

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council
Working Group 1 – West of Scotland (ICES Vb and VI)

Brussels, Wednesday 31st October 2007

15:15 h-17:30 h

SUMMARY REPORT

1) The report of the last meeting of WG1 (12/6/07, Belfast) was adopted.

2) Review of ICES Advice for 2007 for Vla&b – Martin Pastoors

Martin Pastoors of ICES presented scientific summaries for each major stock of importance . The working group made the following recommendations in relation to the advice.

- West of Scotland Cod in Vla&b

ICES advice is for a zero catch.

Recommendation- agreed that there is a roll over on the TAC at 2007 levels on the basis that one year cod avoidance plans will be developed in VIb as a pilot project with the central objective of reducing overall cod mortality.

- Haddock in Vla&b

ICES advice for a TAC of <4,200T.

Recommendation- that the same proportional relationship between catches and TAC that was used to determine the TAC for 2007 is used to set the TAC for 2008.

- Rockall Haddock, ICES advice for a TAC <10,600T.

Recommendation- that NEAFC endeavour to achieve a robust international management plan that includes Russia.

- Northern Shelf Anglerfish

ICES advice for no increase in effort and a rollover of management measures.

Recommendation- ongoing work on stock assessment noted, agreement with ICES advice.

- Saithe in VI

ICES advice to limit landings to 15,000t.

Recommendation- agreement with ICES scientific assessment and advice.

- Whiting in Vla

ICES advice based on recent three year average of landings.

Recommendation- Advice given on an inadequate basis due to deficiencies in data particularly regarding discarding. Additional science should be sought working with industry. Agreed some improvements in selectivity could address discard levels.

- Megrim in VI

ICES advice based on recent three year average of landings.

Recommendation - advice given on an inadequate basis due to deficiencies in data. Additional science should be sought working with industry.

3) Blue Ling Closures: draft paper and proposed way forward

Discussion took place on the Commission's proposed Blue Ling closure. While it was felt that the closure proposal needed revision there was no consensus on an exact alternative proposal at this stage.

Recommendation – Commission to be advised that the timescale for consultation is too short and that rushed consideration of measures could lead to poor design and unintended consequences.

4) Cod Avoidance Plans

The idea of taking forward a one year pilot scheme for a Cod Avoidance Plan in VIb was discussed, informed by the paper tabled by Norman Graham. There was a consensus on the need to address total removals and to identify short management periods, a representative reference fleet for observation, a fixed tonnage rather than a percentage bycatch and effective triggers and penalties. Concern was voiced by Spanish members about the development of plans alongside the Scottish model of 'real time closures', which they do not support, but they continue to support the main elements of the Cod Avoidance Plan concept. The working group noted encouragement given by the Commission to develop the concept further.

Recommendation- a focus group is established early in the New Year to develop the detail needed to take forward a pilot scheme. Dominic Rihan was tasked with compiling a first draft of plan requirements.

5) Discarding Project

Tom Catchpole (CEFAS) outlined a project to create a framework that can be used by RACS to establish their own discarding pilots. There maybe a linkage into the proposed cod avoidance plan pilot.

Recommendation- RAC secretariat to encourage contributions from members to identify fisheries with substantial gaps in discard data. Discard data issues should be discussed at the joint workshop with ICES proposed by Working Group 2.

6) AOB

Agenda of next meeting will include an item on progress towards achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield in the West of Scotland area with Ian Napier.