



DRAFT MINUTES

HORIZONTAL WORKING GROUP Virtual Meeting

Monday 14 March 2022

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair Emiel Brouckaert welcomed all participants. Apologies were received from Jacopo Pasquero (EBCD) and Sean O'Donoghue (KFO). The agenda was adopted with the addition of the fuel crisis as an urgent topic to address at the start of the meeting.

Fuel Crisis

The Chair explained that a meeting was held with the Commissioner that morning to discuss the issues the industry is facing regarding the fuel crisis. A brief overview of what was discussed was presented to the members identifying that the Commission is aware of the situation in the industry presented by the fuel and commodity prices. The Chair detailed how at the Versailles meeting of the Heads of State last week addressed the issue of the fuel crisis, and the possibilities for aid to various food production sectors in the EU. He reported how the Commissioner asked the representatives at that morning's meeting to consider how the Producers Organisations might adapt their planning to target stocks that could remain profitable. The Chair emphasised how the Commission is working around the clock to fix the crisis and is considering how supports such as state aid, guarantees or subsidised loans may be used to enable operations to continue. The chair highlighted that temporary support for gas and electricity may be granted but fuel will not be subsidised at this time, but the possibility of producer organisations having their own fuel storage facilities could be looked at. The Chair noted that some representatives at the meeting appreciated the supports that were given during the pandemic, but this funding can often be delayed. The Chair reported that the meeting concluded with mention that other cabinets were taking similar initiatives and reiterated that the subsidizing of fossil fuels would not be considered.

The Chair then called on the members for suggestions. Johnny Woodlock mentioned that the agri – sector has the same issues and working with them could strengthen our had as both sectors are vital for food security. Patrick Murphy interjected that he appreciated there will be no fuel subsidies as this would be contradictory to policy but suggested that a tie up scheme could be an alternative. Murphy also suggested that fuel storage could help relieve some of the problems as supply issues would be addressed. The Chair suggested to prioritise the preparation of advice on this issue, and that this could be put forward to the Ex-Com to specifically address this topic.

Hugo Gonzalez mentioned that Irene Prieto who has been nominated to replace Purificación Fernández joined the meeting to familiarise herself with how the AC works. Gonzalez stressed how dire the situation is in Spain concerning oil prices which has resulted in the fleet activity stopping. Gonzalez remarked that the Commission must realise that if the fleet cannot maintain activity that fishing will stop and therefore food security in danger.



Olivier Lepretre agreed with what had been said and stressed that the Commission needs to reconsider its position. Lepretre also confirmed that a lot of the French fleet are not working. Jean-Marie Robert agreed that the fleet situation was very serious and that subsidies for gas and electricity but not for oil amounted to discrimination.

The Chair reiterated that this topic would be addressed again under item 6 later in the day.

ACTION: ExCom to approve additional NWWAC submission on the current fuel crisis.

Action points from the minutes of the last meeting (13 September 2021, virtual)

1	Follow up on the DG MARE Action Plan to Conserve ecosystem and Fisheries Resources and the TM report putting forward actions around this. Check NWWAC involvement in DG MARE / DG ENVI cooperation around this
	Presentation by DG MARE at Inter-AC meeting 19 January, slides and minutes on NWWAC website
2	Secretariat to list all topics on NWW MSG agenda and clearly identify which NWWAC WG / FG is addressing which topic to prepare advice and the work plans around this
	Done – these included: EU-UK TM (letter sent to COM on 27/08/2021, following this up with the MSG) Celtic Sea TM (WG2 and FG LO) mesh size for hake fishery (WG2) Danish seine and cohabitation in the Channel (WG3, two letters sent to the COM on 11/10/2021 and 12/04/2021) Directed fisheries for squid (advice sent to MSG on 11/03/2022)
3	Members to review the CIBBRiNA work programme and presentation to respond to the potential for the NWWAC to be present at the Advisory Board of this project
	NWWAC expression of interested sent 14 October 2021, project update expected April 2022
4	Set date for FG LO to address the preparation of the choke risk advice
	Work was carried out, advice submitted 09 December 2021
5	HWG suggests to approve NWWAC participation in the SEAwisE project
	Participation approved, first NWWAC stakeholder workshop held 27 January 2022, Update from this group under agenda item 5
6	Secretariat to submit the joint NWWAC/NSAC/MAC advice on brown crab to the ExCom for approval
	Advice submitted to COM on 08 October 2021. Reply received 07 December 2021. Update from this group under agenda item 6.
7	Proposal to establish a joint FG with the NSAC on the review of the MSFD consultation
	Joint NSAC/NWWAC FG was set up. Update from this group under agenda item 6.
8	Proposal to the ExCom to set up a Focus Group on Social Aspects
	Joint NWWAC/NSAC FG was set up and has met 4 times so far. Update from this group under agenda item 6.
9	Secretariat to distribute the Terms of Reference for the blockchain webinar for members to comment on prior to submission to ExCom
	Blockchain webinar was held in December 2021, report was published in January 2022
10	Proposal for the NWWAC to monitor the work on green claims initiatives and potentially develop advice on the PEF CR (Product Environmental Footprint Categorisation Rules), specifically in the FG Climate & Environment
	The Secretariat repeatedly contacted the organizer and received no response so far.



2. Elections of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair noted that two nominations for Chair of the HWG were received: Patrick Murphy and Emiel Brouckaert. No nominations for Vice-Chair were received. Murphy took the floor to thank the members for the nomination and expressed his willingness to accept the position of Vice-Chair to support and learn from the current Chair. The Chair accepted both nomination and suggestion. No further candidates came forward and election of Chair and Vice-Chair were confirmed.

3. COM overview on ongoing dossiers and upcoming advice requests

a. Fishing Opportunities 2022, TCA and work of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries

Cristina Ribeiro began by indicating that she has followed the discussions closely taking notes of the information shared during the meeting regarding the problems with fuel because of the situation in Ukraine. Ribeiro reported on the details of the tentative calendar of consultations for Fishing opportunities in 2022 remarking that the bulk of consultations are scheduled after September. The tri-lateral consultation meetings will take place in April and further meetings will take place later in the year after the ICES advice is published. Ribeiro mentioned that the conflict in Ukraine has impacted ICES working groups and resulted in some being deferred and others halted. The Commission is working very closely with ICES to mitigate any effects this may have on the calendar so talks can proceed.

Patrick Lavelle then took the floor to discuss the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF) and the TCA. He mentioned there would be a meeting on the 25 April of the SCF. The written record of the annual fisheries consultations with the UK shows that there are a number of topics with deadlines specified for talks and guidelines for special stocks, management areas, non-quota stocks and other issues around management areas that were agreed to be considered. Lavelle could not confirm what is in the agenda as this will be agreed in April but it can be foreseen that some topics have priority due to deadlines. Lavelle closed by saying that the calendar of consultations is still provisional.

b. Action Plan to Conserve Fisheries Resources and Protect Marine Ecosystems - [Presentation by DG MARE at Inter-AC meeting 19 January, slides and minutes on NWWAC website](#)

Maria Moset (DG MARE) thanked the AC for its contribution to the consultation and stressed that DG MARE counts on the opinion and advice of the ACs. All stakeholders were involved in the consultation process which started with the EU Biodiversity Strategy. The September report on Technical Measures is a basic tool to achieve these goals both to improve selectivity of fishing and to contribute to the protection of the marine ecosystems. She pointed out that the Commission was analyzing the contributions to the on-line consultation for the design of the Action Plan. The purpose of the Action Plan is to concretely exploit the synergies between fisheries and environmental policies. Moset explained that the Action Plan will have different chapters including selectivity, sensitive species, commercial species, data collection and environmental goals. Currently the Action Plan is still in the development stage with no final decisions made as to its final design.

Patrick Murphy thanked Moset for her presentation and commented that the ACs were doing their best to send in their own views in response to the consultations. Murphy queried whether climate change and how this is affecting fish movement and biomass levels and the socio-economic implications for countries are being considered. John Lynch queried whether the SCF will work to align EU and UK technical measures, as the difference in gear is proving to be a problem especially in the Irish Sea.



The Chair raised the question of how the advice from the ACs is weighted in the Commission compared to that of individual citizens. Moset replied that the idea the CFP is still in force and valid. She stressed that by the end of the year the Commission will report on the functioning of the CFP. The Action Plan complements the Technical Measures report and advances the environmental pillar of the upcoming CFP report. The aim of the Action Plan is also to complement the MSFD review, new MPAs definition, the upcoming initiative on nature restoration, and will link with the implementation of the Birds & Habitats Directives. Moset emphasized that the advice from the ACs is very useful to aid the Commission in understanding how to process the large number of contributions along with the scientific information.

Hugo González took the floor to pose a question on the link between the financial and social sustainability of fisheries. He continued by mentioning that the fishing industry and especially the trawling sector are continually being attacked and demonised. He stressed that trawl gears are necessary for the capture of demersal species, but that the fishing industry is not interested in destroying the environment which is the habitat of the natural resource they harvest. González asked Moset to bear in mind that the fishing sector contributes to the food security of the entire EU and due to the fuel crisis, the fleet will be forced to stop fishing if nothing is done. Murphy reiterated that it would be counterproductive to destroy the resource that the industry depends on. He emphasized that there has been a huge collapse in socio-economic returns of fishing and therefore a massive reduction in the fleet in his location since the beginning of the CFP. Murphy queried whether the Commission has evaluated the Dreen Deal and its possible effects on the fleet.

Moset recognised the concerns and thanked the members for their comments. She indicated that all the data will be considered along with the fishery sector information and the information in the questionnaire. As the Action Plan is being populated the social economic impacts will be considered.

José Beltran stated that the situation is urgent for the survival of the industry as we are entering a new energy crisis. Prioritisation of the fuel crisis is paramount as otherwise the industry will not survive. Lepretre intervened to comment on how urgent the situation is, he suggested that the pace of change of the CFP be reduced or stopped as the industry is suffocating. He noted that with the constant reduction of fishing the environmental problems may be alleviated but in the end, there will not be a fishing fleet. Woodlock commented that it is easy to demonise trawling but that the industry is currently under great pressure. As a representative of an environmental NGO it is his duty to look at the use of resource for everyone. He pointed out that due to the fuel crisis there may be a huge relaxation in fishing pressure and would like to see how this affects the resource in the future when there is a return to normal fishing pressure. Manu Kelberine interjected that he feels this is not an opportunity as there may be no ships left to fish after the fuel crisis. He felt that the Commission's plan for the preservation of resources see fish as the only variable that may be adjusted and does not recognise other pressure factors which is becoming less acceptable.

Moset thanked the members again for their comments and advised that she was taking note of everything. She explained that the Action Plan would be a way to improve and work along the same lines. She reported that other topics in preparation for the Action Plan were new technical measures, future enforcement regulations and also the implementation act of technical measures. She closed by mentioning that she was more than happy to participate and take questions in any future meetings of the AC.



c. UK Technical Measures

Ribeiro took the floor to discuss the UK technical measures and mentioned that unfortunately there was not a lot of information available to share with the AC. She reported that there had been an exchange of information in order to get clarification on a technical level. Talks with the UK are high on the agenda of the Commission and will resume under the SCF, however, no date has been agreed so far. She reported that both the 2021 and 2022 written records contained publicly available commitments for discussion on the Celtic Sea, West of Scotland, and the Irish Sea. Ribeiro noted that the priority was the Celtic Sea, and the objective was to find a level playing field. She mentioned that all the notifications received from the UK are related to the technical measures in one way or another.

Brouckaert began by asking about the cross-border fishing and how the differences in technical measures between EU and UK might be dealt with. He also mentioned that planning for 2022 consultations in June and reporting on all topics is important for the AC in giving advice and hopes the war in Ukraine will not impact the work that needs to be done by ICES so that fishing can continue in a sustainable manner. He thanked Lavelle for the information on the meeting on the 25 April and asked if there would be any further information on the representatives on the SCF and how stakeholder input will be considered.

Ribeiro intervened and stated that the main goal of industry and stakeholders is the level playing field in terms of stocks and control measures. When there are different measures on each side of the border, a common view is needed to achieve this level playing field. It is not clear yet how this may be achieved. Additional work is being carried out by the TCA and Member States to find this common view. The UK is to share additional work that has been completed on derogations on thresholds, *Nephrops* and gear. These additional technical elements and scientific support will inform the discussions. Ribeiro stressed that the Commission is working with ICES to identify a plan that will hopefully allow the work on the advice for fishing opportunities to carry on.

Lavelle reported that the Commission had received a notification of a closure for seabream nesting areas off Jersey. He stated that this had been circulated to MS and queried whether it had been received. Lavelle mentioned that the agenda of the SCF is to be set two working weeks beforehand. The Commission will represent the EU side and there will be one representative from each MS and UK representatives from their various administrations. Lavelle explained that as this falls under the TCA certain procedures apply and there is less room for flexibility. Stakeholder input comes from both sides through the respective representatives on the SCF.

The Chair mentioned that limited questions would be allowed at this point due to the time and further questions should be submitted through the NWWAC Secretariat. Alexandra Philippe asked how the technical measures, once agreed upon in the SCF would be transposed into EU law. She added that the original process involved joint recommendations involving stakeholders from all regions and queried if this would be the process going forward. Dominique Thomas highlighted the large number of topics that need to be addressed and the need to represent small scale fisheries. She stressed that agreement is vital as it is not workable to have different mesh sizes or measures on each side of the border. Secondly, she presented an urgent demand to receive the information on assigned quotas earlier than January in order to be able to fish smarter. Kelberine requested that the Commission support a working group in the SCF for the Islands in the English Channel.

ACTION: Members to send any additional questions for DG MARE to the Secretariat.



d. Functioning of the ACs

The presentation can be found [here](#).

Pascal Colson presented on the Commission Delegated Regulation 2022/204 amending Delegated Regulation 2015/242 (OJ L 34, 16/2/22) laying down detailed rules on the functioning of the Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy.

The Chair thanked Colson for the presentation and mentioned that some of these items will be looked at more closely during the ExCom meeting to ensure that this AC is abiding by this new amendment. Mo Mathies took the floor and queried whether a written update on the compliance of the new rules under the new delegated regulation was required at any stage.

Colson replied that performance reviews of the ACs are carried out regularly and during the meetings it will be clear if it is the case for example if no Vice-Chair had been elected. She stressed that the Commission is ready to take questions at any stage and will assist the ACs when necessary.

Murphy agreed that inclusiveness is important for the ACs. He outlined the possibility that despite every effort to find a Vice-Chair, the position cannot be filled and asked what the penalty would be in this case. He queried whether it would be possible to receive assistance in this case such as a drive for membership or financial assistance to encourage people to get involved. Marina Le Gurun questioned whether it was obligatory to fill all ExCom seats in the ACs.

Mathies clarified for Murphy that it was only in the case of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the AC that there needed to be members from both industry and OIG in the positions and this was not the case for the working groups. Colson confirmed this and added that for WGs and FGs it was possible to have Chairs and Vice-Chair from different groups, but this was not compulsory. She added that ExCom seats could be left empty.

The Chair apologised that some of the agenda points would not be discussed such as the MSFD and the Commission's COM request for STECF expert registration due to time constraints and asked members to send questions to the Secretariat. He stressed that these were all very important points, but the meeting would have to move on.

ACTION: Secretariat to circulate Commission response to the joint AC letter on AC advice and evaluate if the need arises for a follow-up submission.

4. Collaboration with the NWW MSG

The Chair mentioned that slides had been prepared on this topic by the Secretariat, but unfortunately Dirk van Guyze from the Belgian MSG presidency was unable to attend. However other MS representatives were present so that it was possible to proceed with the topics that were discussed at the NWW Regional Member States Technical Group which was held on 9 February. This was the first virtual meeting under the new Belgian Presidency.

Landing obligation

Matilde Vallerani noted that the Joint Recommendation on the Discard Plan 2023 was discussed at this meeting including considerations regarding the future of the Discard Plan post 2023. The issue of the control of the LO was considered and a letter on infringement procedures sent to the



Commission. The questionnaire on the implementation of the LO in 2021 was discussed with the NWWAC having sent a contribution on the 4th of March, which was based on previously adopted advice.

Technical measures

Vallerani reported that there was a presentation to the MSG on the STECF EWG report on technical measures in the Celtic Sea. She mentioned that the MSG expressed the importance of the continued work in the Celtic Sea and explained how the UK dimension needs to be considered which will be part of the role of the SCF. The coherence of measures across the EU-UK border and the UK measures notification period were also discussed during the meeting.

CFP & CMO targeted consultations

Vallerani stated that the MSG had discussed the CFP and CMO targeted consultations with the Commission. She explained that this is made up of a three steps approach of the consultation process. Firstly, there was a questionnaire which was being worked on and was to be submitted that day after the deadline had been postponed. Vallerani mentioned the next step being the in-depth discussions at regional level from April onwards. A final stakeholder event would be held on the 10 June.

Eel advice request

Vallerani reported that ICES advice on eel for 2021 was for zero catch for the first time, but that this would be discussed later under agenda item 6. She stated the importance of this to the MS due to the EU-UK dimension.

AOB

Vallerani detailed how some other topics were briefly mentioned such as the directed fisheries for squid where there was no progress and no consensus position found. Therefore, the topic was on hold for the time being until the AC has developed its position and the ExCom has approved it. Another topic was Danish seines in area 7d, where no progress had been made as yet. The Scheveningen Group was to address this and is still waiting for the Commission's legal interpretation on definition of gears such as Danish seine, anchor seine and flyshoot. The Commission is preparing a delegated act clarifying that the intention was to apply the exemption to anchor seine only, therefore this could solve some of the issues on the topic.

5. Update on SEAwisE workshop

The presentation can be found [here](#).

Jochen Depestele took the floor to present on the first NWWAC stakeholder workshop of this project which was carried out on 27 January. He reported that the idea was to get feedback on items which were thought important for the ecosystem-based fisheries management and that the workshop had been mainly attended by industry.

The most important social items put forward were wind farms which included the loss of fishing grounds, and also the effect of on the ecosystem such as sedimentary suspension and the effects on the fish stocks. He reported that the second element was employment which he explained was the value of fisheries for local and coastal communities to provide jobs as well to society at large, followed by pollution and economic viability of the fishing industry.

The most important ecological items included climate change and also related topics such as migration and the spatial distribution of commercial stocks.



Depestele also mentioned the list of commercial and non-commercial species that were raised as topics for the workshops, as well as the topic of management measures and how they related to limits of catches and TACs and quota and technical measures, as well as MPAs. These are the topics where scientific advice would be sought.

Depestele highlighted that SEAwise will take these main items and produce end-user driven advice based on a systematic review approach. He stressed that including all the links and components in ecosystem based fisheries management is very challenging, but the next step would be to provide feedback on the scientific knowledge and translate this into advice and return to the NWWAC by 2023.

The Chair opened the floor to questions and Woodlock asked if all predators were taken into account and not just marine mammals. Depestele replied that this was the case.

Murphy hoped that the effects of wind farms on spawning grounds was considered and also raised the issue of the creation of MPAs with the concurrent loss of fishing grounds. Depestele replied that the management of wind farms was not included but that effects are, for example effects on nursery grounds or displacement of fishing.

6. Advice and Focus Groups Update

The presentation can be found [here](#).

The Chair invited the Secretariat to take the floor to present the updates. Mathies began by discussing the Joint NWWAC/NSAC advice on the MSFD stating that the final draft is going through the approval procedures in both Executive Committees with the deadline of 22 March following which this will be submitted to the Commission.

Vallerani presented the next topic which was the Joint AC letter on the weight of AC advice from several ACs (PeIAC, NWWAC, MAC, CC RUP, LDAC, MEDAC, AAC, NSAC, CCS, BISAC) submitted on 07 March. She explained that this submission was led by PeIAC with a meeting taking place in January. She detailed how the number of public consultations from the Commission has increased, and while the NWWAC has been very much involved in providing replies and advice, it was noted that these consultations seem to target more individual citizens and interest groups rather than multi-stakeholder groups such as the ACs. She mentioned that it would be more difficult to provide a consensus contribution from the AC to a channel like an online survey as the ACs have certain procedures for providing advice. This requires more time and should give more weight to the responses from the ACs which should be treated on a different scale in comparison to ones from individuals. The ACs also recommended that the Commission would document the uptake of the AC advice at the end of the consultation processes and take into account the working processes of the ACs by for example flagging upcoming consultations as early as possible. Translated documents should also be provided and the Commission should also engage in active dialogue with the ACs. The letter can be found on the NWWAC website [here](#).

Murphy interjected to thank the Secretariat for all the work carried out. He questioned whether fishermen had protection under the legislation that was coming in under the MSFD, as there were new policies and different departments dealing with these. The Chair replied that this topic is on the weight of AC advice, not to do with the legal standing of fishermen on national level which was a different issue.



González took the floor to state that the same problem was occurring in Spain. He felt that the fisheries ministry, and other ministries were dysfunctional and needed to agree on topics. The Chair agreed that different countries handled the directives from the Commission differently and the problems were widespread across the EU, but that the letter regarding the weight of the ACs was submitted and they now awaited feedback. Murphy added that the Commission may multiply the submissions in order to reflect the amount of membership that is involved. The Chair said that this will be noted in the minutes.

Mathies added that it is a silo mentality that is seen in the national authorities and the Commission, which has been addressed in some of the NWWAC's advice previously by asking for more cross sectoral and cross departmental co-operation.

CFP/CMO

Vallerani introduced the update on the consultation on the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and the of the Common Market Organization with the latter being led by the MAC. She explained that the CFP review response was approved by ExCom and was due to be submitted to the Commission that day. She reported that the advice drafting group is also taking care of the questionnaire that was received from the Member of the European Parliament Gabriel Mato who was preparing a report on the CFP. The AC also asked members to provide individual replies which was then combined to provide input to the questionnaire. Mathies emphasized that she believes the ACs have a very important role and called on the members who are involved at a national level with their own national administrations on the CFP review to advocate that AC work is vital to bring concerns forward to the Commission.

Eels: Commission request for AC advice on eel management

Mathies reported that the request on eel management was received on 10 December 2021 and that collaboration with SWWAC and NSAC was explored. A draft advice document was developed by NSAC, with the NWWAC Secretariat currently coordinating this advice. The deadline for submission of advice is 04 April 2022.

Landing Obligation

The Chair reported that the advice from the FG addressing choke risk in the NWW after exemptions was submitted on 9 December 2021. The next meeting in February looked at the first round of comments on advice on the Joint Recommendation Discard Plan 2023. He noted that the deadline for contributions to the Discard Plan 2023 is 01 May and stressed the importance of working on the joint recommendations for this.

Skates & Rays

John Lynch took the floor to update the members on the work of this FG which is led by the NWWAC. At the last meeting there was a discussion on EU wide harmonization of identification guides for skates & rays. Supporting information for the setting up of an STECF Expert Working Group on Skates & Rays was submitted in January 2022. The Commission proposal to STECF on the establishment of an EWG contains all elements proposed by the NWWAC.

González commented that the Spanish Institute of Oceanography has been working on taking samples of rays and skates and this has been supported by fishermen with observers on board vessels and he requested this to be reviewed by the FG.

The Chair thanked Gonzalez for this information and requested Lynch to follow up on this in the focus



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group. Mathies interjected that this would be noted as an action point for a representative to be invited to present this information at the next meeting of the FG.

ACTION: Secretariat to contact González to arrange a presentation of Spanish skates & rays research to the NWWAC/NSAC Focus Group Skates & Rays

Inter-AC Brexit Forum

The Chair took the floor to present an update on the new forum that has been set up to deal with horizontal issues that may arise due to Brexit and may be jointly addressed by all affected ACs. A first meeting was held on the 10 February which was attended by PelAC, NWWAC, NSAC, MAC, LDAC and facilitated by the PelAC ([link](#) to report). A joint letter is currently going through the approval procedures in the ACs. The next meeting is scheduled for 05 May which will be facilitated by the NWWAC. The Chair mentioned an outstanding question for the Commission, which was how the stakeholder forum can become engaged with the SCF. A draft letter regarding this engagement has been approved by forum members and has been sent to the ExCom recently with approval being expected by 30 March.

Climate & Environment

As the Chair of the FG was unable to attend the meeting Vallerani gave a quick update. She reported that this very important piece of advice on the Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and preserve the marine ecosystem was submitted to the Commission at the end of 2021. Currently no specific topics have been raised to be addressed by this FG, but that the NSAC is also working on establishing a similar FG and therefore it may result in a joint FG depending on topics.

Control and Compliance

As the Chair of this FG was unable to attend Vallerani reported that this FG had been on hold for a period, as it was felt appropriate to wait for the revision of the control regulation for this to be considered by the NWWAC. The topic of the control and implementation of the LO in relation to Article 27 was discussed in a webinar with EFCA, and this will continue to be worked on.

Considerations regarding the potential establishment of a new Focus Group Brown Crab

Norah Parke took the floor and reported that extensive advice had been produced in September 2021 by the NWWAC, MAC and NSAC which was to continue scientific monitoring of brown crab to inform stock levels and avoid excessive exploitation. The advice also mentioned the promotion of the exchange of best practices and to work with EU and other stakeholders to develop sustainable market outlets for brown crab.

Parke highlighted that there is still a certain level of trade happening with some operators successfully exporting to China, however, the COVID pandemic meant restrictions. She proposed in the consideration of a new FG on brown crab that it may be wise to take a step back and review in time the changes in the science on the health of stock in Channel, Ireland, and Scotland which have noted a decline in stock and the rising effort in the North Sea.

The Chair inquired if Parke was in touch with the MAC and NSAC on these outstanding issues and if they saw it necessary to re-establish the focus group then it could be brought to ExCom. Parke suggested writing to the other ACs and reporting back in July.

Manu Kelberine commented that the fleet from Brittany is collaborating with scientists to understand what is believed to be a health problem.



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ACTION: Secretariat to consult with the MAC and NSAC regarding the potential establishment of a new FG Brown Crab

Social aspects

The Chair Bruno Dachicourt stated that the FG does not have agreed ToR yet as they were delayed due to the current crisis, but that these will be completed for next meeting. He also raised the issue of no available written procedures regarding the development of urgent advice and their approvals by ExCom.

Mathies noted this as an action point and stated that members felt strongly that this was an appropriate response but that the AC has no written rules regarding responses in emergency situations like this. She explained that the informal procedure was to raise matters with the Secretariat and see if this is an issue within the scope of any existing FG. Then the Secretariat would contact the Chair of said FG and discuss the need for response which would be the relevant Chair's decision. A member of the FG asked for the Secretariat to develop these written procedures for inclusion in the Rules of Procedure which would then need to be voted on by the General Assembly in September.

The Chair asked if this was already covered by the fast-track procedure to which Mathies replied that the fast-track procedure covers the approval procedure only and not the development procedure of this advice. Mathies suggested a way to solve this might be to add a sentence to the ToR referring to any additional issues that may arise during the existence of the FG can be addressed.

González took the floor stating that the current problem in the EU is the war in Ukraine and the related fuel crisis. He reiterated the need to speak to the Commissioner and explain that there is a need to adopt measures or the fishing fleet will be paralysed. The Chair outlined the actions to bring forward advice to address the emergency situation stating that a letter has been drafted for approval by ExCom on Wednesday. Murphy agreed with González but stated that the issues is not just about price but also about fuel reserves. He mentioned that a letter had been sent to the Irish Minister about fuel reserves and suggested that this element could be added to the letter to the Commission.

Lepretre reiterated how urgent the matter was and the need for solutions. He remarked that as well as a concern for the environment the livelihoods of fishermen need to be considered. He proposed a meeting of all ACs to discuss the situation and gather suggestions to help fishmen. Lynch expressed his support of the ideas put forward by the other contributors. He questioned whether the EU should be accepting Russian caught fish and asked that this be brought to the Commission. Kelberine agreed with the contributors and with Lynch on the boycott of Russian fish. He felt that food security in the EU is being challenged.

ACTION: Secretariat to make proposal for a written procedure regarding emergency advice development in the NWWAC

Seismic & Wind

Mathies recalled that two submissions to the Commission were made in 2020 from the Joint NWWAC/PelAC Focus Group which were supported by the NSAC. These specific requests to the Commission were to ask ICES to investigate the impact of seismic surveys and the development of offshore wind energy. However, both requests were turned down by the Commission, but additional direct discussions were offered. This was continually followed up by NWWAC Secretariat and led to presentations made at Inter AC meeting on 19 January. The Commission agreed to a dedicated virtual



workshop to address the ACs' concerns and the date of the 10 May 2022 was proposed.

ACTION: ExCom to approve the organisation and running of the NWWAC/PelAC workshop on impacts of seismic and offshore wind energy developments

7. Choke Mitigation Tool

Michael Keatinge took the floor to give an update on the work on updating the choke mitigation tool. He explained that updates have been made to allow the determination of whether changes in TAC and quotas are due to science or Brexit and distinguish these impacts. He indicated that he would like to get an idea of which fisheries the members are concerned about and gather names for a drafting group to meet next week. He asked members to share where they believe chokes occur and then practical work could start to adapt the tool to explain these points..

The Chair stressed the need to continue to populate the work that has been done with specific information on the fleets and the risk and the most threatened activities with which Keatinge agreed.

The Chair opened the floor to questions and added that this information could be of interest to the Commission as they are reporting on the CFP.

Murphy explained that the strategy used in Ireland to stop choking is to fish month by month and use quota swaps. He queried whether the appearance of greater quantities of Spurdog on the grounds might be discussed at the group or if it would be just the quota species.

Keatinge replied that this certainly could be looked at. He explained that if the LO is causing disproportionate difficulties, there are ways of looking at the data for example by using the choke mitigation tool to look at alternatives and types of technical measures that might be considered.

The Chair stated that in his opinion the most pressing need was to concentrate on quota species and discard avoidance. Lynch voiced his main concern was how to deal with stocks under by-catch quotas which have zero catch advice, for example *Nephrops* in the Irish Sea and the by-catch of whiting and cod, and stressed the need for a better solution. He affirmed that he would be happy to be involved in this group to gather ideas.

Keatinge replied that members are contending with changes to quotas for scientific reasons and due to Brexit that have impacts downstream. These things must be taken into account to put forward ideas for the review of the CFP. He suggested a short meeting of the drafting group in the next week or two to discuss examples that can be worked on by himself and Dominic in order to prepare the submission to the Commission.

González highlighted that the problem for the Spanish trawler fleet is that they do not have quota for all species. He would like to see fishing made simpler and suggested looking at the approximate catch composition by species for each fleet to come up with some ideas. He remarked that ICES has the information on this, and it could be used to give fleets a percentage of quota based on prior information.

Vallerani queried whether the FG Landing Obligation would be the right forum for this discussion. The Chair suggested a Doodle Poll be set up to convene the FG so that work could begin.

Thomas expressed that all species would be choke species in one fishery or another. She asserted that



Brexit was making it impossible to fish as all species quotas are reduced. She felt that the species composition is known to science and percentages could be used to solve this problem. She affirmed that fleets do not want to discard and would rather use what is caught especially when dead. Therefore, there was a need to be more flexible, as the current situation was no longer solving the problem. The Chair thanked Thomas for her contribution and clarified that rays have a survivability derogation and seabass is not subject to the LO but these topics can be added to the discussions on the choke mitigation tool.

Lepretre affirmed that fishermen are tired of discarding fish, which does not make sense in terms of food security.

González provided details on these mesh selectivity trials for megrim and confirmed that the results will be shared with the NWWAC. The Chair noted that a lot of fisheries are testing technical measures to reduce unwanted catch.

Murphy mentioned Irish gear trials and explained that a trigger mechanism should be used when a species might be more abundant than the scientific advice predicted. This could be invoked when discard rates are high and allow a more precautionary approach as high discard rates are in contradiction of what the LO was designed for.

Keatinge remarked that this was the sort of discussion that he hoped to have during the drafting group. He mentioned that at the last review of the CFP 10 years ago the LO was introduced and now a review is needed to see has it worked and what changes are needed for the way forward. He hopes the drafting group could work on the data broken down by fleet. He explained that with this data the members can draft appropriate submissions to the Commission.

The Chair thanked Keatinge for the update on the choke mitigation tool and called for suggestions as to actions the AC recommend to solve the issues.

ACTION: Secretariat to set up Doodle for meeting of the Focus Group Landing Obligation to discuss the update of the NWWAC Choke Tool

8. NWWAC Online Fisheries Management Chart development

Jacob Ashton from Mindfully Wired Communications took the floor to present on the NWWAC interactive WebGIS tool. The presentation can be found [here](#).

Ashton explained the main findings from the scoping study and how these would be taken forward. He finished by outlining the timeline and confirmed that the project was on track for publishing the tool in October to November this year. He expressed that he would welcome any feedback or questions. The Chair thanked him for the presentation and due to time constraints asked for any questions to be sent through the Secretariat.

9. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	ExCom to approve additional NWWAC submission on the current fuel crisis
2	Members to send any questions for the Commission on the topics discussed to the Secretariat for written submission to DG MARE



3	Secretariat to circulate Commission response to the joint AC letter on AC advice and evaluate if the need arises for a follow-up submission.
4	Secretariat to contact Hugo González to arrange a presentation of Spanish skates & rays research to the NWWAC/NSAC Focus Group Skates & Rays
5	Secretariat to consult with the MAC and NSAC regarding the potential establishment of a new Focus Group Brown Crab
6	Secretariat to make proposal for a written procedure regarding emergency advice development in the NWWAC
7	ExCom to approve the organisation and running of the NWWAC/PelAC workshop on impacts of seismic and offshore wind energy developments
8	Secretariat to set up Doodle for meeting of the Focus Group Landing Obligation to discuss the update of the NWWAC Choke Tool

Participants

NWWAC members	
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Emiel Brouckaert (Chair)	Rederscentrale
Enda Conneely	IIMRO
Juan Carlos Corras Arias	PESCAGALICIA-ARPEGA-OBARCO
Hugo González	ANASOL/ARVI
Manu Kelberine	CRPM de Bretagne
Julien Lamothe	ANOP
Marina Le Gurun	ONG BLUE FISH
Olivier Lepretre	CRPMEM Hauts-de-France
John Lynch	Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Luis Francisco Marin	O.P.P.A.O.
Anaïs Mourtada	CNPMEM
Patrick Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation
Aodh (Hugh) O Domhnaill	IFPO
Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation Ltd
Norah Parke	KFO
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Irene Prieto	ANASOL/ARVI
Erwan Quemeneur	CDPMEM 29
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne
Delphine Roncin	FROM Nord
Dominique Thomas	OP CME MMN
Johnny Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Experts and observers	
Jacob Ashton	Mindfully Wired Communications
Marta del Avellanal	Ministerio De Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación
Cristina Castro Ribeiro	DG MARE
Pascale Colson	DG MARE
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Michael Keatinge	Director
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary

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