

## Report of the NWWRAC Executive Committee meeting

15/4/2008  
Schiphol Amsterdam

### 1. Introduction

The chairman Sam Lambourn welcomed members to the meeting and asked them to review the minutes of the last meeting and agenda for this meeting. The minutes of the last meeting were adopted with one change. The agenda for this meeting was adopted with the following two changes:

- Presentation from Harm Koster of the CFCA was moved forward to be dealt with first
- Report structures for the focus groups were added under point 6 on the agenda.

### 2. Report from the Community Fisheries Control Agency

The Chairman welcomed Harm Koster, Executive Director of the Community Fisheries Control Agency to the meeting and asked him to brief members of the NWWRAC on work of the agency to date and plans of the agency for the western waters in the future.

Mr Koster informed the members that similar to the RACs the CFCA was established as a result of the CFP review in 2002. Legislation was put in place to sanction the setting up of the CFCA in 2005 and control work on the ground commenced in January 2007. The primary role of the Community Fisheries Control Agency is to organise coordination and cooperation between national control and inspection activities so that the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) are respected and applied effectively.

Work programmes for both 2007 and 2008 are posted on the CFCA website: [http://ec.europa.eu/cfca/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/cfca/index_en.htm). Mr Koster gave a brief overview of rollout of the work programme in 2008 and in particular the current situation of the joint deployment plans for:

- North Sea, Skagerrak, Kattegat and Eastern Channel
- Baltic Sea
- NAFO
- Blue fin Tuna

Mr Koster also informed the members that the CFCA had assisted the Baltic Sea RAC in setting up a seminar on control and enforcement, which was deemed by the industry as a great success in promoting transparency and understanding of control issues in the Baltic.

He noted that the CFCA had not planned any work thus far in the Western Waters but that the CFCA planned to in 2009. He therefore would welcome feedback from the NWWRAC on priority areas that could be worked on in 2009.

Overall Mr Koster informed the meeting that the CFCA wished to promote and foster a culture of compliance and welcomed feedback from the Industry members on how to make enforcement procedures more understandable, transparent and effective and how to develop a level playing field for the fishing industry so that obligations are observed and everyone in the sector is treated equally, wherever they might be operating.

#### General Discussion

The Chairman thanked Mr Koster and the floor was opened for comments. The following issues were raised and discussed from the floor:

**Inspection Documents:** It was noted that not all Member States provide inspection documents to vessels that are boarded and inspected. It was suggested that in the interest of transparency and fairness, this is something that could be harmonised across the EU.

Mr Koster noted that there were some differences in Member States and Regional Organisations handling of this issue and noted it was something that could be sought to harmonise. He also noted that all of the CFCA inspections were reported on the website.

**Overcapacity:** Spanish representatives noted that many of the current difficulties in fisheries management and control may be attributed to overcapacity of fleets. They noted that some member states were tackling this by providing decommissioning programmes but that Spain had not adequate funding to do this. It was suggested that the CFCA encourage member states to put in place adequate decommissioning programmes which would alleviate some of the compliance issues.

Mr Koster noted that as an independent entity with responsibility for control this was not within the remit of the CFCA and was an issue for the Commission and the Member States.

**Cod recovery in Western Waters:** It was noted that this is an extremely important issue for this RAC and something that should be focused on in the CFCA work programme in 2009. The Cod fishery in the Celtic Sea was used as an example where it was felt that there was a real lack of understanding between Industry, Scientist and the Commission on what was actually happening in this fishery and where it might be useful to implement a joint deployment plan.

Mr Koster indicated that it would be possible to include this as part of the work programme for 2009.

**Haddock fishery in Rockall:** It was recommended that the Rockall area also be considered as part of the CFCA. Fisheries in this area were governed by both the EU and NEAFC and it was felt by EU fishermen that some of the measures imposed to protect juvenile fisheries were not always respected.

Mr Koster agreed that joint work with NEAFC was being proposed for 2009.

**Partnerships:** It was suggested that in order to encourage better co-operation between fisheries and control agencies methods adopted to improve work between industry and scientific agencies could be used. Projects could be encouraged between the industry and the control agencies to consider methods of improved control and transparency, for instance CCTV could be trailed as a possible tool for monitoring and control, projects could be set up to trial e-logbooks, individual discard plans, margin of tolerance etc. A large part of this would be sourcing funding for projects, but this is something that may be considered under EFF.

Mr Koster agreed that this would be an excellent initiative to assist in the development of a culture of compliance.

**Consistency in Regulations:** It was noted that some of the actions that are taken to circumvent regulations is due to lack of consistency in regulations, for instance in some fisheries the minimum landing sizes of the species and mesh sizes are not appropriately correlated. It was also noted that some members transpose various legislation differently and this needed to be addressed.

Mr Koster agreed with this point and noted that it would be useful for RACs to highlight when and where these arise and that steps be taken to encourage the Commission to amend the relevant regulations.

**Margin of Tolerance:** The suggestion to increase the margin of tolerance to 20% was discussed. Industry feels that the current level of 8% is unreasonable and difficult to comply with.

Mr Koster replied that he could not agree with this and cited other countries who had no Margin of Tolerance and could comply. He noted that technology such as onboard weighing machines assisted the industry in these countries to comply with these regulations.

**Catch Composition:** It was noted that catch composition rules generate discards. The CFCA was asked if this was something that had been noted in their work done so far.

Mr Koster noted that all findings and conclusions from the joint deployment plans are published on the website. It is the Commission's remit to amend their regulation based on the outcome of these findings/reports.

At the end of the debate The Chairman thanked Mr Koster for attending the meeting and recommended that the NWWRAC produce a paper for the CFCA of priority fisheries that should be tackled in 2009.

#### **Action**

Secretariat to work with members of the NWWRAC members to collate priority areas of work to send to the CFCA by the end of June.

### **3. Report on the Workshop on Control and Response to the Commission Consultation Document.**

Two of the representatives, Gerard O'Flynn and Konstantinos Kalamantis who attended this meeting on behalf of the NWWRAC on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April updated the meeting on its outcome. Both felt it was a useful meeting and encouraged members to view the presentations posted on the NWWRAC website. One issue that arose that attendees were concerned about was the issue of quota swaps which the Commission raised as a point of concern. However it was felt by the industry representatives that this was a necessity to retain some flexibility in the TAC and quota system. Another issue that was widely debated was the margin of tolerance. These are issues that the NWWRAC need to respond in.

Regarding the Commission consultation document, it was felt that it was not stakeholder focused, nor did it adequately tackle the culture of compliance issue, it was felt that the NWWRAC should work to respond to this consultation document within the given deadline. It was agreed that those representatives who attended the meeting should draft a joint response document to be sent to the Executive Committee for sign off.

#### **Action**

The three representatives who attended the meeting will work together to draft a response to the Commission consultation. Members of the NWWRAC will be encouraged to send comments via the secretariat from this document. The draft document will be circulated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April for comment and responses before the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May.

### **4. Report from the Working Groups**

The Chairman invited each of the Working Group Chairs to make a report of the outcome of discussions and actions from working groups held in Manchester on the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> of March 2008. The following are agreed actions as a result of these presentations:

#### **Working Group 1**

##### *Actions endorsed by the Executive Committee:*

- **Letter of response on outcome of TAC and quotas in 2007:** It was agreed that this should be drafted by the secretariat with assistance from Working Group 1 and sent.
- **Blue Ling Closures:** It was agreed that Victor Badiola presentation on Blue Ling should be presented and discussed in details at the next Deep-water Species Focus Group.
- **NAFC LTM Handbook:** It was agreed that funding to continue this project should be actively sought by working group 1.

#### **Working Group 2**

##### *Actions endorsed by the Executive Committee:*

- **Cod Recovery:** It was agreed that a letter should be drafted and sent to ICES to review the situation of Cod in the Celtic Sea. This will be drafted by the secretariat with assistance from Working Group 2.

#### **Working Group 3**

##### *Actions endorsed by the Executive Committee:*

- **Scallop Management:** It was agreed that Working Group 3 should continue their work on this issue and draft a text for the proposed project on Harmonisation of ring size. Once this text is available the NWWRAC will contact member states to seek support and funding for this project.
- **TACs & Quotas:** It was agreed that the NWWRAC should write to the Commission seeking clarification on the issue of management zones and assessment zones for certain species in the channel i.e. Cod. This will be drafted by the secretariat with assistance from Working Group 3.

## Working Group 4

### Actions endorsed by the Executive Committee:

- **Cod Recovery:** It was agreed that the NWWRAC would write to ICES to request a comprehensive scientific review of the Cod stocks and management in Area VIIa. This will be drafted by the secretariat with assistance from Working Group 4. **Spurdog:** This issue was discussed at some length. A paper that was tabled by the chairman of WG4 presented all sides of the argument. After a debate on the positions presented the following two recommendations were proposed as a compromise:
  - Member States should retain competence for all matters relating to quota management at a national level
  - The proposed 5% by catch of spurdog should be based on annual takes rather than trip by trip.The European Anglers Association requested some time to reflect on this position and it was agreed that the Secretariat would work with the relevant parties to produce a position to be endorsed via email procedures in the coming weeks.

## 5. Report from the Focus Groups

The Chairman invited each of the Focus Group Chairs to make a report of the outcome of discussions and actions from meetings held to date. The following are agreed actions as a result of these presentations:

- **Deepwater gillnets:** It was agreed that a letter should be sent to ICES to consider the impact of reducing mesh size for hake in area VI and VII to 100mm. It was also agreed that no further meeting of this focus group would take place until this advice was received from ICES.
- **Deepwater Species:** It was agreed that a meeting on deepwater species should be convened in June to consider the Commission proposals for TACs and quotas. This meeting will be co-hosted with the SWWARC and the NSRAC.
- **Cod avoidance plans and Cod recovery:** It was agreed that the Cod avoidance plan initiative would be put on hold until better incentives were available to encourage industry members to take them up. In the meantime the NWWRAC would produce a paper on the recent Commission proposal for Cod Recovery which is currently being discussed by Member States in Fisheries Council and which the Commission hope to be adopted later this year. It was agreed that the following representatives would draft comments from each of the relevant working group areas on these proposals: Bertie Armstrong WG1, Jacques Pichon WG2, Daniel Lefevre WG3, Lorcan O’Cinnéide WG4. An amalgamated paper would be sent to the Commission and Member States before the next Council of Ministers meeting in June.
- **Hake Management:** It was agreed that a meeting should be convened ASAP and in early May to discuss the hake management measures proposed by the Commission. This meeting should be co-organised with the SWWARC.
- **Data Collection:** It was agreed that the NWWRAC would seek to produce a paper stating the NWWRAC priorities for data collection to be considered at the forthcoming ICES data workshops in November. It was agreed that this paper would be drafted by Sean O’Donoghue.
- **MSY and long-term Management:** It was agreed that the NWWRAC should set up a meeting/mini-conference with ICES and the Commission on this issue. It was noted that other RACs were interested in co-hosting the meeting and that the secretariats of these RACs should discuss the most appropriate way forward.

## 6. Marine Protected areas

The Chairman provided an update to the members on this issue.

- The report of the jointly hosted MPA meeting was being completed and would be available in the coming weeks.
- The NWWRAC response to UK proposals had been submitted
- The French MPA agency had been invited to the meeting but was not available to attend. They had informed the secretariat that the proposed closures would be displayed on the MPA website from the end of April.

## **7. Work programme and administrative issues**

### Mid -Term Budget and work timetable

- The secretariat presented the midterm budget and informed members that due to over spend on meeting room hire some cutbacks may be necessary for the forthcoming months until the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2008 (year end).
- The following meeting calendar was agreed:
  - Focus group on Hake Management, 7<sup>th</sup> of May in Madrid (Co-hosted with the SWWRAC)
  - Focus Group on Deep-water species, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of June in Lisbon (Co-hosted with the SWWRAC & NSRAC)
  - Working Group meetings, 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> of July in Madrid
  - General Assembly meeting, 9<sup>th</sup> of October in Dublin
- The following meetings were proposed and the Secretariat agreed to set-up pending available funds:
  - Joint meeting on MSY
  - Executive Committee meeting, 4<sup>th</sup> of September

### NWWRAC meeting venues

The feasibility of changing meeting venues to accommodate members travel was discussed. It was agreed that it would be more practical to choose one location for all future NWWRAC meetings as this would streamline costs for the NWWRAC. It was agreed that the secretariat would produce a report on the cost effectiveness of the various venues and give recommendations on where all future meetings should be held.

## **8. Close of Meeting**

Due to time constraints the meeting was closed and the Chairman agreed to deal with the outstanding issues via email procedures.