

North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council
Report of Working Group 4
30/10/2007

Introduction

The Chairman Lorcan Ó Cinneide welcomed the members. Members were asked to consider both the agenda for this meeting and the report of the last meeting. Both were adopted without comment.

Review of ICES Advice 2007 for VIIa (Irish Sea)

Martin Pastoors presented the ICES advice for VIIa the presentation of Martins advice is available on the website, in summary the advice can be summarized as:

Stock	SSB	F
Cod in VIIa	Reduced	Non Sustainable
Haddock in VIIa	Unknown	Unknown
Plaice in VIIa	Full	Sustainable
Sole in VIIa	Reduced	Non sustainable
Whiting in VIIa	Unknown	Unknown

The Nephrops advice given for the Irish Sea is based on last years assessment and advice is for no increase in effort based on 2003-2005 levels.

Comments based on the presentation:

- Overall it was agreed that the data available and assessments of stocks in the Irish Sea was unsatisfactory and that there was a real and urgent need to address this. The assessments of the status of Cod, Haddock and Whiting were not good. The Nephrops and Plaice stocks were in a better state but were still bedevilled by uncertainty.
- There was general disappointment that improvements in data collection in the Irish Sea had not translated into better quality of analysis, but it was recognised that there had been delays in the Irish Sea Data enhancement programme and as such outputs are not yet available to feed into the assessments.
- There was a lengthy discussion on what else was needed to improve data available for the Irish Sea:
 - One suggestion was to implement egg and larva surveys to improve information on all juvenile species in the Irish Sea. The meeting was informed by Robert Scott of CEFAS that DEFRA was funding a juvenile Plaice survey in the Irish Sea and as part of this other species would be surveyed including cod. This should ensure better data into the assessments
 - Another suggestion was to encourage the use of Fishermens knowledge, and if possible their diaries, to compare their information with the information available to the assessments. This information could be made available for retrospective years so that assessments could be retuned if and where necessary. Filling serious historical gaps in knowledge is a priority.
 - It was also suggested that rates of discarding should be considered for the fleets in the Irish Sea. It was acknowledged that there was adequate work done in this area to improve selectivity of the fleets via increase mesh sizes or inclusion of escapement panel and that a more concerted effort should be put in by the industry to take up these selective gears.
 - A final suggestion was for a call for the resumption of port sampling in the relevant member States and an improvement in control and enforcement in the fisheries in the Irish Sea.

It was agreed that the suggestions to improve data and selectivity of fisheries in the Irish Sea would be put forward to the Executive Committee for discussion.

Queenie Fishery

Tom Bryan Brown reiterated his request that this working group recommend that the Executive Committee urge the Commission to remove the Manx Queenie fishery from the effort limitations of the cod recovery programme.

Lorcan Ó Cinnéide pointed out that this proposal was included in the recommendations of the NWWRAC response on the Commission Non-paper on Cod recovery which is due to be reviewed next year. However he proposed that in the interim of this review, Tom provide an evidence based proposal to the Executive Committee for endorsement at the forthcoming meeting on the 22nd of November which could then be escalated to the EU Commission for consideration in this round of TAC and quota negotiations.

It was agreed that Tom Bryan Brown would submit a summary proposal for consideration at the executive Committee meeting on the 22nd of November.

Irish Sea Discarding Project

Tom Catchpole of CEFAS gave an update on the Irish Sea discarding project on behalf of Norman Graham of the Irish Marine Institute. (Presentation available on website). The project is proceeding and the number of boats taking part in the programme is currently at 8. Tom informed the meeting that the limited participation is intentional in order to identify any problems that may exist and to train crew appropriately in collecting the sample data. So far a number of problems have arisen, but are being dealt with. Regarding progress of the project, the UK and Irish administration have indicated a committed to continue the project into 2008 and 2009 and an additional 2 staff are being recruited into the project. Furthermore more vessels are expressing their interest in taking part of the programme. The whitefish and Nephrops vessels which are currently taking part get an additional 6 and 12 days fishing effort respectively.

Comments based on the presentation:

Members felt that this was a very positive report on a ground breaking initiative which has significance beyond itself. The members also welcomed the fact that it was to be supported by the Member States for at least the next 2 years.

Specific Comments were made on the following:

- **Simplification of the questionnaire:**
Regarding the questionnaire for this project it was felt that there was too much data sought on information that could be gathered elsewhere i.e. weather conditions, wind conditions etc. It was recommended that the questionnaires be simplified to gather only data which could not be easily sourced from elsewhere.
- **Gears:**
Regarding gears used, it was recommended that the programme could be expanded to include other gears such as beam trawls in future.
- **Input of data into the ICES Assessments:**
Regarding the input of data from this project into the ICES process, it was noted that the NWWRAC members were not clear as to when or if ICES would incorporate this data into the assessment process. Tom agreed to clarify both of these points (i.e. if the data will be incorporated and when) with Norman Graham and to revert to this working group.
- **Managing Expectations:**
Furthermore it was recognised that the RACs had a job to do in managing expectation of the industry and acknowledged that a short time series of data is often not sufficient for robust stock estimates.

- **Sharing of data:**
The sharing of data and information between scientists and industry needs to become an integral part of fisheries management. It was recognised that data shared by the industry in the past has been used against them by other government agencies; there is a need to overcome this problem.
- **Future Self-sampling and industry initiative projects:**
As per the discussion earlier in this meeting, it was agreed that the NWWRAC should encourage improved data collection. In addition it was recommended that future self-sampling projects and/or industry science partnerships projects should be developed to improve the data voids that were being noted by ICES. To achieve this ICES, the RACs and Member States would need to work closely together to ensure that projects being developed are done so in a manner which promotes the collection of relevant and compatible data for the assessments. The development of broad guidelines on how to produce work that would be of benefit to ICES would be a very useful tool for RACs and Member States.

It was agreed that some form of workshop should be established between the RACs and ICES to consider the current data voids and what needs to be done to fill these gaps.

Close of Meeting:

Lorcan thanked the members for attending and in particular thanked Martin Pastoors, Robert Scott and Tom Catchpole for their presentations and input. He agreed to take forward the recommendations made at this meeting to the Executive Committee on the 22nd of November for endorsement.