



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

MINUTES

Meeting of NWWAC FG Crab

Madrid

10 March 2020 | 10:30 – 11:30

Attendees

Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM	IND	FR
Norah Parke (Chair)	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation	IND	IE
Patrick Murphy (Vice-Chair)	Irish South and West Fish Producer's Organisation	IND	IE
Barrie Deas	NFFO	IND	UK
Paul Trebilcock	Cornish FPO	IND	UK
Erwan Quemeneur	CDPMEM 29	IND	FR
Yannick Calvez	CDPMEM 29	IND	FR
Rosalie Crespin	CNPMEM (remote access only)	IND	FR
Mo Mathies (rapporteur)	NWWAC Secretariat	Sec	

Apologies: Enda Connelly (IIMRO), Manon Joguet (FromNord)

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair Norah Parke welcomed all participants. Following discussion regarding attendance of observers or acceptance of new members, the definitive membership list of this Focus Group is as follows:

Norah Parke (Chair)	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation	IND	IE
Patrick Murphy (Vice-Chair)	Irish South and West Fish Producer's Organisation	IND	IE
Edward Fahy	Irish Seal Sanctuary	OIG	IE
Enda Conneely	IIMRO	IND	IE
Barrie Deas	NFFO	IND	UK
Gary Hodgeson	NFFO	IND	UK
Paul Trebilcock	Cornish FPO	IND	UK
Erwan Quemeneur	CDPMEM 29	IND	FR
Yannick Calvez	CDPMEM 29	IND	FR
Rosalie Crespin	CNPMEM	IND	FR
Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM	IND	FR
Manon Joguet	FROMNord	IND	FR

The agenda was adopted.

2 A brief explanation of the previous FG Crab

The Chair provided a detailed summary of the work of the Focus Group Brown Crab since its inception in 2016.

In 2010, the European project ACRUNET was established. It was a transnational Interreg project which was the formalisation of an ad hoc industry/agency/science group concerned with a number of issues – market, transport, quality – common to all brown crab stakeholders. Stakeholders from five EU Member States were involved including from Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal and the UK (link to [ACRUNET](#)).

There were many substantial conclusions and outputs from ACRUNET but a major concern of the French partner, CNPMEM, was the unresolved issue of comparable management of brown crab fisheries across the main producer countries UK, Ireland and France. The CNPMEM has opted for a system of allocation of fishing licenses for professionals from the Regional Committees of Brittany and Normandy, based on a strict analysis of the sustainability of the stock and market opportunities. While Ireland and the UK could see the merit of this system, it was not feasible for them to adopt due to their own national regulations. The French industry feared the market would be oversupplied causing a fall in price paid to fishermen.

When ACRUNET concluded in 2015, the partners concerned signed up to a further effort to address the issue of transnational management. The NWWAC agreed to facilitate the process by establishing this Focus Group in 2016. An initial meeting was held in September 2016 in Dublin, followed by a meeting in Paris (Feb 2017) where the scientists involved with crustacean species (Dr Oliver Tully, Ireland; Dr Ewan Bell, UK; Dr Martial Laurans, (by Ppt), France) provided an update of the current data, suggesting there was a gap in the data preventing cross-national advice for the fisheries. Following this meeting the Chair had endeavoured to organise a data-based “snap-shot” of data on a monthly basis from around the coasts of all three jurisdictions. Eventually, this proposal was deemed unsuitable for the NWWAC to operate. Reports on the work of the Focus Group were provided to the NWWAC Executive Committee at its meetings in March and September 2018.

In addition, the brown crab industry appeared to be entering a phase of expansion, due largely to the emerging Chinese market. The perception of runaway effort is not supported by the records of landings up to the end of 2017 [see chart slide 10] which indicates the relatively stable landings by individual countries over the period 2000 to 2017 and the continued dominance of the UK regarding total landings. Exports of brown crab to China were almost completely driven by UK and Irish exporters.

While neither country could adopt the French management model, in both Ireland and the UK there has been substantial development of management in the inshore sector (Inshore Fishery and Conservation Area, UK and Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum, Ireland) with increased bottom-up demands to improve management. In Ireland there has been a country-wide increase of MLS to 140mm and taken further in the UK with higher MLS according to local conditions. Certification of brown crab fisheries (FIPs) by internationally recognised NGOs (FisheryProgress.org in Ireland and Marine Stewardship Council in the UK) have had, in the main, positive impact and whereas they did not contribute to the specific issue of transnational management, they have brought about improved alignment of the management structures in all three jurisdictions.

In 2019, the Chair felt that there was reason to refocus the work of the Group following the NWWAC meetings in Madrid 2019 and her report to the ExCom. as well as to the Horizontal Working Group in July 2019.

A first comment thanked the Chair for the good overview and agrees that each of the three players is different in its fleets which does present quite a few issues in coming up with something coordinated. Perhaps the group's advice could be to capture how the landscape has changed and how coordination might be possible. The FIP in the UK has been fairly localised and may not be applicable at this level. What has happened in UK is the establishment of the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group at national level, with the involvement of MMO, Cefas, Seafish and the fishing industry. It was suggested to start at the beginning and establish a baseline of where the fleet is now, how it has changed in the last 5 to 10 years and look at the stock assessments. What is the state of the stock, do data gaps still exist, have they gotten worse, what management measures exist that could help. There has been and will always be a difference in opinion on what measure might have impact as some like catch restrictions, some like permit scheme – this all depends on where one is at that given point of time. There is a need to look objectively what the impacts would be. The AC work is more about coordination now.

The Chair enquired if the group should possibly look at a SWOT analysis to simplify things?

A UK member identified that a jurisdiction change is imminent, and that the Fisheries Bill is going through UK Parliament at present, in which the importance of management plans is noted. Within that context is scope for co-management, i.e. scientists, administrators and industry working together. There is a change in the structure of fisheries management in the UK. The idea is to get a baseline understanding of where we are and then look at options for management, so yes to SWAT analysis. It is a difficult discussion regarding what options are best, as this may be different in different regions. One driver that needs to be mentioned is the displacement from other sectors which is driving up effort in crab fishery. Where does brown crab sit in relation to the overall drivers and pressures of management?

The Chair stated that information on this can still be included in this report and enquired if those figures available in the UK?

In reply it was stated that this is part of what the new group is going to be looking at, however, the timeline may not suit AC. This is about the individual choices of vessel operators under certain economic and regulatory pressures and an understanding of this is needed.

The Chair explained that it is important to have some idea of this. In Ireland people are fishing crab part time and then going back to whitefish.

Another member put forward some conclusions. Rather than focussing on what has been in the past, maybe the groups needs to focus on the species, its lifecycle, best practice for catching, more scientific data, which might lead to better understanding regional differences. Is there room for possible standardisation in relation to the product, for example no bringing in of white crab, berried animals, no declawing, maybe these could be agreed between the three countries?

Additional issues need to also be considered, for example plastics (ropes fall under the SUP Directive) and climate change, which means that the focus of this group may change to address

these other issues. New environmental users for example wind farms will also have an impact on fisheries.

France declared to have regional specificities, that is to say different regulatory measures depending on the regions. A scientific program is underway to develop a monitoring method which makes it possible to annually estimate the level of recruitment of crustaceans, including brown crab (RECCRU project), in order to adapt the fishing effort accordingly.

The Chair explained that a larval assessment was carried out in Area 6 several years ago but has not been repeated there or in the English Channel in recent times. The FG could make a recommendation that such a study be carried out more widely and review results from existing historic larval studies.

5. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted (Chair)

Actions

1	Norah with the assistance of the Secretariat to draft the minutes, to identify the points that can be taken forward and circulate within the next 2 weeks.
2	Participation in virtual conferencing: When the Terms of Reference for this Focus Group were revised it was stated that as much of this work as possible would be carried out via virtual conferencing. The Secretariat tried to establish several virtual meetings, but unfortunately there was no response. If we want things done quickly this is the easiest way and the Chair would appreciate greater involvement. Simultaneous interpretation is not possible for virtual meetings, however, the Secretariat is preparing all documents in both languages and will continue bilingual support.

The Chair thanked all the participants and closed the meeting.