

MEETING REPORT

North West Waters Regional Advisory Council

Focus Group Meeting on CFP Reform

CNPMEM – Paris, Friday 10th July 2009

Chairman: Lorcan O’Cinnéide

Rapporteur: Barrie Deas

1. Introductory Remarks

The Chairman outlined the purpose of the meeting, which was to define the elements of a NWWRAC response to the Commission’s Green Paper on CFP reform. The RAC, by virtue of its membership composition, provided a unique vantage point from which to make a distinctive contribution to the debate on CFP reform. Although there could be some dispute about the Commission’s reasoning and its allocation of blame for the shortcomings of the Common Fisheries Policy, there was a broad agreement with its conclusion that in many respects it was a broken system in need of radical reform.

The present meeting was the start of a process that would:

- define the way in which the NWWRAC would arrive at a consensus on CFP reform
- Identify the main areas in which the RAC would provide advice on CFP reform
- Agree a programme of work
- Begin to discuss some of the key issues

2. Main Themes

Although it was suggested that the RAC could simply answer all the questions in the Green Paper, the dominant view was that this could dilute the RACs unique contribution. After extensive discussion, a number of dominant themes emerged as candidates for the RACs main areas of contribution to the debate on CFP reform:

- Policy Objectives: It was agreed that clarity in what the CFP is *for* would be paramount. This discussion would centre on whether environmental/ecosystem objectives should be afforded a privileged position or whether the three pillars of sustainability (environmental, economic and social) provided a surer foundation and guide for policy.
- Fleet Overcapacity: There was agreement that overcapacity was indeed a problem that the CFP had conspicuously failed to address but that the old tired formulae “too many boats chasing too few fish” failed to do justice to the complexity of the issue which had stocks and complex economic dimensions
- Devolution of Management Responsibilities: Within the RAC there was an appetite to move away from the discredited top-down, command and control model of decision making. However, there was little clarity, to date, on the new institutional form that devolved decision making would take. There was also the danger of a good idea spoiled by poor implementation. The RAC could make a distinctive contribution in this area.
- The Future Role of RACs: Although RACs had undoubtedly been one of the breakthrough areas of the 2002 CFP reform, there was a perception that the NWWRAC, despite having a very strong and efficient secretariat, was underperforming in terms of the strength and quality of its advice. This issue should be addressed as well as defining the role of RACs within a reformed decision making structure
- Scientific Advice: The knowledge underpinnings for CFP decisions were critical but it was acknowledged that there were serious deficiencies in the arrangements for the provision of high quality, impartial, scientific advice despite having access to world class expertise. The role of fisheries science within a reformed CFP and new forms of industry/science collaboration should be addressed
- Wider Environmental and Marine Context: The RAC could usefully contribute to the debate on how the CFP should be situated in relation to the EU’s broader environmental agenda and Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Markets: The effective functioning of the market for fish is a critical factor embracing supply chain transparency, compliance, industry reputation and imports. The RAC could make a unique contribution to the development of policy in this sphere
- A strong socio-economic dimension to policy formation was required to complement the biological dimension. The RAC could be in a strong position to contribute to this aspect.
- Long Term Management Plans: The development on long term management plans developed inclusively, as an alternative to short term reactive policies, should be at the heart of the reformed CFP.

This list, although not necessarily exhaustive, would help to guide the RAC in its deliberations to ensure that its advice was not diluted by trying to address every issue raised in the Commission's Green Paper.

3. European Commission

The Chairman welcomed the representative from the Commission and invited her to do a commentary on the meeting so far. The representative of the Commission:

- Stressed that the Commission had high expectations of the RAC's contribution to the debate on a reformed CFP, in recognition of its "special nature" as a group
- Fully understood and valued the advice produced by the RAC especially in the context of striving for consensus
- Identified the central weakness of the CFP as "the extreme abundance of regulation and the complexity of the system". The biggest reason for the complexity is that the system has overseen a decline in many key stocks and 27 countries had tried to respond to that situation by devising common rules. The necessary derogations to make such as system work accounted for much of the complexity.
- Regionalisation was therefore an essential part of the reform; Measures could be designed and tailored to specific fisheries. This approach had huge potential to simplify the CFP and deliver more coherent and effective fisheries policy.

4. Policy Areas: Preliminary Deliberation

Having scoped out the main areas on which the NWWRAC could contribute to the debate on the CFP, the Chairman invited the meeting to begin initial deliberation on some of the key issues identified by the RAC. These preliminary discussions could be built on at future meetings.

Decentralised Decision Making

Alternative models for decentralised CFP decision making should be explored instead of the current over-centralised system of micro-management. It was agreed that all possible alternative models for a reformed CFP decision-making structure should be discussed in more detail both through the interactive forum at the website and at future meetings. It was agreed that one of the key questions would be where in the revised structures RACs would sit.

Fleet Capacity

The meeting began its preliminary discussion on the issue of fleet overcapacity. There was a clear view that although fleet overcapacity had long been a problem for the CFP, the Commission's unqualified and differentiated view as expressed in the Green paper was inadequate, even as a starting point. After extensive discussion, some key elements in an approach to overcapacity emerged:

- There was a lack of clarity in the definitions of overcapacity employed to date
- Economic overcapacity might be a more useful concept than those used to date. There were examples in the pelagic fisheries of fleets whose capacity are well in excess (in terms of GT and KWs) of that necessary to catch their legitimate quotas but because these fleets are profitable, compliant and efficient it makes little sense to consider them in terms of fleet capacity. A more useful definition would focus on obtaining a balance between capacity and access to levels of quota that would allow the vessels to operate profitably.
- Identifying where there is fleet overcapacity in economic terms
- Identify appropriate solutions:
 - Publically funded decommissioning
 - Some form of rights based management with transferable entitlements
 - Some hybrid form of public/private capacity reduction
 - Compatible with a decentralised CFP
- A workable solution that takes into account that stocks can have a greater or lesser carrying capacity depending on environmental conditions
- A means of overcoming the fact that fleets (and overcapacity) are international in scope and operation but capacity solutions generally lie at member state level. In other words, how to make member states take ownership of their share of overcapacity?
- Markets can have a very direct and significant impact on vessel revenue and therefore economic overcapacity. As markets (supply and demand) fluctuate in response to various factors, such as high operational costs, the tariff regime, and the success of resource policies it will be important to avoid an overly simplistic approach.
- An effective approach to overcapacity would:
 - Develop a more sophisticated definition of overcapacity

- Identify areas of overcapacity
- Focus policy on those specific areas where overcapacity is a problem
- Make explicit the assumptions underpinning a structural policy
- Develop a trajectory over time through which structural objectives could be achieved
- Develop an approach based on the “triple helix” involving the administrations, scientists and the fishing industry. This would be necessary for an effective approach

5. Work Programme

The meeting agreed the following elements of a work programme that would deliver coherent and well thought through advice on CFP reform, hopefully on a consensus basis, in a timely manner:

- Members of the RAC should submit any relevant papers on CFP reform that they have produced. These will be circulated electronically and in this way the RAC will act as a clearing house and provide a useful role as an information resource
- The NWWRAC website will establish an area where a dialogue on CFP reform could be held
- The NWWRAC should participate energetically in the proposed CFP reform symposium, provisionally scheduled for 3rd and 4th November, in Edinburgh. The event, by providing a forum for world class experts, fishermen, the European Commission and member states, would raise the quality of the debate and allow the emergence of core themes.
- In the meantime, the RAC should continue to develop its advice on the contents of the reform by identifying and providing advice on the main building blocks of a reformed CFP. A further meeting of the NWWRAC Focus Group on CFP reform would be required before the Edinburgh symposium and one after to define final RAC draft advice.
- All advice on CFP reform would require approval by the Executive Committee

6. Close of the meeting

Meeting ended at 13:00 h

ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

* Chairman: Lorcan O’Cinnéide (IFPO)

* Rapporteur: Barrie Deas (NFFO)

* Members:

- Bertie Armstrong (Scottish Fishermen’s Federation)
- Iwan Ball (WWF)
- Kara Brydson (RSBP Scotland)
- Delphine Ciolek (CNPMEM)
- John Crudden (European Anglers’ Association)
- Caroline Gamblin (CNPMEM)
- Hugo González (ANASOL-ARVI)
- John Hermse (MNWFA)
- Sam Lambourn (NWWRAC Chairman)
- Julien Lamothe (ANOP)
- Jesús Lourido Garcia (Puerto de Celeiro S.A.)
- Joe Maddock (Irish Fishermen’s Organisation)
- Kevin McDonell (West of Scotland FPO)
- Sean O’Donoghue (KFO)
- Gerard O’Flynn (Irish South West FPO)
- Jim Portus (SWFPO)
- Mercedes Rodríguez Moreda (OPP-07-Lugo)
- Delphine Roncin (CRPMEM Pas de Calais-Picardie)
- Jane Sandell (Scottish Fishermen’s Organisation)
- Paul Trebilcock (CFPO)



* In Attendance:

- Kristel Adriaenssens (NWWRAC Secretariat)
- Alain Biseau (IFREMER)
- Fuensanta Candela (European Commission - DG MARE)
- Patricia Comiskey (NWWRAC Secretariat)
- Antonio Flórez (MARM – Spanish Government)
- Olivier Leprêtre (CRPM)
- Colm Lordan (ICES – Marine Institute)
- Alexandre Rodriguez (NWWRAC Secretariat)
- Pieter- Jan Schon (ICES-AFBI)