The Commission justified setting the inter-RAC meeting for December (no available dates in November) and declared that it planned to hold the 2008 Inter-RAC meetings for late spring and late October.

2. RELATIONS WITH ICES AND STECF

The RACs described their relations with ICES and STECF. Whereas they admitted that their relations with ICES had significantly improved, they found that they were still in a learning process with the STECF.

The Pelagic RAC requested to have direct access to ICES, allowing them to address their own requests to ICES under the Commission's MoU with ICES, rather than having to go through the Commission. This call for direct access was supported by the NWWRAC, which explained that it had put forward a request to ICES (via the Commission) on cod closures but had never received a direct response. Instead it had discovered the information on the ICES website. The NWWRAC doubted that this situation would have arisen, if it had had direct access to ICES. The BSRAC asked for a more systematic consultation of RACs by the Commission, before the Commission put forward its requests to ICES.

The Commission clarified that it was up to the RACs and ICES to make any arrangements they wanted, including requests for advice, as long as these arrangements did not involve the Commission. However, as far as requests financed under the Commission's MoU with ICES are concerned, it would be illegal to grant direct access to the RACs because that would enable RACs to make financial commitments on behalf of the Commission. The

Commission furthermore reserved its right to utilise scarce resources of expertise as efficiently as possible by ensuring that requests from RACs, financed by the Commission, did not duplicate other work requested by the Commission. There was no intention of censorship, and the Commission was sure that the RACs would agree that there had indeed been no cases of censorship. The Commission assured the meeting that it would ensure that ICES' responses would be passed on to the RACs immediately. Furthermore the Commission noted that all ICES advice was available on the ICES website and that consulting the website on a regular basis would ensure that all RACs were up to date with ICES advice.

3. COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME AND PRIORITIES FOR 2008

The Commission outlined its two priorities: a new strategy for European aquaculture and improvement of control and enforcement. With regards to control and enforcement, it explained that, in response to the Court of Auditor's criticism, a new legislative package on control and enforcement was anticipated for October 2008, with a view to strengthening and simplifying the current control and enforcement system. This would necessitate an impact assessment, including stakeholder consultation.

Furthermore, the Commission indicated some additional items in its work programme for 2008:

- Communication on Ecosystem Approach to fisheries management
- Regulation on technical measures
- Cod recovery plan
- Data Collection
- Shark Action Plan
- Discards
- Deep sea fisheries
- Hake, Salmon and Horse Mackerel long-term management plans
- Policy statement for 2009 and TACs & Quotas
- ...

NSRAC and NWWRAC asked for a specific meeting with the Commission on technical measures if no further consultation is to take place.

The Horse Mackerel long-term management plan is foreseen for the 4th quarter of 2008. The Pelagic RAC considered this to be too late and requested adoption in the first part of 2008, so that it can be taken into account in the allocation of TACs and quotas for 2009. The Commission took note of this.

BSRAC and NSRAC would like to be involved in the preparation of the report to the European Parliament on incidental catches of cetaceans.

The BSRAC asked for the 2009 Policy statement to be made available earlier than June 2008.

4. RACs' WORK PROGRAMMES AND PRIORITIES FOR 2008

The LDRAC working groups will soon discuss their work programme for 2008. LDRAC expects close cooperation with the Commission on RFO issues and bilateral agreements.

The NSRAC plans a conference on control with the Scottish Executive and CFCA, and a joint workshop with the NWWRAC on offshore MPAs for March. All RACs are invited to participate in the joint workshop, provided they contribute financially.

The Pelagic RAC intends to improve data on mackerel and to develop management plans for most other pelagic species.

The Executive Committee of the BSRAC will meet in January and February and the General Assembly in February. A seminar is being held in January on Rights-Based Management.

The current work programme of the SWWRAC ends in April. Thereafter, it will focus on a management plan for anchovy, the decrease of discards, and the harmonisation of technical measures and effort regulation.

In addition, the NWWRAC anticipates workshops, working groups and meetings on cod avoidance plans, stock assessment quality, a hake management plan and deep-water species.

5. HOW TO IMPROVE COORDINATION OF MEETINGS INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS

The Commission remarked that it was essential to rationalise the work by improving the coordination of RAC and stakeholder meetings and that, to this end, a coordination system should be established. It invited the RACs to share their ideas and suggestions.

The RACs proposed setting up an interactive online calendar, which would show all the meetings of the RFOs, Fisheries Council, RACs and ACFA. This calendar could be modified by all the relevant parties, which would use a password for this purpose. It was noted that such a calendar had already been developed by M. Goujon, who was ready to share it.

It was also suggested "RAC weeks" be organised, in which the RAC meetings would be concentrated.

The Commission welcomed the ideas and encouraged the RACs to think further about organising "RAC weeks". The Commission undertook to explore the calendar idea but doubted that it would be possible to take over the already existing calendar due to the infringement of IP-rights.

6. RACS REVIEW AND ACFA EVALUATION – STATE OF PLAY

The Working Group was informed about the Commission's evaluation of ACFA. The evaluation will be carried out by a consultancy, COWI, for a period of six months from the end of November on. This evaluation will answer a series of questions regarding the effectiveness, efficiency, representativeness, structure and financing of ACFA, as well as

examining the interaction between ACFA and RACs and the quality and value of the advice given by ACFA. For this reason, ACFA members will be approached by the consultancy between January and March. The results of the study will be presented to ACFA members and discussed in the Working Groups, then reviewed and evaluated by the Commission. It is hoped that the assessment will be completed by the plenary in June.

Simultaneously, the RACs are also being reviewed. The Commission's report will be discussed at the April Council of Ministers.


The NSRAC asked whether it would be possible to see this report, while the BSRAC wondered whether it could receive a list of the outcomes and conclusions for its General Assembly meeting at the end of February. The Commission confirmed that the RACs could to review RAC report once it was published but doubted that a list of outcomes and conclusions could be made available for the end of February.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

NSRAC and NWWRAC asked for a meeting with the Commission at the beginning of 2008 to discuss the 8% margin of tolerance between logbook entry and landing declaration. They proposed to involve the CFCA.

The RACs were not satisfied with the Commission's answers regarding chairmen's fees. They accepted that these expenses would no longer be eligible for Community co-financing, but they did not understand why they should ask Member States to pay these fees. RACs believe that membership fees could be used to finance the chairmen's fees. The issue will be presented to executive committees but RACs asked for a new meeting with the Commission and RACs vice-chairmen at the beginning of 2008.

North Sea RAC is discussing the transfer of competence to the Pelagic RAC as regards Norway pout and sandeel stocks in the North Sea.


VIALLOON Isabelle

Cc: Mr. Fotiadis, Mr. Mastracchio, Mr. Priebe, Mr. Spencer, Mr. Deben, Mr. Degnbol, Mr. Penas, Mr. Hagström, Mr. Donatella, Mr. Rambaud, Ms. Laine, Mr. Nolan, Mr. Alexandrou, Ms. Schmidt, Mr. Patterson, Mr. Papaioannou, Ms. Ruiz Monroy, Ms. Darmanin, Ms. Kirchner.

List of participants
Coordination Meeting with the RACs
December 11, 2007 - Brussels

<i>PARTICIPANTS</i>		
Baltic RAC	Tobias KERRN-JESPERSEN	Secretariat
	Ewa MILEWSKA	
Long-Distance RAC	Antonio CABRAL	Chairman
	Marta de LUCAS	Secretariat
Pelagic RAC	Aukje COERS	Secretariat
	Gerard van BALSFOORT	
South Western Waters RAC	Benoît GUERIN	Secretariat
North Sea RAC	Ann BELL	Secretariat
	Michael ANDERSEN	
North Western Waters RAC	Patricia COMISKEY	Secretariat
<i>OBSERVERS</i>		
<i>North Western Waters RAC</i>	Alexandre RODRIGUEZ	Secretariat
<i>Mediterranean RAC</i>	Francesca MARTÍNEZ	Secretariat

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