

Report to the NWWRAC Executive Committee of WG3, held in Bilbao on Friday 26th January 2007:

1. **Welcome:** Chairman Daniel Le Fevre welcomed members and observers and introduced Alexandra Rodriguez, who has been duly appointed as the “Technical Assistant” to the RAC on a 2-year contract, as discussed in Executive Committee.
2. **Agenda:** Barrie Deas asked that the management and control of fisheries exploited by the inshore sector, particularly those in vessels of less than 10 metres in length, be included in the work programme of the NWWRAC WG3. This is a sector that, in the UK at least, is growing in significance. He explained that it is uniquely affected by issues that are normally of lesser concern to the RAC so there is a tendency to overlook those problems. It was agreed that this subject would be an agenda item for the next meeting of the WG3. Barrie Deas agreed to prepare a paper detailing the characteristics and difficulties of this diverse sector that would be tabled for consideration and discussion.
3. **Report of the meeting of WG3 held in Paris 3rd November 2006:**
This was adopted without amendment.
4. **Report concerning the decisions of the Council of Ministers, December 2006:**

The Chairman opened discussions by referring to a new “bible” for the industry, which is the 213-pages Quota Regulation 2007.

The Rapporteur, Jim Portus, gave a verbal report of the significant TAC, quota and Annex changes agreed by Council that affected the fishers in the Channel. These included importantly the decision to adopt a “Long-term Management Plan” (MAMP) for 7e Sole involving a cut to 16 days per month for beam trawlers and netters targeting the stock. The cut is 20% compared to the limit of 2005. He believed that the NWWRAC had delivered a good service to the fishing industry by proposing a number of things to the Commission that were adopted. A discussion followed.

Concerns were expressed that the Commission seems determined to extend effort controls similar to those of the Cod Recovery Zone to the whole of Area VII. This is despite the Celtic Sea “Trevoise Box” that was introduced as an alternative to limited time at sea.

WG2 had yesterday agreed to the establishment of a Cod focus group and members of WG3 were urged to contribute fully to its meetings. If the industry cannot come up with alternatives to the clumsy CRZ regime then the mixed and rich fisheries that are a feature of the Channel and Celtic Sea may be in jeopardy. The point was made that all of Western Waters have since 1996 been under a mandatory effort limitation regime. This factor and the rationale of the CRZ effort regime are to be considered by the joint NSRAC and NWWRAC Cod Symposium in early March, especially in the light of the changes in recent times to the monitoring and control regimes.

The subject was raised of the inability of Skippers while at sea to comply readily with “percentage” limits, such as the 5% Cod bycatch, the 8% Margin of Tolerance in logbook quantities etc. This subject would be revisited in later discussions with the new Fisheries Control Agency. The Chairman suggested that this too should be part of the work of the WG2/ WG3 Cod focus group. He expressed the hope that proposals for change might result from strong participation in these events.

5. **Steve Mackinson of CEFAS:** Steve delivered a PPT Presentation on the subject of proposals for the long-term management of certain stocks in Area 7. The project is funded by DEFRA and Steve asked for the support of NWWRAC members to make it a success. Data being used to start the project is that from STECF between 2003 and 2005. Other data is essential to identify interactions between various fleet metiers and fisheries. It is crucial that all Member States fleets participate fully in the project.

There followed a question and answer session. The Chairman offered the opinion that future management of fisheries has to be on a long-term basis. There is an obligation on the Commission to deliver each fishery to Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015. This project will help in the quest for a better understanding of the fisheries leading to better management in the long-term.

It was confirmed that the study, although funded in the first instance by DEFRA is one that should be welcomed in each Member State. The work has not yet started, but the project idea was broadly supported. General agreement was reached that collaboration amongst fisheries science institutions across the EU is essential so that the data on all fleets and the stocks they are exploiting can be collected in a clear, uniform and structured way. The opportunity is presented to also study the impact and effectiveness of steps already taken and measures already introduced so that the path from now on towards MSY by 2015 can be followed smoothly and without the harsh regimes experienced in the past.

The funding for this study is limited and not sufficient to consider every fleet and stock in the available time, especially as 64 separate groupings had been identified in the Channel alone. It was suggested that the experience of the 7e sole fishery might provide an example of co-operation between Member States institutions and industry organisations. The long-term management plan now introduced had been derived over 3 years of trans-national study and discussion. Perhaps it might form the basis of a model for other fisheries and fleet segments?

It was agreed that the secretariat would reissue to members the “checklist” on MSY that had derived from the joint workshop on this subject held in Edinburgh.

During discussions the question was raised about the dates of the quota management year and it was suggested that the NWWRAC might give support to the idea of an April start to the “year”.

6. **Invest in Fish Southwest (IiFSW): A Presentation by Heather Squires:**

Heather Squires delivered a PPT that had been previewed at the WG2 the previous day. She fielded questions afterwards.

It was suggested that the Bio-economic model developed by the IiFSW project would prove to be a valuable tool for fisheries managers and might add significantly to the work being undertaken by Steve Mackinson.

Heather confirmed that the model has only used a full dataset from the UK and that data from other Member States would enable better results to be derived. It was agreed that time at the next WG3 would be set aside for a full simulation to be run as a case study.

The CEFAS and IiFSW models would be examined for compatibility with one another and to ascertain the part each might play in the future as tools for managers to use in the interests of achieving MSY.

7. **Scallop management:** The minutes were tabled of the meeting held in London on 10th October 2006. WG3 debated how to take forward the issues raised at that event. The various scallop management methods used by each Member State had been presented and the conference recommended via the WG3 meeting in Paris a number of studies and trials that might be done to establish whether or not harmonisation would be beneficial.
- The Executive Committee had received the proposals, but there appeared to be no progress with trials in any of the Member States. The Isle of Man delegate expressed the view that scallop fishermen would be willing to conduct trials in the Manx scallop fishery.
- The Chairman wondered whether there might be sufficient accord within the Group to propose, for example, a standard ring size or mesh size in dredges. There was support for the trials that had been proposed in London, but it was emphasised by a number of contributors that the state of the scallop stocks was not causing concern in the scientific community and there was no appetite for volunteering greater selectivity. The Group was reminded of the “Eco-Dredge” project that the SFIA had conducted.
- Delegates were asked to remember that each Member State is allowed for its own reasons to impose tighter regulations than those of the CFP on its own fishermen. Extending those such as the French scallop rules to other Member States has to be scientifically justified. This might in time also apply to proposed UK Bass rules (MLS 40cms) being extended to others.
- The Chairman concluded the discussions by suggesting that the NWWRAC and especially WG3 should consider Non-TAC fisheries like scallops and bass before such time as they give rise to concerns at scientific level. It was agreed that Bass will be included on the agenda of the next meeting of WG3.
8. **Control issues: Sven Tahon:** Sven delivered a PPT to the WG3 that explained the intended functions of the new Control Agency that is to be based in Spain. After his presentation he fielded questions.
- The subject was raised of IUU landings and the incomplete use of VMS in Third Countries and, indeed, through all Member States. This lack of harmonisation is a source of frustration to inspectors and to those nations whose fishermen do respect the rules.
- Sven was questioned about the approach of the Agency to the 8% Margin of Tolerance. He responded that a tolerance should only apply to an exact figure, for example at the point of landing. The original 20% figure reflected the on board difficulties that had not diminished. He would pose the question to those in charge at the Agency.
- Sven confirmed that the Agency has only recently started work, is still finding its feet and it may take some time for things to bed-down. Officials would be seeking ways to ensure that each Member State interprets and applies the rules of the CFP in a uniform way to ensure conformity.
9. **AOB:** It was agreed that issues affecting more than one Working Group would be better dealt with at joint meetings. Time allocated to such joint issues might be deducted from the time set aside for each individual WG. The secretariat would raise this at the next Executive Committee that is due to be convened in Caen, Normandy.