



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

MINUTES

WORKING GROUP 3 – ENGLISH CHANNEL

Virtual meeting (Zoom)

Thursday 25 March 2021

10:00 – 11:00 CET

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair Pascal Coquet welcomed the participants and confirmed that the topics addressed today would be those that were not addressed at the last meeting.

2. Update on Focus Group Seabass

Mathieu Vimard: We got around to the advice that was published in December following the Focus Group's work with the report on what had been going on in 2020, including ICES data. The upshot of this advice was that we should stay at steady levels of landings while reducing discards, so fishermen could get full value for their landings. We also issued some advice regarding the tool that divides up the seabass between the various métiers. The tool is based on a very pessimistic assumption and we recommended a revision before its use. With respect to Brexit, we do not have any update. We are still in the transition period, so last year's rules still apply, and we expect that these rules will be extended further until July. Our position remains the same as last year and our plans have not changed. It is a shame that we do not have a COM representative again during this meeting, which also happened the last time. In France, we heard last month that the UK administration proposed in February a limit at 400 kg per month for trawlers, but we have not heard much since. We have tried to receive more information about the British proposal but couldn't get more information. Maybe Nicholas would like to come in?

Nicolas Michelet: No, I do not have anything to add to this. Caroline may be better placed to update us on the most recent discussions. We have no further info on the simulation model that the EU has been using which leaves us with quite some uncertainty.

Caroline Gamblin: Unfortunately, I do not have any further info on the discussions of seabass with the UK. I would like to know if the Commission was invited to this meeting?

Secretariat: Yes, the Secretariat invited the Commission to both the first meetings of WG3 and again to this meeting. The reply was the same, that they are busy with the UK-EU negotiations and could not join this meeting.

We sent an email out this morning regarding the next Inter-AC meeting with DG MARE, asking for suggestions on topics to put on the agenda. Please reply as soon as possible.

Llibori Martinez: Mathieu, what about the rules from last year that will apply until July, I am not sure



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

I am clear on this? Could this be explained further? Is it that they would apply for the first few months of this year?

Mathieu Vimard: Indeed we have received something which may or may not have been validated, but there is a proposal for the regulation to be extended if the negotiations between the EU and the UK are not finalized by the end of March. The pro rata agreement would be extended until 01 July and would cover seven months of the year. The EU was confident that it would be able to conclude the negotiations on time so that this would not be needed.

Should we put into the meeting report that we have reports of many discards of seabass? There are not many participants here in this meeting but maybe the Secretariat can take a note? In 7d there are discards of seabass everywhere.

Chair: It has now been two or three times that the COM has not been present. If they cannot spend 10-15 minutes with the AC, then the members cannot waste their time for discussions. If they do not want to waste their time, well neither can we.

Manu Kelberine: I agree that there have been more and more seabass discards. I think that the need to reduce discards is going to be one of the main arguments to move forward. We must make sure that there is no seabass targeted by trawlers.

Martyn Youell: On seabass, we also can verify Mathieu's point about discards. I work for a fishing company in England, so I don't represent the government or producer organization, but we've seen very significant discards of seabass this year. In particular we're quite concerned about the track record of I think it's 2012 to 2016 to have a seabass authorization and we're asking the UK Government to get rid of this track record, because any trawler can accidentally catch seabass and it essentially discourages companies from building new boats, because they don't have the seabass authorization.

Secretariat: We need to collaborate with the COM as much as we can. It is a very busy time for them as you can see in the letter we received from Director Vitcheva, available on the website. As was pointed out, the next Inter-AC meeting will be held on 05 May and we will of course address their participation in the AC meetings. We will continue looking for a specific meeting on seabass and we will make sure that this topic stays high on our agenda.

ACTION: Secretariat to organize a meeting on seabass with the COM after the negotiations with the UK are concluded.

3. Update on Focus Group Whelk

Mathieu Vimard: We were supposed to have additional UK representatives at this meeting to discuss the whelk issue on the British side, but only Martyn was available to join us today. But this should enable us to start moving on the Focus Group Whelk.



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

Chair: I would like to say that Whelk have become very important for the French. We have a great market in Asia plus our own national market. In Normandy sales in 2020 amounted to 12.000 tons, but prices dropped by 25% percent this year. This activity is not controlled by quote or license, only by size. There are some limits that apply and we have existing problems with various trawlers. Since it is a profitable activity, a lot of people are thinking of starting to fish for whelk. Recently industrial boats over 30 meters have come on the scene. A couple more are currently being built as there had been a good season in 7d for whelks. It would be good to come to a joint agreement: we should have a quota which sets the widths of the grid and the length of the boat.

We could ask to carry out a census regarding the number of boats and the areas they are fishing, possibly distinguishing between 7d and 7e, so that we can get an idea of what is happening. Martyn, according to UK rules, do you need a license to fish for whelk in 7d? And how many vessels are in 7e?

Martyn Youell: The eastern Channel seems more important to UK vessels than the West Channel, where there is some activity but generally inshore. In the eastern Channel it's both offshore and inshore and there is no special permit or license specifically to fish for whelks in the UK licensing system. It is less limited than some other shellfish fisheries. There's a working group in the UK, an initiative by DEFRA, our environment department, looking at co-management of the resource, looking especially at the long-term management of whelk. So far, it just met two or three times so it's at an early stage still, focusing more on data analysis rather than on proposing management measures.

Manu Kelberine: In the west channel, on the FR inshore side, you need to have a license to fish for whelk and I will try to find out more to report at the next FG meeting. We grant licenses which are very much in demand. As far as offshore is concerned, there are no fishing permits in place. What about 7e, are there fishermen and are they involved in that area?

Martyn Youell: From our side, there is some offshore activity in 7e but less than in 7d. Similarly to Manu, in our inshore grounds between zero and six nautical miles, we have some specific permit systems and larger minimum landing size, for example, so we have some local management, but that's very much inshore UK water.

John Lynch: Ireland has a substantial whelk fishery mainly in the Irish sea and in the Celtic sea on the south coasts, possibly on the north Donegal coast as well. There is only a general polyvalent license covering the vessels fishing whelks. The vessels are generally under 15 meters of length. These supply a substantial amount of whelk for the Asian market, and COVID has had an impact on the price. The only measures in place are minimum landing sizes regarding length and width. Most fishing would take place within the 12 miles. The Irish do not fish in the Channel for whelk at all.

Mathieu Vimard: Of course, the situation in 7e is quite different than in 7d, where we have as many English as we have French vessels. In the western Channel we are focusing on working together rather than managing actively. We are talking about the mesh size and in Normandy it is 22mm while the English have said it is 25mm. Is this a rule that applies to them or does it just happen to be their practice that adapted to the market? We know that the British often trade larger whelks with Asia where in France on the fresh market smaller whelk are more important. This could be something we could put into our joint recommendation.



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

Xavier Tetard: I am more familiar with 7d, but the 22mm mesh size is applied across Normandy and Haute de France. The fishery is closed on the weekends and a quota applies. We should not forget about the western Channel, but we need to focus on 7d where the stocks are quite heavily fished, and our statistics show that the fishing effort has gone up on the French side. If we are going to propose a quota, we need to look at the specifics: what time reference to base this on, also mesh size and vessel length. The difference in the size of whelks between the French and the British depends on the market. Using a 22mm mesh means we can discard any whelks that are under 4.5cm. However, we are mindful of the biology and the longevity of this species, whose maturity is at 5 to 5.3cm. It is true that some have looked at 25mm mesh. For zone 7d it would be really useful to have further data.

Martyn Youell: One other country that seems to now have an interest is The Netherlands. There is a large 45m vessel which is actually owned by a British company. So far, this has not come to fish in the Channel, but they may do so in future. My own company has two vessels using 25 mm mesh. This is not a regulation but a voluntary measure. We have to comply with the 45mm landing size. Even with the 25mm mesh, still quite small whelks are being caught. We are definitely interested in developing joint measure as we do want this fishery to be sustainable.

Manu Kelberine: I am not entirely sure about what is on the beds around Brittany, but I think the grill is 23 mm. I would like to ask the Secretariat to set up a meeting of the FG Whelk and to include the Channel West as well in the scope of the Focus Group.

Secretariat: We had asked for expressions of interest to NWWAC members back in September 2020, but this group did not go ahead due to the uncertainties of Brexit and has not formally been established. The group is still open for more members to join. It would be good to set a date for the next meeting of this Focus Group already.

Anais Roussel: I wanted to say that the size data we have are based on data on Channel West and we do not know if these are the same everywhere. We have had a project in place over the past year, but we have no results yet. As far as maturity is concerned, we are also referring to Channel west data, so we do not know if we are indeed protecting the reproductive stock.

Chair: At the next Focus Group meeting we could certainly invite UK representatives to join. Could Martyn already give us an opinion on the size of fishing vessels? The French are against large vessels to enter this fishery.

Martyn Youell: The vessels that we have as a company are 15 and 18 meters long. We are aware that the eastern Channel can get very busy, which could lead to some conflict. We would not want to see larger whelk vessels coming into this area either.

Chair: I noticed that the Irish mentioned 18 meters as their maximum length. In France we have 4 or 5 vessels that are longer than 18 meters, but they could be covered by a license.

Mathieu Vimard: Yes, I think that could be an idea. It means that people who are operating can



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

carry on, but for the future it can send us down the track where we are more adapted. In the future we will also have the management of species which are not under quota, including whelk, as part of the UK-EU negotiations. The French production currently is very different from 2012-16 landings, on which the current limits are based. We could suggest a common quota, including the UK as well, but it is not up to us to decide on this. We could set a maximum fishing limit with the objective that it could be set as a rule.

Martyn Youell: We have a group in the UK taking about cooperative management of non-quota species, but we are facing a top-down moment, where the TCA has set quota limits, and that could take over everything we're trying to do from bottom up. For example, British boats may not be able to fish for whelk in French waters, but French vessels then may not be able to fish for example for cab or cuttlefish in UK waters. It is an important question that could have a big impact on how we fish in each other's waters.

Chair: I wanted to ask Dominique Thomas if she wanted to comment on the Haute de France area? What is the vessel size there?

Dominique Thomas: We are building some local regulation to preserve this resource: we have set a limit of landings and a mesh size, but we would need to adopt a regulation on common issues at national level. Our vessels are surely not larger than 20 meters.

Xavier Tetard: In Normandy most vessels are less than 12 meters long, the biggest are of 18.5 meters. There is also a Focus Group being set up at the national level to discuss this.

Chair: I think we can stop the discussion for today and set a date for the focus group to meet.

ACTION: Secretariat to organise the first meeting of Focus Group Whelk (possible dates 14 and 15 April) and invite UK observers.

4. Input on how to improve the functioning of the NWWAC

Secretariat: This item was mainly to allow the working group to comment on the proposal prepared by the Focus Group Brexit on the difference restructuring options that we have for the NWWAC following Brexit. Working Group 3 is the less impacted: the Focus Group Brexit thought that this WG has a very specific identity and that it should be kept separate from the others. If you would like to bring forward any comment on these proposals, please send us an email.

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

1	Secretariat to organize a meeting on seabass with the COM after the negotiations with the UK are concluded.
2	Secretariat to organise the first meeting of Focus Group Whelk (possible dates 14 and 15 April) and invite UK observers.



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

6. List of participants

Members	Organisation
Anais Roussell	CRPMEM Hauts-de-France
Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM
Delphine Roncin	FromNORD
Dominique Thomas	OPCMEMMN
Gérald Hussenot	Blue Fish
Llibori Martinez	IFSUA
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Manu Kelberine	CDPMEM 22
Mathieu Vimard	Organisation des Pêcheurs Normands
Pascal Coquet	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Sander Meyns	Rederscentrale
Xavier Tetard	CRPMEM Normandie
Observers	Organisation
Nicholas Michelet	CNPMEM
Martyn Youell	
NWWAC Secretariat	
Matilde Vallerani	
Mo Mathies	