



DRAFT Minutes

WORKING GROUP 1 (Irish Sea)

Monday 04 July 2022 | 13:00 – 15:00

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all participants in the room and connected online. No apologies were received prior to the meeting. The agenda was adopted.

Action points from the last meeting (15 March 2022, virtual)

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| 1 | Secretariat to draft a letter to the NWW MSG on the need for new technical measures in the Irish Sea <i>Nephrops</i> fishery to mitigate whiting bycatch. |
| | Letter sent to MSG in response to request for advice on JR Technical Measures in the NWW on 6/05 |
| 2 | Secretariat to report members' input on discussion on Discard Plan to the Focus Group Landing Obligation for drafting of advice on the topic. |
| | Advice on JR Discard Plan sent to NWW MSG on 27/04 |
| 3 | The Working Group supports the NWWAC initiative to write a letter to the Commission with recommendations on the current fuel crisis and particularly highlights the need of having fuel storage and the importance of the fishing sector as it provides food security. |
| | Done - fuel crisis letter sent on 16/03 |

2. ICES advice for the Irish Sea

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

The Chair welcomed Joanne Morgan, ICES ACOM Vice-Chair, to present the ICES advice for the stocks in the Irish Sea for the Fishing Opportunities 2023.

The advice was released on 30 June. COVID-19 impacts are included in the quality of the assessment. *Nephrops* and elasmobranchs advice will be released in autumn.

Cod (7a)

- 0 TAC advice, biomass is below B_{lim} , fishing pressure is low
- Unavoidable bycatch from *Nephrops* and haddock fisheries
- Issues with the stock area and landings from southern 7a are not included in this stock
- The assessment was benchmarked in 2022 and changed from category 3 to category 1

Haddock (7a)

- Catch advice ≤ 2648 t (- 12%)
- Sampling below pre-COVID levels but considered adequate for assessment
- low recruitment in 2020 decreases SSB further in 2024
- 12% decrease in advice mainly due to poor recruitment



- Downward revision in spawning stock size

Plaice (7a)

- Catch advice $\leq 2039t$ (- 30%)
- Recruitment low since 2016
- Discarding high and variable, 40% assumed to survive
- Downward revision in the SSB

Sole (7a)

- Catch advice ≤ 605 t advice (-23%)
- Spawning stock above $MSY B_{trigger}$
- Low recruitment
- Spawning stock has decreased a lot and target F is decreased due to advice rule and revision of assessment

Sea bass (4b-c, 7a, 7d-a)

- Catch advice $\leq 2\,542$ t (+14.7%)
- Spawning stock above B_{lim} and B_{pa} but below $MSY B_{trigger}$
- Under advised catch, stock expected to decrease remaining below $MSY B_{trigger}$
- No breakdown of catch scenarios provided for commercial and recreational split up as management for next year is unknown

Whiting

- 0 catch advice given in 2022 for 2022 / 2023
- Stock size is very low
- Discarding high; 97% in 2020 on catches of 1 118 t
- Technical service was provided based on bycatch in the *Nephrops* fishery
- Unavoidable bycatch estimated for 2023

The Chair thanked the ACOM Vice-Chair and opened the floor for questions.

Sean O'Donoghue thanked Morgan for her presentation. He queried the significant decrease of haddock in 7a which is driven by the exclusion of rectangles 33.2 and 33.3. 68% of the landings related to these rectangles. It seems that ICES decided that these are more appropriate to the Celtic Sea instead of the Irish Sea, however, there is no stock identification programme being developed on this. "Should the AC ask for a stock ID genetic study to clarify this?" He also wondered if the figure for the 2020 recruitment had been fully confirmed in comparison to 2019 and 2021 which were average, but it seems the 2020 figure is driving the decrease? He finished by asking if there was a particular reason for the addition of the EU MAP into the headline of the advice.

Morgan responded that she was unsure what the basis was for the stock ID and that she was not aware if there was any work being carried out on this issue. She offered to follow this up internally and respond to the AC in writing. Regarding the 2020 recruitment she stated that other year classes are of similar size, so this is not unusual and added that haddock is notorious for having erratic recruitments. This would not seem to be an issue related to the surveys. Regarding the headline advice she was not sure if this was the result of an EU request. ICES added this for each stock where this was the case meaning this is not simply related to EU-UK issues.



O'Donoghue proposed that the AC should make a recommendation on stock ID for haddock in 7a. Regarding cod he stated that the AC identified that there was a benchmark prior to 2022 which put this stock into Cat. 1 leading to a TAC increase of cod in 7a, but the following year this was reclassified to Cat. 3 and now going back to 0 TAC advice. He felt that there might be a retrospective as there is undoubtedly an issue around cod in the Irish Sea, but the advice does not seem to highlight the issue around the benchmark and the changes from Cat.1 to Cat.3 to 0 catch advice. He questioned the trust that could be placed in this advice and added a query on the quality assurance per stock.

Morgan provided the link to the TAF dashboard: <https://ices-taf.shinyapps.io/taf-dashboard/> She added that the benchmark system is put in place so avoid big changes in assessments, but even despite this, issues can be overlooked. In addition, the following information was provided regarding the retrospective for cod 7a from benchmark report:

Very little retrospective for SSB and F

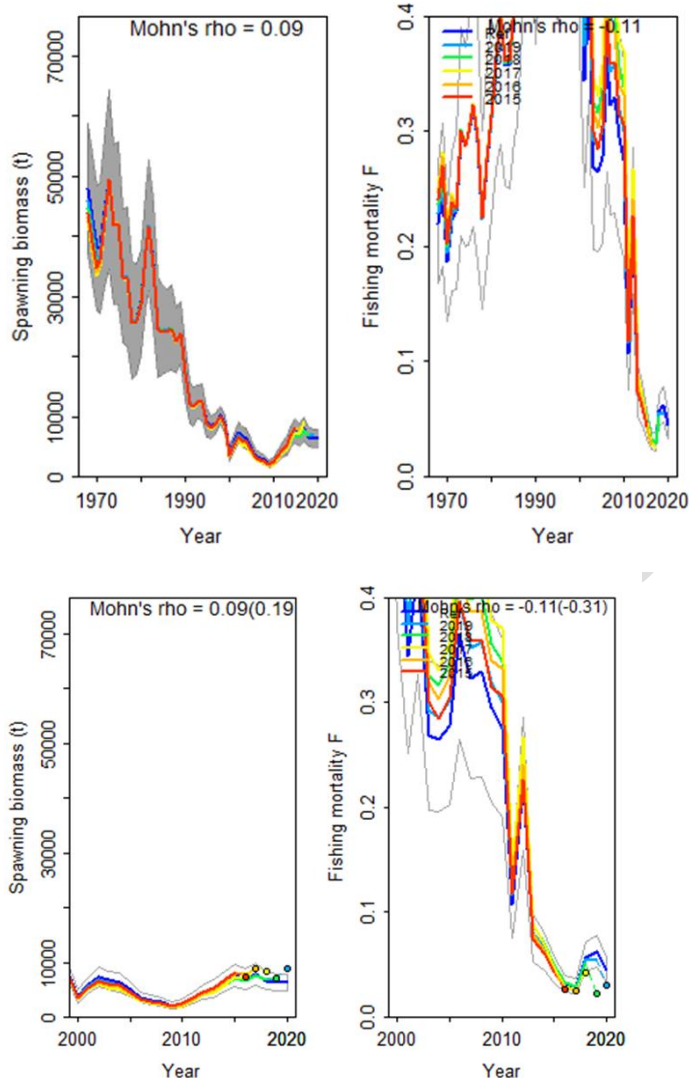


Figure 1 Retrospective plots with 5 peels and zoomed in retrospective plots. The envelope is in grey or white. Mohn's rho for SSB and F and in brackets one-year-ahead projections. Those are also denoted by color-coded dashed lines with terminal points shown for each model.

The overall fit of the model to indices, index ages and catch at age is good and Mohn's rho is at 0.09

(SSB) and -0.11 (F). A Mohn's rho for recruitment is not calculated as recruitment does not really follow a stock recruitment relationship.

O'Donoghue added that the key issue he felt was the volatility of the benchmark. The benchmark from a few years ago was thrown out the following year, and he queries if those issues were addressed in the benchmark in 2022 or will the stock be reclassified again as Cat. 3 next year.

Morgan stated that those issues should have been addressed in the 2022 benchmark but that this does not guarantee that things will not change next year.

Cristina Ribero thanked Morgan for the presentation and the exchange. Regarding plaice she asked Morgan to elaborate further on the 40% discard for this species.

Morgan felt that the main reason for the decrease was the retrospective related to the SSB.

Patrick Murphy asked what would happen if the missing haddock year class would show up following the survey, and if it did not show up, would there be another cut in 2024.

Morgan stated that it is unlikely that haddock would show up in lower numbers than already and that larger estimated recruitments are on either side. If the more recent recruitments are better, then their impact will decrease. This will only be known after the next set of data comes in.

Murphy felt that the large decrease in the one year class seems difficult to explain and thus should not influence the advice over the coming years.

Morgan stated it would have to have been missed in both the survey as well as in the fishery.

Regarding plaice and sole Emil Brouckaert asked if there was a limit on the percentage reduction per stock. He wondered if there were COVID related impacts on sole or if all survey data was available for this species as the Belgian research seems to show much more positive results. He also wondered if ICES did take survival into account as only a *de minimis* exemption is available for this stock.

Morgan stated that the limit of percentage reduction is only applied to data limited stocks. She added that COVID related impacts were found this year and the survey was affected in 2020. The 2020 year recruitment was revised upward this year as the full coverage of the stock is shown this year. Discard survival is not taken into account for this species.

O'Donoghue wondered what the change to the advice was regarding plaice in 2022. He also asked regarding the 0 catch advice and if the bycatches of the mixed fisheries are taken fully into account.

Morgan stated that these are based on the knowledge of the bycatch, i.e., which fisheries are taking what volume of bycatch. The following information was added regarding the plaice query:

Please note: The present advice replaces the advice given in June 2021 for catches in 2022. ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, and assuming that discard rates and fishery selection patterns do not change from the average of the years 2018–2020, total catches in 2022 should be no more than 2925⁺ tonnes.

Advice given in 2021 for 2022 was: ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, and assuming that discard rates and fishery selection patterns do not change from the average of the years 2018–2020, total catches in 2022 should be no more than 2747 tonnes.

Revised advice 6% higher.

Advice was revised as a result of a revision to the calculation of the survey indices.

- Drafting advice to inform the development of the EU TAC proposal

The Secretariat asked if there were any specific recommendations members would like to put forward following this presentation for the Fishing Opportunities advice.

O'Donoghue stated that the issue regarding haddock should be put forward and that the AC should also enquire regarding the cod issue. The plaice issue should also be highlighted. Finally, a close eye should be kept on the zero catch options for cod and whiting as there is a concern regarding the poor recruitment for haddock in 2020 though there is an abundance of haddock. The bycatch must fully cover the mixed fisheries.

The Chair stated if the last two recruitments are correct the stock will increase significantly but the TAC might stay low.

Brouckaert added that the two points regarding sole should be raised, as well as the impact of COVID on the surveys as it seems there are inconsistencies between the survey results and what fishers see. It would be worthwhile to take the survival of sole into consideration as well.

ACTION: Secretariat to share written responses from ACOM Vice-Chair to pending questions from the meeting.

ACTION: Members to send comments on ICES advice and recommendations to be included in fishing opportunities advice to the Secretariat.

3. Choke Avoidance Best Practice & Choke ID Tool

The Secretariat outlined the updates made to the NWWAC choke tool and thanked Michael Keatinge, NWWAC Director, for his work on this.

The data part of the tool is filled automatically using the attached data sheets.

The second part of the tool involves qualitative information regarding avoidance and selectivity measures which is very involved and not possible for the Secretariat to populate. Members input is required for this section.

A condensed overview was prepared by Dominic Rihan, BIM, to assist NWWAC members with the update of the tool. The structure of the more complex version is replicated but the overall structure is simplified.

Brouckaert explained that the experience with the Landing Obligation may make this tool redundant. Most exemptions are in place until 2023 so he wondered if the tool is really needed based on the knowledge that we have to date.

O'Donoghue felt that the NWWAC was at the forefront of developing this tool, but that people and resources are needed for updating. He felt that with the work of Michael Keatinge this could be linked into a system to predict what needs to be done. This could be reduced to the species of main interest for



the NWWAC. He felt it would be a loss if the AC did not link the quantitative part to the qualitative part of the tool. He felt that this WG has a limited number of stock though all of these would have the potential to act as a choke.

Brouckaert felt that this work could be completed possibly in time for the Discard Plan discussions for May 2023.

Johnny Woodlock added that this work may get easier soon as new technical measures are being introduced.

The Chair stated that there was a request for the review of whiting technical measures which could change the situation. He agreed that if the bycatch quota was not given then there would be a definite choke situation.

O'Donoghue stated that the AC needed to be realistic but at the same time should address the completion of this work as soon as possible.

ACTION: Secretariat to share 2022 Choke ID tool following an update on exemptions on technical measures for members to provide comments to feed advice preparation by the FG LO.

ACTION: The WG will review the bycatch measures in place for whiting in the *Nephrops* fishery and get in touch with the MSG to progress on the matter.

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

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|---|---|
| 1 | Secretariat to share written responses from ACOM Vice-Chair to pending questions from the meeting |
| 2 | Members to send comments on ICES advice and recommendations to be included in fishing opportunities advice to the Secretariat |
| 3 | Secretariat to share 2022 Choke ID tool following an update on exemptions on technical measures for members to provide comments to feed advice preparation by the FG LO |
| 4 | The WG will review the bycatch measures in place for whiting in the <i>Nephrops</i> fishery and get in touch with the MSG to progress on the matter. |

The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.



Participants

| NWWAC members | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Emiel | Brouckaert | Rederscentrale |
| John | Lynch | Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation Ltd |
| Patrick | Murphy | IS&WFPO |
| Aodh | O Donnell | IFPO |
| Sean | O'Donoghue | KFO |
| Norah | Parke | KFO |
| Johnny | Woodlock | Irish Seal Sanctuary |
| Experts & Observers | | |
| Killian | Chute | EFCA |
| Gérald | Hussenot Desenonges | Blue Fish |
| Joanne | Morgan | ICES |
| Irene | Prieto | ANASOL |
| NWWAC Secretariat | | |
| Mo | Mathies | Executive Secretary |
| Matilde | Vallerani | Deputy Executive Secretary |