



## MINUTES

JOINT WORKSHOP ON SEABASS MANAGEMENT  
CNP MEM Offices, 134, Avenue de Malakoff  
75116 – Paris, France  
Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015, 10.30 - 15.30hrs

Chairman: Jacques Pichon

Rapporteur: Debbie Crockard

### Draft 2

#### 1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

A round table introduction of participants took place, Robert Griffin of the Commission was delayed but arrived shortly after the meeting commenced. Participant list available in appendix 1.

There were no apologies to report.

#### 2. Appointment of Chairman and Rapporteur

Appointment of chair and rapporteur agreed, no additional volunteers.

#### 3. Approval of agenda

Agenda agreed, with the addition of a presentation by the Commission representative Robert Griffin on the proposed management measures for seabass. No objections.

#### 4. Review of meeting report 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014

The Chair reviewed the previous meeting highlighting the fact the format of that meeting was more broad scale and suggesting that it may not be worth re-discussing many of the issues given the new proposal from the Commission.

He highlighted that at the previous meeting there was an emphasis on the burden should weigh on all industries not simply the commercial sector. He reflected that personally he had found the meeting very interesting and that it was useful for everyone to be able to discuss their positions but that the AC's position was not taken into consideration when the Commissions put into place the emergency measures to ban mid-water trawling.

It was decided at the Bilbao meeting that the current meeting would go ahead to formalise a position for the Commission and Member States, however, since then the Commission has published its proposals for seabass management without AC consultation. It would be useful to know who was consulted before the proposal was produced.

He then opened the floor to questions with regards to the Dublin meeting.



Jan Willen Wijnstroom fed back that there was inconsistencies in the reporting of the proportion of the total catch which was taken by the recreational sector and that it should be 25% and not 30% as was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> report.

The chair suggested that these changes were not significant at the current time since this was an estimate but that Carmen Fernandez the ICES representative may be able to explain the differences during her presentation.

Daniel Lefèvre commented that the French fishing industry had difficulties in swallowing what was action against a single Member State. He pointed out the lack of sustainable management of seabass and that the French industries have been asking for management for many years. He stated that seabass should be included under article 12 and should have a TAC like any other species with reductions like any other species. This would give the opportunity for all fishermen to fish seabass.

The Chair stated that this was a discussion that should take place later in the meeting and introduced Carmen Fernandez who would present the ICES stock data for seabass.

## **5. Update on current position and review of current measures**

Ms Fernandez thanked the AC's for the opportunity to present to them.

She highlighted that she would be presenting last year's advice and that the advice for 2016 would be available at the end of June. She pointed out that until the new advice is produced she cannot predict what it will say but that currently ICES do not expect big changes.

The Seabass in the EU is currently thought to consist of four stocks although stock structure is unclear. There was a benchmarking process for seabass in 2012 and it was recognised that the Northern stock was the largest, that there were substantial catches in the Bay of Biscay (BoB) and in Iberian waters and the West of Scotland and Ireland there were small catches.

For the stock found in the North Sea, Celtic sea and the channel a recommended catch limit of 1155tonnes was proposed by ICES for the stock to be managed under an MSY approach. Discard levels of the stock are unknown and the advice is based on landings data.

This stock benefitted from good years of recruitment between 1989 and the mid 2000's but this has been low since then. In parallel there has been increased mortality since 1985 for the stock resulting in a decrease in SSB in recent years.

ICES recommended a management with an urgent requirement to reduce the stocks F for both the recreational and commercial sectors. There is a need to manage the stock at Fmsy as the stock is rapidly heading towards Blim. There was lots of work completed to improve the assessment this stock is now considered a category 1 assessment with appropriate reference points – which means that it has a good assessment.

There are some issues around the incorporation of fishing mortality as a result of recreational angling as there are only a few estimates but what is available has been included in the assessment. Due to the biology of seabass they are inherently vulnerable to overfishing – slow growing, late maturing site fidelity when spawning.

Additionally warming oceans are facilitating a move of the stock north, warmer waters result in better year classes but colder winters and hence waters result in a decrease in recruitment.



The pelagic pair trawl fishery targets spawning grounds seasonally and there is by catch of seabass in inshore waters. There has been a moratorium on commercial seabass fishing in Irish waters for a number of years but this applied to Irish vessels only. The by catch of seabass is related to the MLS, currently 36cm. Commercial catches for this stock are thought to be in the region of 4100tonnes and recreational catches about 1500tonnes.

Advice for 2015 was for an Fmsy of 0.15 with F being reduced to 1155tonnes for both recreational and commercial catches combined. Management will be required to reach this reduced level of F. It is likely that even with reduced catches the stock will continue to decline due to decreased recruitment. More fish need to spawn before capture to allow the stock to recover – this will require changes to gear and some spatial closures.

There is the potential for an increase in effort as a result of displacement from other fisheries.

There is still a lot of work to be done and some uncertainties, particularly with regards to issues of survivability which vary depending on fishing method.

Work is continuing and more developments will be produced for 2016 including a new bench mark and new data. There is a possibility that another full benchmark will be completed in 2017.

Ms Fernandez then went on to describe the other 3 stocks in the EU starting with the Bay of Biscay.

There is significantly less information available for this stock which is considered a category 5 data limited stock, which has no full assessment or projections. Information on landings only is available for this stock. The commercial catch is less than 1890 tonnes and while discard levels are uncertain they are thought to be low. Recreational catches for this stock are unknown.

The stock is mostly targeted by long line between July and October and pelagic trawls from November to April. Ideally there would be a time series of data to improve the assessment. ICES recommended input control measures and technical measures to protect juveniles. There may be a better abundance index available next year but it is unclear, however more work is happening for this stock.

The state of the Iberian stock is very similar to the BoB; little information is available for this stock which is considered a category 5 data limited stock, which has no full assessment or projections. Information on landings only is available for this stock. The commercial catch is less than <598tonnes and while discard levels are uncertain they are thought to be low. Recreational catches for this stock are unknown. Fishing for this stock tends to be coastal and artisanal fishing.

The West of Scotland and West of Ireland stocks is in the same position as the previous two stocks; little information is available for this stock which is considered a category 5 data limited stock, which has no full assessment or projections. There has been a moratorium on commercial fishing for this stock for Irish fisheries since 1990. The commercial catch is less than <5tonnes, mostly caught by French vessels. It is unclear if this should be a separate management unit. ICES does not advocate a TAC in this area. For more information see the ICES advice on their website.

The chair thanked Ms Fernandez for her presentation and opened the floor to questions starting with one from himself.

ICES is still to give further advice and at the moment we don't have information on the impact assessment of the action taken earlier this year. It may also be important to consider the geography of the stocks and we should be considering the boundary effects. Adapting gears to improve selectivity may not apply to all gear types – for example the hook and line fisheries.

Olivier Leprêtre suggested that the ICES report was incomplete and that the data was lacking and asked how the commission could make proposals and decisions based on insufficient data, he also asked if socio economics had been considered in her advice.

The Chair suggested that this question may be answered by the upcoming presentation from the commission.

A member of the floor pointed out that the data for recreational fisheries was considered static and that it did not take into account changes in recreational fishing patterns and levels over the past few years.

Marc Ghiglia suggested that they return to the chairs point about how the pelagic trawl ban will be taken into account and there should be some data available from this.

Ms Fernandez responded to the questions by pointing out that while it was true that they did not have any complete data for some of the stocks there was good data available for the Celtic sea stock which was a category 1 ICES stock. She also pointed out that despite the uncertainties scientists agree that trends are robust and that we can be confident of what these trends are showing.

She also agreed that the recreational fishery information was incomplete but that they had estimates for recent years and that F has been considered constant in the recreational fisheries for the sake of the assessment. The assessment is not a bad assessment.

With regards to data resulting from the emergency measures the data for 2016 has not been assessed yet and so this is unclear.

The chair asked if there was any information on the geographical distribution of the catches for the main stock since the boundaries have not been confirmed.

Ms Fernandez admitted that she was unsure but that STECF had a study reviewing the main areas for fishing so the information should exist.

Ken Kawahara pointed out that simply because an evaluation – such as the BoB assessment – is incomplete this is not a reason to do nothing. The stocks is not in a good state, big seabass are becoming rare.

Ludovic Le Roux pointed out the increase in Channel mortality.

A member from the floor asked if in Iberian waters the small scale included purse seiners.

Ms Fernandez responded to questions from the floor regarding the BoB stock commenting that even though there is not much information other than that which was used and pointed out that the ICES scientists should be aware of the information. Commercial landings have been increasing over time and have levelled off in the past few years. However, since recruitment is reduced the population can still decrease even with stable landings – as a result F is still increasing and stock is still decreasing in size.

For fishing in Iberian waters most coastal landings are artisanal, in Portugal they use trammel nets, official landings underestimate catches and the recreational sector uses hook and line.

Richard Brouzes pointed out that with regards to changing gears pelagic trawling is on the rise but demersal trawling is more damaging.

Daniel Lefèvre pointed out that the recreational fishing sector in France consisted of over 2million anglers who each had a daily limit of 3 seabass resulted in quite high catches.

There was a question from the floor with regards to the error margins of the advice being presented by ICES.

Ms Fernandez responded that they were not always calculated when a full report is not available, as such she was unsure about the error margin for the recreational fishery assessments. However for the assessment for the northern stock the error margins for the SSB of the stock are shown on the graph. Since only catch data is available for the other assessments calculating error is difficult. If the scientists felt that the data was complete then the estimates will be good however, there are issues with underreporting.

A question from the floor asked if STECF took into account the underreporting as a result of article 65 regarding the removal of up to 30kg of fish for personal consumption, they member asked is any work was being done to address underreporting?

The chair added that we should also discuss the estimates for recreational fishing and highlighted that each individual needs to improve their own practice.

Robert Griffin from the commission replied to the question about STECF and the ability to catch 30kg a day for personal consumption, he stated that they were looking into this and at the catch data from the Member States involved but the eventual response was currently unclear.

The chair used this interjection to suggest a move on to the presentation of the commission's proposal for seabass management.

## 6. Commission presentation of proposed measures

Robert Griffin introduced his presentation which would cover the proposals and would cover previous questions on TAC's.

He began by pointing out that this was process which began in 2011 which resulted in lots of talking but very little action to protect the stock. The actions taken by the commission have been in response to the ICES advice for 2015.

There were proposals in December to reduce mortality (by imposing a restrictive days at sea scheme) but no consensus was reached. As there was still a need for action emergency measures were put in place by the commission. The decision to ban pelagic trawling on the spawning stock was made from a purely biological basis to attempt to increase the spawning stock –socio economic impacts were not considered when putting into place this emergency measure. Emergency Measures are a drastic measure that were taken to protect the rapidly decreasing stock. The commission is trying to take into account all fleets going forward to ensure there is a proportional impact, the actions in December were based on the 2015 advice.

The commission sees proposals such as an introduction of catch limits, bag limits, prohibited areas and MCRS as a means to protect the stock.

The proposals for amendment of the Fishing Opportunities Regulation are for a prohibition and imposition of catch limits. The prohibited area in the proposal is an extension of the Irish closure which applies only to commercial vessels to all European vessels, catch limits which are non-transferable and were produced following discussion with Member States and set low catch level for the gear used. It is recognised that the fleets vary by area and Member State and that under this broad stance all gears in use are affected.

If the Ac's wish to influence the management of the stock there are several time lines they should note;



The proposal for amendment of the Fishing Opportunities will be initially examined this week,

The commission's proposal for an increase in MCRS will be discussed at the CoM meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June.

ICES advice is produced at the end of June which will provide 2016 advice.

December council may have to discuss further management in 2016 for this stock.

MAPs are still in development and the ACs will be formally consulted with regards to the MAPs – Seabass may be a single species MAP or part of a multi-species plan - this is yet to be decided in the scoping.

There needs to be an AC position for moving forward in 2016 – you are recommended to identify things that may be useful and to provide input.

The Chair disagreed that the Commission hadn't received information from the ACs and pointed out that guidelines had been provided on the equality of burden and that this was not taken into account. He pointed out that at the end of the council meeting the AC were informed that the emergency measures were being considered but we were given a very short time to provide information.

He asked if Seabass would be included in the Landings Obligation. He also asked if the 5 tonnes saved from closing areas can be caught and landed somewhere else? The Chair stated that he was surprised by the limitations proposed for some gear types - long liners will be double impacted when you consider the proposed increase in MCRS. He expressed his concern that a decrease in landings to 2.5tonnes a month would completely remove the long line fishery, and was surprised by the 3tonne allowance for the seine netters.

Marc Ghiglia added that he was surprised that given the advice from ICES and STECF the proposals from the commission do not seem to be linked to this advice. He added that they should know the mortality reduction as a result of the pelagic ban. He stated that they did not know what the mortality reduction objective was and asked if this committee could answer that?

Mr Griffin responded that the objective of the measure was to reduce mortality; following the requirements of the CFP would require MSY by 2015 and to do this the catch would have to be limited to 1155tonnes. He pointed out that obviously they haven't done that as they are trying to take into account the socio-economic impacts in the catch reduction but that this means that they are not meeting the MSY objectives.

Mr Griffin asked the representatives present what their objectives would be and that they need to identify what reductions they can make.

The catch limits have been introduced under the Fishing Opportunities Regulation 2015. Setting a catch limit for the species introduces it into the Landing Obligation regime. A landing obligation has implications for managing a catch limitation; however as no fishery for seabass is yet defined in the regional recommendations then it is likely that sea bass will only be included in the LO in 2019 when it applies to all species.

Daniel Lefèvre stated that he thought that the Emergency Measures were put in place at the request of the UK.

Mr Griffin refuted this point and stated that the Emergency Measures were discussed at the last joint AC meeting and that it was ultimately a Commission decision to put them in place.

Mr Lefèvre added that it was impossible for the AC to supply a response at Christmas and pointed out that the trawlers were already subjected to limits as a result of cod measures in an area where they catch on average 1.5tonnes.





Olivier Leprêtre asked for clarification if the prohibited area was for only commercial fisheries or if it included recreational fisheries outside the 12nm as well?

Mr Griffin responded that the question with regards to the 1.5 tonnes was a valid point it is supposed to be restrictive and to prevent a targeted fishery for Sea bass. 1.5 tonnes is a significant level of by-catch and it will now be down to the council to decide if this is acceptable. The prohibited area for fishing is applicable to only the commercial fishers.

Oscar Sagué asked if the commission had considered any measures to improve the data collection pointing out the lack of need to report <30kg of catches and the little available data on recreational catches.

Mr Griffin agreed that data collection improvements would be always be welcome and that improvements in recreational information are being sought. Member States have previously not been following a common assessment which made comparisons difficult, he stated that the improvements in data collection were required but that this would be impossible to do before 2016.

Tony Delahunty pointed out that the industry was always at the mercy of poor data he pointed out that the science was not good enough and that they need to consider the suitability.

The Chair agreed that both aspects should be taken into account (I believe he made a comment that the industry were being asked to react too rapidly here?)

Mr Griffin stated that if they thought that this was fast then he was concerned – this has been discussed for the last 3 years and yet they have yet to take action – the commission must take a precautionary approach, we can't spend another 3 years talking.

The Chair then asked what criteria they used to come up with the proposal.

Mr Griffin responded that the proposal was developed in conjunction with ongoing discussions with MS – that the Commission asked the Member States to identify sea bass fisheries, and to evaluate the impact of catch restrictions on the various métiers, in addition the Commission has met representatives of Member States several times to discuss this information. The Commission's decision was made based on these discussions and the information provided by the Member States.

Emmanuel Kelberine highlighted his experience with the French long-line fisheries which were very targeted and had a small number of days at sea. Having a monthly limit for this fishery is very difficult as they often only fish for 1-2 months a year, they would also struggle to diversify their practices easily. His fishery committee proposed a reduction in days at sea by 40% a MCRS of 40cm and monthly catch limits of 2 tonnes.

Mr Griffin assured him that these proposals had been received but pointed out that the days at sea proposal was rejected by the Member States, currently that the Commission has proposed monthly limits, and an increased MCRS, however simply because they were not included in this proposal does not mean that any of the previous suggestions are off the table.

Mr Leprêtre asked what would happen to the large catches of by-catch of seabass – without taking into account socio-economics small companies could become deserted.

Mr Griffin responded that improving selectivity to reduce discards in light of an increased MCRS would be a first step. He pointed out that everyone had seen the evaluation for the stock – there will be worse impacts if we do nothing. The future has to be considered the group must look forward.



Rachel Lagiere asked why the catch limit for seiners was so much higher than everything else. She suggested that temporal closures and yearly limits would be better.

Anne Doeksen stated that she appreciated the action being taken but highlighted the fact that they were discussing short term costs to an important industry but if nothing the costs will be higher, she asked if the commission could quantify the benefits?

The Chair pointed out that they were not saying nothing should be done but that it should be proportional.

Mr Griffin replied that a socio-economic impact assessment was intended but after discussion with STECF they felt that the analysis could not be improved in the short term. The information just doesn't exist and a financial impact assessment would take time to develop.

The 3 tonne limit (for seines) was a comparable level to the other restrictions in fishing, it is important to look at the size of mortality reduction rather than the actual catch reduction. An annual catch limit does not by itself encourage a move towards more sustainable fisheries.

Mr Lefèvre pointed out that French fishermen have been concerned about seabass for over 10 years he repeated that with the additional restriction due to cod safeguard plans that the bigger mesh size would be unsuitable, he stated that they could not switch to another species. He stated that annual limits would be better for targeted seabass fisheries but could result in more discarding in other fisheries. He suggested that the overall aim is to decrease F but the proposal could actually increase the catch.

Mr Griffin responded to questions regarding the annual/monthly discussion, asking if vessels would start to target seabass on a monthly basis and pointed out that the measures have been proposed by the Commission and were now a matter for discussion at council. He told the members that if they wanted to influence the measures they need to develop supported arguments.

The Chair pointed out that a difficulty was in having no control over the timeline – he stated that they required more than 2 weeks to respond.

Tony Delahunty agreed that the industry knew there was a problem but asked how they were supposed to adapt to big changes like mesh size in the short term – he suggested that the month by month allocation needs to be more flexible.

Mr Griffin agreed that there was a short time to respond to the proposal but that the MAP is a long term process and pointed out that we have been discussing this since last September. He agreed that the increase to 42cm MCRS would support some gear adaptations and agreed that the fishermen's response would need to be discussed.

The Chair stated that the impact to the fleet must be taken into account and pointed out that since September the emergency measures have been put in place.

Mr Leprêtre agreed with an earlier comment that annual catches would be easier for the commercial fishery to adapt to.

Thierry Guigue pointed out that the main source of frustration is that a tangible achievable objective had not been set. The current objective is not achievable in the short time, maybe under a MAP this would work. He asked what the commissions target was a 20% reduction, 30%? If we knew the target we could come up with a realistic target to meet the objectives.





Jerry Percy stated that with regards to the 1, 3 or 12 months flexibility or limit he saw the 3 month limit as the most appropriate as in terms of flexibility it was more realistic than the 12 month proposal. He also highlighted the need for a related increase in minimum mesh size to prevent discards and highlighted the need for compensation with regards to the need to change the nets.

Mr Griffin pointed out that if seabass is not the target species then there may not be a need to change your gear type. He suggested that if the objective of meeting MSY is not achievable then it makes it difficult for him to say what must be done to achieve it and thus fishermen need to provide some indication of what they can contribute.

A step wise reduction in catches can be introduced in a MAP but this will not be affected until 2017; there remains an urgent need to develop a measures for 2016. In respect of catch limits he pointed out that there would need to be an assessment of the effect of a 3month limit rather than a 1month one, and that the catch levels might be expected to be revised downwards.

The chair closed the session for lunch at 12.40.

## **7. Discussion of possible future measures and commissions proposed measures**

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 13.35 and pointed out that since the agenda had been produced the Commission had produced a proposal so it would be more appropriate to use the time to discuss this. He stated that there were three things to be considered the short term influence of the commission's proposal, the mid-term impacts and preparing for December council and the long term influence on the development of a seabass MAP.

Mr Griffin asked the group to remember that they won't be influencing the Commission's proposal but that they could influence the CoM.

The Chair stated that they had no time to wait that the CoM would meet to discuss the proposal and that the MS's would need AC advice. He suggested that each participant should state what they think is acceptable and what is not.

The discussion on the December council could wait for the time being. He opened questions to the floor.

Ken Kawahara began by stating that if all the measures were going in the right direction the prohibition of fishing during the spawning season would also need to continue to improve SSB, the spawning areas need to be protected. He suggested a closure between December to May for all areas not just the Northern stock. He also suggested that in Southern areas seabass should be considered for the whole region not only the Bay of Biscay.

He stated that TACs would have been an efficient measure but that it is also important to preserve the fisheries and therefore preferential access should be given to small scale fisheries applying article 17. If TAC is based on history it would give preference to fishermen responsible for the current situation and would be detrimental to the sustainable artisanal fisheries.

The Chair agreed that there would be no difficulty in TACs being put into place but he did not think that the CoM would step back and revise their position on this, he agreed that the prohibition of fishing during spawning seasons was a good idea. He did however point out that it would be useful to use the Commission proposal as a basis for a response and that prohibition of fishing on spawning stocks was not included in this.



Mr Kawahara replied by pointing out that spawning does not happen at the same time everywhere, that socio economic impacts must be considered and that a prohibition during spawning should vary depending on the area.

Mr Lefèvre interjected by saying that under the Commission's proposal there is no equality. He suggested that Mr Kawahara's point was to essentially ban pelagic trawling, he pointed out that bottom trawling only happened during December to April and so would end the fishing. In the Northern area this would result in a shift in the fleet from fishing in the Channel to the Bay of Biscay.

He suggested that the monthly catch proposal should be smoothed out to reflect the seabass season; he stated that he was talking about trawlers. He highlighted the need to take into account the fishing seasons suggesting a ban for fishing in the summer months when they don't fish no problem. He suggested that the seasons needed to be considered with direct and controlled fishing and suggested that there were more appropriate and relevant tools available than monthly limits. His main point was to smooth out the monthly catches.

Marc Ghiglia stated that he didn't understand if we were currently discussing the short, mid or long term issues. He pointed out that what is important now is the capping of catch levels, he wanted to know how the proposed amounts were decided upon. He pointed out that fishing on the spawning stock was not the main fishery and wanted to know why it was being focused on.

The Chair confirmed that the current discussion was with regards to the short term time line and that prohibition of fishing can be discussed at a later date. He stressed the need to focus on the current proposal.

Geert Meun stated that his industry could not work with a 1.5 tonne monthly proposal as the catches varied hugely from month to month, he agreed with earlier points about the need for flexibility the stated that he did not support the introduction of more TACs.

Dave Cuthbert pointed out that the small scale fishermen on the South coast of the UK rely on bass in the summer and pointed out that no one wants to go back to their member and tell them that something is being cut but we need to do something. We need the flexibility to be increased to 3 months for small scale fisheries, but the larger boats don't require the same levels of flexibility.

Jan Willem Wijnstroom stated that his organisation would not support a TAC and gave his support to the proposal from the commission, he pointed out that the recreational sector already have a 3 bag limit enforced on them but that the other 75% of the industry now needed to experience cuts. The MAP for seabass needs to bring the stock in line with MSY and there needs to be clear short and mid-term measures. He also gave his support to the increase in MCRS to 42cm highlighting that they need to take action now.

Richard Brouzes agreed that there was a need to do something now but stated that it is hard to measure the impact to the stock. He state that he thought it seemed incoherent to set monthly limits based on the size of the vessel but agreed that a 3 month limit would be better than monthly. He pointed out the difficulties in increasing mesh size and the fact that this may result in an increase in F due to discards.

Jerry Percy warned of the dangers of talking themselves out of doing anything, he gave the example of the spur dog fishery – which is now a prohibited fishery in which stocks are only now increasing. The overfishing by large scale fishing fleets resulted in the stock being closed to fishing when it had been a productive fishery. He pointed out that those involved were honour bound to input on broader issues, the 3 bag limit will be important to stop black fishing for seabass and will reduce the recreational sectors impact. While with regards to commercial fisheries he pointed out that fishing on a spawning stock was the wrong time to fish as it can significantly reduce the stock and can additionally adversely impact the success of the spawning.



He addressed the issue of increasing the MCRS to 42cm and asked for the science to support this move, he pointed out that it also needs to be considered alongside an increase in mesh size. He supported the need for more flexibility and suggested that the 1 tonne 1.5 tonne catch limit could be discussed. Increasing the survivability in some fisheries may also be possible and is something that needs to be worked on.

The key to all of this is the lack of data, effective monitoring, control and enforcement. He confirmed that his organisation were not in favour of a TAC, but would support allocation of fishing based on article 17 if a TAC was to be put in place. He highlighted the need to avoid displacement in the fishery and referred the group to a paper sent to the commission and the ACs emphasising the need to ensure that those mostly reliant on the bass to keep fishing are those who must be protected.

The Chair recognised that from the speakers who had contributed so far that the framework proposed by the commission was not completely unworkable but that it lacked flexibility and that most groups accepted the limits in general.

Mr Leprête agreed that if you spoke to the average fishermen (trawler men) that they would like to increase their mesh size but that fishing effort regimes block this and have knock on impacts on selectivity.

Mr Lefèvre added that they would support a step wise increase in MCRS to 40cm and then up to 42cm.

Ludovick Le Roux stated that he did not agree with the 1.5 tonne limit for 2015.

The Chair pointed out that it was unnecessary to make a point just for the sake of it and pointed out that the pelagic fleet are not concerned about the 2015 limits.

Mr Griffin confirmed that he 42cm limit would be discussed at the next Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June.

Ms Lagiere stated that the 42cm would be difficult to implement quickly particularly where gear will need to be adapted, this could result in huge commercial losses for many species since seabass is not always the target species, she agreed that she would need more information with regards to a stepwise approach. She stated that if an annual limit was not acceptable then a quarterly one may be ok however this may be difficult to apply. She also stated that a 1- 1.5 tonne limit would be difficult to achieve but that she did see a problem with the catch level for the seine fisheries.

She was surprised that the commission was in favour of monthly catch limits where it was possible to catch between 1 and 1.5 tonnes during the spawning season and against a yearly TAC with a ban on fishing during the spawning season.

Barry Delany interjected that the scientific advice for seabass is worrying, he highlighted that the moratorium is already in place in Ireland and that he welcomes the extension of this to include all EU vessels. He agreed that there seemed to be consensus on flexibility in the room and also pointed out that Irish anglers have had a 2 bag limit for years.

The Chair stated that the closure of the Irish zone since 1990 has not yielded any results, the stock is not showing signs of recovery. He stated that it seems like banning fishing in that area had no impact on the recovery of the stock.

Tony Delahunty agreed with the need for flexibility and with the need for an increased time scale if the gear is to be improved.



Mr Percy added that the seine fishery has a high level of survivability and so does not require the 3 tonnes proposed, he agreed with the proposal from the French to introduce an incremental approach to increasing the MCRS to 42cm.

The Chair pointed out that every country has a different position and that in the Bay of Biscay they catch smaller fish than those caught in the Northern fishery.

A member from the floor pointed out that long-lines were vulnerable as an industry as they are completely reliant on seabass and so would require more than 1.5 tonnes per month.

The Chair summarised that the flexibility is an agreed stance across the board but that little has been discussed about the actual catch limit levels other than the increase requested by the long liners and the netters. There has been no unanimous rejection of the proposal and some are ok with the 42cm increase with others saying it should be gradually implemented.

A member from the floor pointed out that 42cm is the size at first maturity and that for individuals to have the opportunity to spawn at least once there should be an increase in the MCRS, this could also lead to an increase in the market value of the species.

The Chair pointed out that for the smaller fish there would be a lot of aquaculture which would impact the price of fish. But that this was not a priority for today's discussion.

The Chair then went on to propose that they move discussions towards the TAC's and quota meeting in December and what proposals for the control of this activity should be proposed since it previously led to the pelagic ban. For the AC's position to be taken into account a position must be provided to the commission by September. Is it possible /achievable to carry on the emergency measures into 2016? Some members around the room have suggested that there should be a prohibition of fishing during the spawning season while others suggest fisheries could continue.

Mr Le Roux suggested that this would just transfer the problem to other species, he pointed out that they have a reduction in landings of 60% and that this should be used as a starting point not a way to proceed. He pointed out that banning fishing on spawning stocks may not be the approach to be taken.

The Chair pointed out that the ban applied to about 50 vessels and that he is sure that the ban is not a long – term solution and that mortality will not have been impacted by banning one aspect of the fleet.

Mr Griffin stated that the commission's proposal for days at sea was not accepted (in the December Council 2014) but that this does not mean that it or a similar system cannot be reconsidered.

The Chair suggested that they could draft a position based on effort management, this would then be prepared by the French but it would be better to come from the AC's, he expressed his surprise that the commission did not wait until after ICES had released the latest advice for seabass. He also acknowledged that some members around the room would not support this as they would like to see the fishing on spawning grounds stopped all together. He suggested waiting for the newest advice from ICES before preparing the AC's objectives for the December council.

Mr Jan Willem Wijnstroom agreed that we must keep into mind displacement and the movement to ICES area VII during the ban.

The Chair confirmed that there had been displacement to area VII but not to target seabass however they were yet to get the data back form ICES on this.



Mr Lefevre wanted to know what the percentage reduction for each fleet was, he wanted to know the effort for bottom trawlers, he pointed out that not everyone has the same fishing effort and the reduction should be shared. He also stated that he thought the 3 bag limit applied to all recreational fishermen, but now does not.

The Chair stated that he thought it was unnecessary to try and look for consensus where there will be none.

Bernard Rosselot introduced his organisation FNPSA who provide information to their members on fishing rules and formalising recreational activities. His organisation's job was to make their members aware of environmental requirements and he pointed out that sometimes they go beyond French law, they impose a strict bag limit and MCRS. He stated that they meet and talk to both recreational and commercial fishermen about issues such as Natura 2000 to ensure that they comply with the law. He also stated that they produce data and statistics which are available on the internet which can help make decisions based on recreational management.

Mr Kawahara pointed out that the 3 bag limit was very clear.

Mr Delehunty asked for clarity on the timing of producing a document stating that they should not wait for the new advice and that something had to be produced for July.

The Chair repeated the time line which put the required position to be submitted in September and confirmed that he thought that it would be most appropriate to wait until the ICES advice had been released.

Mr Leprête pointed out that a true recreational fisherman is not a concern to the future of the stock but the illegal, black fishermen are the ones that must be subject to enforcement. He also stated that they require the means and the resources to target illegal activities and that the commission and Member States must recognise that they are trying to make a living and that they need the tools and resources to maintain their businesses.

The Chair asked the floor to address how they would formally take forward the proposed documents given the upcoming deadlines.

Mr Beaucher suggested using Article 17 to frame the AC response.

The Chair confirmed that he had his own opinion on Article 17 but that does not mean that that is the position of the AC. Not everyone's experiences are the same as his.

Mr Beaucher pointed out that many of the fleets relying on seabass fell under the scope of Article 17.

The Chair stated that this brought the discussion back to whether the limits proposed by the commission are acceptable. He felt that 1 tonne was not sufficient. The Chair then drew the discussion to a close.

## **8. Agreement of next steps**

The Chair asked for volunteers to take forward the work on this. He referred to the upcoming CoM meeting as opposed to the preparation of a MAP for seabass. He stated that the drafting group would require 2 or 3 people and that a draft would be required by Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> of May. He pointed out that the group would require someone from the UK, France and the NGOs.

The drafting group was agreed as:

Ken Kawahara



Jeremy Percy

Jan Willen Wijnstroom

Jérôme Jourdin

Anne Doeksen suggested that people could submit paragraphs to the drafting group for consideration.

It was agreed that the AC's would wait for the ICES advice to be published in June before preparing advice for December Council at which point we would address the closing/opening of spawning grounds to fisheries and the Irish closure.

Alain Biseau commented that seabass was a long lived species and that we cannot expect the proposals from ICES to change what needs to be done, there needs to be a decrease in F and an increase in biomass.

The Chair also confirmed the need to consider the geography of where and when fishing happens and the need to protect juveniles.

Mr Griffin also added that it would be useful to consider the scientific advice. While sea bass is not a TAC species it is likely that any management measures might be part of the annual Fishing Opportunities proposal. Any proposals for December Council from the AC are likely to be submitted to scientific evaluation and the last STECF Plenary is in November and the AC should consider this in their work planning.

## **9. Close of meeting**

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and drew the meeting to a close at 15.20.



ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Joint AC Workshop on Seabass - 26 May 2015, 10:30-15:30 - CNPMMEM, Paris		
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NORTH WESTERN WATERS ADVISORY COUNCIL (NWWAC)		
Member State	Organisation	Representative
France	Association Nationale des Organisations de Producteurs	Jacques Pichon
France	Association Nationale des Organisations de Producteurs	Thierry Guigue
France	Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins	Kevin Charlot
France	Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins de Basse Normandie	Daniel Lefèvre
France	Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins de Bretagne	Olivier Leprêtre
France	OPBN	Richard Brouzes
France	OP COBRENORD	Rachel Lagiere
Spain	Fundació ENT	Stephan Beaucher
UK	New Under Ten Fishermen's Association	Dave Cuthbert
	<i>North Western Waters Advisory Council - Secretariat</i>	<i>Joanna McGrath</i>
Member State	Organisation	Representative
EU	Seas at Risk Organisation	Debbie Crockard
France	Blue Fish	Nicolas Teisseire
France	Union des Armateurs à la Pêche de France	Marc Ghiglia
Netherlands	Seas at Risk	Anne Doeksen
Netherlands	European Anglers Alliance	Jan Willem Wijnstroom
UK	New Under Ten Fishermen's Association	Jeremy Percy
Netherlands	Stichting van de Nederlandse Visserij / Dutch Fisheries Organisation	Geert Meun
UK	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations	Tony Delahunty
France	CNPMMEM	Anthony Morin
	<i>North Sea Advisory Council - Secretariat</i>	<i>Lorna Duguid</i>
Member State	Organisation	Representative
EU	Panete Mer	Ken Kawahara
France	CDPMEM	Emanuel Kelberine
France	IFSUA	Oscar Sagué
France	OP La côtière	Alizée Angelini
France	Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins	Jérôme Jourdain
France	Comité régional des pêches et des élevages marins des pays de loire	Ludovic Le Roux
France	CDPMEM	Olivier Le Nezet
UK	Pelagic Fishermen Association	Stéphanie Blanchet
Member State	Organisation	Representative
Ireland	Irish Member State	Barry Delany
Netherland	Ministry for Economic Affairs, Netherlands Member State	Henk Offringa
EU	European Commission	Robert Griffin
France	IFREMER	Alain Biseau
EU	ICES	Carmen Fernandez
France	France Member State	Gonzague De Moncuit
NI	IMARES	Brita Trapman
UK	DEFRA - UK Member State	Roy Smith
		8