



## DRAFT MINUTES

### WORKING GROUP 2 (CELTIC SEA & West of Scotland)

Room 21.04 “Jacob Van Artevelde” - Virginie Lovelinggebouw (VAC)  
Koningin Fabiolalaan, 9000 Gent

Monday 03 July 2023

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair Suso Lourido Garcia welcomed all participants. Apologies were received from Gerald Hussenot Desenonges (Bluefish), José Beltran (OPP Lugo) and Jean-Marie Robert (LPDB), who is delayed in joining.

The agenda was adopted as drafted.

Minutes from the last meeting (14 March 2023, Santiago de Compostela):

1	Continue NWWAC work on ORE developments jointly with other Advisory Councils if possible
	A new joint Focus Group between the NWWAC and the PelAC is being established to continue previous collaboration and the Secretariats have drafted the Terms of Reference. These have been shared with the Horizontal Working Group and are currently being approved by ExCom.
2	Working Group members are invited to send their comments on exemptions to the Landing Obligation to feed the preparation of the advice on the Discard Plan 2024 being prepared by the Focus Group Landing Obligation. In particular, members are invited to reflect on measures introduced which resulted in an increase in selectivity and in survivability.
	Done. The advice was sent to the MS on 17 April.

#### 2. ICES advice for the Celtic Sea (slides available here)

Before starting her presentation, Joanne Morgan explained that for the stocks managed by EU and UK advice was provided on the basis of MSY or precautionary approach. The EU MAP option was provided in the catch scenario table if available.

Advice for Nephrops, megrim 6b, elasmobranchs, cod 6a will be released in the autumn.

Black bellied anglerfish (7, 8.a-b, and 8.d)



- Advice for 2024, MSY: catch  $\leq 25,579$  t (+9%)
- F has been decreasing: below  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB has been increasing since 2002: above MSY  $B_{trigger}$
- Recruitment very high 2020
- Advice higher because stock has continued to increase
- Length based stock synthesis
- Under combined TAC with white anglerfish – could lead to overexploitation of either species

#### White anglerfish

- Advice for 2024, MSY: catch  $\leq 35,502$ t (+3%)
- F decreasing: below  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB increasing since 2012 to 2020 and relative stable since: above MSY  $B_{trigger}$
- Length based age structured stock synthesis
- Under combined TAC with black-bellied anglerfish – could lead to overexploitation of either species

#### Cod in western Channel (7.e-k)

- Advice for 2024, MSY: 0 catch (no change)
- Fishing pressure above  $F_{MSY}$ , spawning stock below  $B_{lim}$ , low recruitment
- No catch scenario brings stock above  $B_{lim}$
- Some tendency to overestimate SSB and recruitment
- Mixed fisheries advice to be provided in autumn
- Stock includes the south of Division 7.a (rectangles 33E2-33E3)
- SAM assessment

#### Greater Silver Smelt (7-10, 12 and 6b)

- Advice for 2024, MSY: catch 87t, landings 16t (-30%)
- New DLS method - rfb
- F above  $F_{MSY}$  proxy
- Biomass in last 2 years lower than in previous 3 but above  $I_{trigger}$
- Index is Spanish Porcupine Bank survey
- Decreased advice: decrease in survey index, new method, stability clause applied
- Landings assume average discard rate of last 7 years
- Survey doesn't cover whole stock area but is where most catch is taken
- Decrease due to application of stability clause

#### Haddock (7.b-k)

- Advice for 2024 MSY: catch 8.252t (-31%)
- F declining but remains above  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB declining but above MSY  $B_{trigger}$



- Recruitment low
- Decrease in advice: decreasing stock size and low recruitment and downward revision of SSB (retrospective)
- Stock includes the south of Division 7.a (rectangles 33E2-3)

#### Hake

- Advice for 2024, MSY: 72,839t (-12.4%)
- Catches decreasing
- F decreasing below  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB above MSY  $B_{trigger}$  but decreasing
- Recruitment decreasing
- Advice lower due to decreasing stock size
- No survey that covers entire stock distribution
- Stock area does not correspond to the TAC areas
- Length based and sex disaggregated stock synthesis

#### Megrim (7.b-k)

- Advice for 2024, MSY: catch  $\leq 23,303t$  (advice -1%)
- F has been decreasing and is below  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB increasing and above MSY  $B_{trigger}$
- Advice similar to last year as stock size revised downwards compared to last year (retrospective)
- Benchmarked in 2022 – no change in perception

#### Plaice (7.b-c)

- Advice for 2024, 2025, 2026, PA: catch  $\leq 15t$  (-20%)
- Cat 6 stock, only small amount of landings information available
- Precautionary buffer applied
- Discarding takes place but not fully quantified
- Catch (without discards) 2022: 2t

#### Plaice (7.h-k)

- Advice for 2023 and 2024, MSY:  $\leq 132t$  (+20%)
- Declining trend in catches
- F below  $F_{MSY}$  proxy (not inverse)
- Increase in biomass index: above  $I_{trigger}$
- Advice increase because of increase in index: stability clause applied

#### Plaice (7.f-g)

- Advice for 2024 released in 2022, MSY: catch  $\leq 402t$  (-77%)



- Category 3 rfb
- UKBTS survey index
- Fishing pressure above  $F_{MSY}$  proxy (not inverse)
- Spawning stock below  $MSY B_{trigger}$
- Caught in mixed fishery with sole, high discard rates (38 % during 2019-2021)

#### Pollack (6-7)

- Advice for 2024,  $MSY$ : zero catch
- Benchmark – SPiCT – using 4 surveys + landings
- New perception of stock
- Landings have declined since the late 1980's
- Recreational catch unknown but substantial
- Model results for recent years robust to this
- $F$  above  $F_{MSY}$
- Stock size very low: below  $B_{MSY}$

#### Sole (7.bc)

- Advice for 2024, 2025, 2026, PA: catch  $\leq 15t$  (-20%)
- State of the stock unknown - Category 6
- Landings in 2022, 26 t; discards considered negligible.
- Precautionary reduction advised from 19 t to 15 t.
- Buffer applied

#### Sole (7.f and g)

- Advice for 2024,  $MSY$ :  $\leq 1,267t$  (-5.3%)
- $F$  has decreased slightly and is below  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB is above  $MSY B_{trigger}$
- Decrease in advice: downward revision in stock size (retrospective) and projected decrease
- No data for Belgian commercial beam trawl index in 2022 – increase uncertainty
- Discard sampling incomplete but minimal impact

#### Sole (7.h-k)

- Advice for 2024, 2025, 2026, PA:  $\leq 170 t$  (-20%)
- Stock identity uncertain, research ongoing – Category 5
- There is area misreporting of the catch but unquantified
- Catch in 2022 = 264 t - discards negligible

#### Whiting (7b-c, 3-k)



- Advice for 2024, MSY: zero catch
- $F$  has decreased but is above  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB is below  $B_{lim}$
- No catch scenario brings SSB above  $B_{lim}$  with 50% probability
- Incoming recruitment is low
- Assessment and advice for divisions 7.b-k includes rectangles 33E2 and 33E3

The Chair thanked Morgan for her presentation.

Patrick Murphy referred to the low category assessment in relation to some stocks which leads to less quota every year. However, since the quotas are based on landings and these are going down, this will lead to a 20% decrease in the advice every 3 years, inevitably ending with 0 catch advice despite fishers' efforts to avoid catches.

Morgan responded that the lower categories specifically below 3 mean that there is essentially no information, which makes it hard to sustainably manage a fishery. Dedicated data collection is necessary for these stocks to allow for proper assessment.

Murphy suggested that this should come out as an action from this meeting that ICES is in need of more data and that fishers should be considered as data providers.

Sean O'Donoghue pointed out that the issue of the statistical rectangles 33E2 and 33E3 keeps reappearing and needs to be addressed. Referring to hake, he pointed out that last year there was a huge change in the assessment with a sex-disaggregated model currently being used. However, he felt there was a big retrospective issue on the stock size, which would raise questions about the model. This could be cause for concern if ICES has not evaluated it. Regarding the zero catch advice for pollack, there seems to be dramatic change in terms of perception of the stock which leads to concerns around the model and data used. Finally, he asked why the catch option table doesn't show the difference between the TAC and the scientific advice anymore.

Morgan responded that she sent an email to ICES colleagues regarding the statistical rectangles in relation to haddock and will report back. She agreed that there is a bad retrospective for hake but pointed out that most of what is there is a historical retrospective. The true retrospective is just the model itself. The historical retrospective is there to show how perception changed overtime, but it can be confusing. On pollack, most of the survey information is not based on suitable surveys for this stock. There was a lot of discussion on this, especially on the use of survey indexes without catch information or letting the available catch information help the model. In both cases, the survey indexes were the same and were combined with a spatial method.

O'Donoghue stated that the retrospective table for hake needs urgent review as it is really confusing. It relates to historical data which no longer applies as the whole assessment basis was changed. Morgan agreed as this gives the wrong perception.

John Lynch asked to look back at the haddock and the reason for the large cut. He felt there was a mismatch in the available quota and the fish see on the ground, though the latter is anecdotal



evidence. He queried when the stock was last benchmarked as stock size blooms and declines rapidly.

Morgan responded that the stock was benchmarked in 2020. The mismatch in perception can be linked to various things. She stated that haddock is notorious for sudden stock size changes.

Franck Le Barzic agreed with Lynch's statement regarding haddock. The peaks and decreases make management very difficult. Model and fishers' observation very often do not match. Regarding the stock separation of black-bellied and white anglerfish, he stated that it is very difficult to distinguish between these two species and wondered how ICES planned to take the landing data into account. He then referred to pollack and felt that this trend followed a review of the stock into Cat 2, despite the lack of data on recreational fishing. He agreed on having a benchmark and highlighted the need to challenge the data used in the assessment.

Morgan stated that ICES is working with advice requesters and area councils to develop ways where in a formal way perceptions by fishers can be brought into the assessments. This will be addressed in a workshop later this year. Fishers' information is valuable and, though the scale may be different, it is important to capture it. She did not know how the anglerfish are separated, she assumed this is done by observers. Regarding recreational fisheries and pollack, ICES through the WG on recreational fisheries is developing a roadmap to figure out how to bring recreational catch data into all those assessments that need it.

Le Barzic asked if ICES is going to address the stock fluctuations regarding whiting in the Western Channel and in the Celtic Sea as no decrease in stock has been experienced in the Western Channel by the sector.

Morgan explained that even in the assessment the different areas have different variabilities, however, she was not aware of any work though this may be going on in the WGs. She asked Le Barzic to address this in writing for a better response.

Murphy reiterated his appreciation for Morgan to have joined AC members in person. He felt several stocks are characterized by retrospective issues and by a significant difference between what fishers experience at sea and what is perceived through the assessment. He gave the example of hake and haddock. In his opinion, fishers' information is vital to address this issue. Finally, he felt that more genetic research is needed to better understand stock spatial fluctuations, especially in light of the impacts of climate change.

### 3. ICES advice for the West of Scotland

#### Anglerfish (4, 6, 3a)

- Advice for 2023 and 2024, MSY: catch  $\leq$  9,881 t (-30%)
- Advice for black bellied and white combined
- F is above  $F_{MSY}$  (not inverse)
- Stock size above  $I_{trigger}$



- Missing survey 2020 – no stock size indicator that year. Also part of the area surveyed in 2022. 3a, 4b, 4c not included in the survey area in any year
- Constant harvest rate rule
- Declining stock size - Stability clause applied

#### Cod (6a)

- Advice for 2023 and 2024, MSY: zero catch
- Advice delayed until September due to benchmark

#### Cod (6b)

- Advice for 2024, 2025, 2026, PA: =11t (-20%)
- Category 6
- PA buffer as last applied in 2017
- Stock ID uncertain

#### Haddock (4, 6.a, Subdiv. 20)

- Advice for 2024, MSY:  $\leq 149,024$  t (+18%)
- F sharp decline since 2000: below  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB large increase since 2000: above MSY  $B_{trigger}$
- Increase in advice: increasing stock size, revision in estimated abundance in 2022
- In 2023, TAC in 6.a is about 9 % of TAC for the stock
- Benchmark 2022: new model (SAM) and biological information

#### Haddock (6.b)

- Advice released October 2023 – impacted by lack of Russian participation
- New method: rfb
- F slightly decreasing: below  $F_{MSY}$  proxy (not inverse)
- Stock size above  $I_{trigger}$  but lower in last 2 years
- Advice lower because of decline in biomass index and change in method
- Benchmark planned

#### Whiting (6.a)

- Catches have been low since early 2000s
- F declining and below  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB increased from early 2000s to about 2015 and has been fairly stable since: just below MSY  $B_{trigger}$
- Decrease in advice: lower SSB and lower F target since below trigger
- TAC includes Division 6.b, for which advice is given separately

#### Whiting (6.b)





- Advice for 2022, 2023, 2024: PA: Catch  $\leq 7$  t
- Only landings data are available
- Catch of 38 t in 2020
- There is uncertainty on the accuracy of historical landings
- Discards uncertain

#### Megrim (4.a, 6.a)

- Catch and F fairly stable since 2006: F below  $F_{MSY}$
- Stock size stable since 2013: above  $MSY B_{trigger}$
- Increase in advice: increase in stock size and upward revision (retrospective)
- Bycatch in mixed demersal trawl in 6a and 4a.
- Advice is for 2 species: *L. whiffiagonis* and *L. boscii* combined.
- *L. boscii* negligible in catches.
- Separate advice for Division 6b in autumn.

#### Saithe (4, 6, 3.a)

- Advice for 2024, MSY: catch  $\leq 73,815$  t (+25%)
- Catches lower last 2 years
- F has declined: below  $F_{MSY}$
- SSB has increased to above  $MSY B_{trigger}$
- Increased advice: increased stock size, upward revision of stock size (retrospective) and target of  $F_{MSY}$  as stock now above  $MSY B_{trigger}$
- Decreased proportion of landings sampled for ages 2022– considered acceptable
- Since 2021 assessment signals from commercial CPUE and survey consistent

Emiel Brouckaert asked regarding the stability clause if there was a possibility for ICES that such a clause could also apply to other categories.

Morgan stated that Cat.3 is an active area for development. ICES understands that it is helpful not to have too great of fluctuations between the years and the current status is accepted as precautionary. Cat. 3 rules have been tested to be precautionary across a wide range of species whereas Cat. 1 stocks are more tuned to each stock individually.

Regarding the anglerfish, O'Donoghue asked if she could confirm that the reduction is the same as in 2023. He felt it strange that there was a Cat. 3 assessment and asked whether a benchmark is planned. In relation to whiting, he was wondering what the basis was for the ICES advice in terms of separating 6.a from 6.b which is not done in the management.

Morgan responded that the advice for anglerfish was the same for each year. She added that many of the Cat. 3 methods can be applied every year. She could not confirm that anglerfish was included in the planned benchmarks. Whiting was last benchmarked in 2021 but she could not specify what the basis for the split was. She advised that she would ask ICES to include information in the advice





sheet if and why a split was made.

O'Donoghue referred to the combined assessment for haddock 6a with stocks in subarea 4 and subdivision 20 and noted that the TAC is running less than the advice for the past years. In particular, the 2023 TAC was 135% lower than the scientific advice for that year. This is a significant discrepancy between the scientific advice and the management advice. Considering that advice for 2024 is 17% higher than last year's advice, he wondered where the stock size would be at this stage if managers had followed the scientific advice.

Morgan stated that the TAC was quite different from the advice, but this was not mentioned in the advice sheet. However, the TAC option table includes a TAC rollover line. Stock sizes are fairly large, but any modelling would be based on assumptions made.

**ACTION:** Comments from members following the presentation of the ICES advice will be taken into account in the preparation of the advice on fishing opportunities by the FG landing obligation.

These recommendations include and are not limited to:

- The creation of a mechanism for the industry to provide structured data to be included in the ICES advice
- Advice sheet should include table with comparison between TACs and advice in previous years. It would be also useful to have a graph showing how the advice has evolved over the years.

**ACTION:** Members should send any pending comments/questions on the ICES advice to the Secretariat who will forward them to Joanne via email.

#### 4. Update on Porcupine Nephrops fishery management by John Lynch

Lynch explained that Irish fishers have been raising the issue of increased pressure on the Porcupine bank *Nephrops* fishery for some time, and they have made a request to review the management of this commercially important fishery. In January 2022 a workshop was facilitated by the Marine Institute where the decision was made that the feasibility of extending the Porcupine *Nephrops* closure further into the summer should be investigated to secure the future of the fishery. The current closure covers only the month of May. Where extensive data are available for most of the year, it was considered that better data are required for the summer months. Therefore, the Irish fishing industry and administration worked together to design a survey which will cover the summer months in 2023.

The format of the survey was developed and 12 vessels were selected from the *Nephrops* fleet, with four vessels to fish in each of the months. As the survey is being done under commercial conditions, the vessels selected have been allocated sufficient quota to use for the survey.

One vessel per month will carry a scientific observer to collect catch data and the remaining three vessels will carry out a self-assessment monitored by the Marine Institute.

The objective is to evaluate the quantity of females on the ground and in the catch to make a comparison with other months where less females are observed. The assessment of the fishery will



however have two strands: first is the scientific data collection and secondly an assessment of the value of the catch compared to other times of the year. The latter to demonstrate the optimum time of year in terms of price per kg.

Lynch proposed that, when the results of the survey are released, a presentation to the NWWAC could be arranged to inform any further proposals on management measures.

The Chair expressed his gratitude that an evaluation on the socio-economic effects is being carried out.

Jean-Marie Robert queried the purpose of the work and why this was only carried out during the summer months. Should this not be carried out during other times of the year as well?

Lynch explained that good data is available for the other times of the year but not during the summer as there has been less activity at that time in recent years.

Murphy commented that the biological activity of females was being analysed and when they would come out to forage. Data gaps were apparent and these need to be filled. Fishing was stopped during the relevant months, which seems to have had positive results on the stock, but data is needed to confirm this.

## **5. Update on WKRRCOD2 by Arthur Yon**

Arthur Yon explained that he attended the second WKRRCOD workshop in Edinburgh in May where several presentations were given and the cod benchmark from February was discussed. The hypothesis of the benchmark was that adult cod would spawn during the first part of the year, however several data gaps were identified. More catch sampling and genetic data is needed to better understand the structure of the stock and the sub-stocks distribution all over the year. Natural mortality needs to be better quantified and more data is needed on spawning capacity of adults.

Concerns were expressed due to the delay of the advice release to September.

Overall, the need for genetic information was identified as a priority and a strong link between science and industry is essential to support this work.

ICES concluded that organising such a workshop before the benchmark was very useful and that this could be done for other stocks as well, such as anglerfish.

Murphy asked regarding the effect of climate change on the spawning of cod.

Yon stated that he did not have any additional information on this bar what was explained at the first workshop, that cod needs a very specific temperature for spawning.

Murphy commented that work was ongoing in the North Sea with links to the Celtic Sea. Scientific advice could include the effects of climate change to show that the stock cannot recover due to these factors rather than fishing pressure. This could explain the movement of fish into an area but giving out zero TAC advice will not have an effect on the stock itself.



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

Robert commented that the impact of climate change on certain stocks brings with it great difficulties for management. Reference from the past where environmental conditions were much better are still being used which is not useful for proper management. It would be useful if ICES could provide advice that now considering all the changes it is not possible to follow the same biomass limit.

Morgan agreed that this was an important topic. ICES explained that in areas such as the Baltic Sea environmental factors are included in the assessments, however for a lot of stocks the information to adjust the reference points is missing and it is difficult to quantify the impacts of climate change.

Lynch referred to the zero catch advice stocks and wondered if there is a possibility to assess at which point for a stock it becomes useless to establish a TAC lower than a certain level in a mixed fishery scenario.

Morgan explained that this is available for example for herring in the Irish Sea, where the advice explains what the minimum amount of stock would be to be caught due to mixed fisheries bycatch. She explained that ICES is requested to provide single stock advice which leads to the 0 catch advice. However, the mixed fisheries advice coming out in autumn addresses this to a certain extent.

Robert stated that if the average temperature reached 12°C, cod could no longer spawn. Some ICES advice includes this information, but for example the advice for cod in the Celtic Sea does not refer to temperature changes at all and it would be more honest towards fishermen if this was mentioned.

Morgan agreed with Robert's comment, however she stated that in the single stock advice ICES focuses on the quantifiable aspects. More information on climate change impacts are found on ecosystem overviews, which are also considered advice.

Murphy suggested that requesting more effort on quantifying climate information could be added as an action item.

The Secretariat added that a letter was sent to the Commission two months ago recommending that ICES consider how ocean warming is affecting cod reproduction in the Celtic Sea and response is still pending.

**ACTION:** As a follow up of the letter sent to the COM on 9 May on climate change impacts in stock assessment for cod, emphasise the need to quantify such impacts in the advice on fishing opportunities.

## 6. Summary of agreed action points



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

1	<p>Comments from members following the presentation of the ICES advice will be taken into account in the preparation of the advice on fishing opportunities by the FG landing obligation.</p> <p>These recommendations include and are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creation of a mechanism for the industry to provide structured data to be included in the ICES advice</li> <li>• Advice sheet should include table with comparison between TACs and advice in previous years. It would be also useful to have a graph showing how the advice has evolved over the years.</li> </ul>
2	Members should send any pending comments/questions on the ICES advice to the Secretariat who will forward them to Joanne via email
3	As a follow up of the letter sent to the COM on 9 May on climate change impacts in stock assessment for cod, emphasise the need to quantify such impacts in the advice on fishing opportunities.

## 7. List of participants

### NWWAC members

Name		Organisation
José	Beltran	OPP-7 Burela
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Kenatea	Chavez-Hey	ANOP
Manu	Kelberine	CRPM de Bretagne
Franck	Le Barzic	OP COBRENORD
Suso	Lourido Garcia	Puerto de Celeiro
John	Lynch	Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Anaïs	Mourtada	CNPMEM
Patrick	Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation
Breanainn	O'Beirne	AIPCE
Aodh	O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO)
Sean	O'Donoghue	KILLYBEGS FISHERMEN'S ORGANISATION
Alexandra	Philippe	EBCD
Irene	Prieto	ANASOL
Erwan	Quemeneur	CDPMEM29
Jean-Marie	Robert	Pêcheurs de Bretagne
Arthur	Yon	FROM Nord

### Observers and experts

Name		Organisation
Marta	del Avellanal	Ministerio de Agricultura Pesca y Alimentación
Paulien	Depickere	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

Michael	Keatinge	Seaview Marine Economic Consultancy
Marie	Lecomte	MSC France
Joanne	Morgan	ICES
Eveline	Smith	NL Ministry of Agriculture Nature + Food Quality
Dirk	Van Guyze	departement LV ABCO dienst zeevisserij

#### NWWAC Secretariat

Name	Role
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary

DRAFT