



## MIAC 2023 – Annual coordination meeting ICES-ACs

### Final Report

Date: 12 January 2023

Time: 09:30 – 12:00 CET

Location: ICES Headquarters (hybrid meeting) with interpretation in PT, ESP, FR and ENG

Chair: Gualberto Rita

Rapporteur: CCRUP Secretariat

#### 1) Welcome and introduction:

Mr. Gualberto Rita (vice president of the Executive Committee of CCRUP and chair of the meeting) welcomed all the participants (in-person and online). He also thanked ICES for their collaboration, namely by providing their facilities to hold the MIAC meeting. And being available to discuss relevant topics for the Advisory Councils (ACs), the Northwestern Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) for organizing last year's meeting. Mentioned that, for the first time, the meeting had simultaneous interpretation, in portuguese, spanish and french. Asked everyone to be the most synthesized in their interventions, so all the topics could be addressed, considering the agenda extension. He also clarified that, in case there wasn't time for all the interventions, ICES would send the response by written. The agenda of this meeting was adopted by consensus.

#### 2) Actions of previous meeting:

Action Points numbering refers to the item on the MIAC 2022 agenda to which an Action Point is relevant:

**3.2 PELAC: Background to decision and communication to stakeholders of the change of the Fmsy reference point for Southern horse mackerel:** Reference points are agreed by ACOM as the advice is published. This is when ICES will notify of changes to reference points.

**3.4 BSAC: Western Baltic herring:** BSAC to advise DG MARE for a request to ICES on developing a rebuilding plan for Western Baltic herring.

**3.5 BSAC: The issue of seals, parasite infections and the assessment of Eastern Baltic cod:** BSAC to liaise with ICES regarding Eastern Baltic cod assessment.

**3.6 NWWAC: Presentation of ICES advice on undulate ray:** NWWAC to follow discussions in SCF regarding survivability of undulate ray.



**4.1.NWWAC: List of special requests received by ICES from DG MARE:** ICES to make list of approved requests available on their website for ACs consultation via the advice forum

**4.2 PELAC: Clarification procedure for using agreed management plan in top-line advice:** ICES to progress ongoing discussions with DG MARE to clarify the relation between MSY and management plan in top-line advice. This will likely be further discussed at MIRiA in January 2023

**4.3 LDAC: Improving science and discard data for deep-water stocks:** LDAC to share report from EASME project. ICES to explore possible links between their work on VMEs and the EASME project. MIAC 2022

**4.4 NWWAC: Overview on ICES work supporting the implementation of the EU MSFD:** The ACs should explore opportunities for increasing direct engagement with DG ENVI and other Commission Directorates on fisheries related items.

**4.5 PELAC: ICES Workshop on reference points WKREF:** ICES to use the new stakeholder engagement strategy to evaluate the balance of stakeholders. ICES to continue following the developments Fmsy project.

**4.6 CCRUP: Interpretation at meetings:** ACs to consider opportunities to provide interpretation at MIAC meetings if needed.

### **3) ACs General Issues**

#### **3.1) NWWAC/LDAC: Inclusion of socio-economic dimension in ICES advice on VMEs underpinning the Regulation (EU) 2022/1614 determining list of VMEs in implementation of the Deep Sea Access**

##### **Introduction:**

On 26 July 2022, DG MARE organized a stakeholder meeting on implementation of the Deep-Sea Access Regulation in view of the preparation of the ICES advice on the topic. Inputs from stakeholders highlighted a number of items to be considered in the implementation of this Delegated Act. These particularly included analysis of the socio-economic impacts of VMEs and of possible conflicts with specific fishing gears. The NWWAC also highlights that an exhaustive survey should be carried out regarding how VMEs could affect each fishing gear, since only bottom trawling's fishing footprint has been considered. Is ICES considering these elements as well and how do they envisage to include this information in their advice? In this regard, the NWWAC believes that ACs could provide useful input and should be invited to participate in future ICES Advice Drafting Groups on VMEs.

interaction between ICES and stakeholders, as well as the quality of the discussion. Furthermore, the NWWAC would like to highlight the importance of including explanations on stock assessment and on the main points of the advice drafting process in the presentation of each stock advice.

(LDAC)



At MIAC 2022, Mr Rodriguez asked ICES for suggestions on how to improve collaboration and address the topic of VMEs and its impact on fishing activities. He asked whether ACs could participate in the benchmark and support data compilation work. The EASME project on VMEs conservation and deep-sea fisheries management was also mentioned, where the LDAC participated in a stakeholders and scientists workshop.

Mr. Dickey-Collas replied that ICES had in 2022 a VME benchmark and is now working with the Commission in providing scientific evidence for identifying VME sites in light of the review of the EU Deepsea Access Regulation, looking at fishing footprint on VMEs. ICES is also liaising with NEAFC on regular information on distribution of VMEs in the NEAFC area as well as impact of fisheries activities. How to interpret advice approach to VMEs. He added that it would be interesting to explore the link between the EASME project and the work carried out by ICES. ICES is also in partnership with a data limited stocks project from FAO on ABNJ (Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction).

Both parties agreed to continue having discussions on this topic bilaterally on the topic and, if relevant, share the information available with the other ACs as well. LDAC committed to share the report from the EASME project once available and public. ICES will consider exploring possible links between their work on VMEs and the EASME project.

In addition, on 15 September 2022, the Commission adopted Regulation (EU) 2022/1614 determining the existing deep-sea fishing areas and establishing a list of areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known to occur or are likely to occur. An annual review of the list is foreseen in article 9(6) of the framework Regulation, the Deep-sea Access Regulation (EU) 2016/2336. First on the process, Article 9(6) provides that “the Commission shall review the list annually on the basis of advice received from the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries and, where appropriate, amend the list by means of implementing acts. The Commission may remove an area from the list provided that it determines, on the basis of an impact assessment and after consulting the competent scientific advisory body, that there is sufficient evidence to indicate that VMEs are not present, or that appropriate conservation and management measures have been adopted which ensure that significant adverse impacts on VMEs in that area are prevented.”

Accordingly, the Commission has requested STECF to deliver an opinion on socioeconomic aspects and ICES to deliver an updated scientific advice on the list of areas, respectively.

It would be good to know what ICES is planning to do regarding timing and content of this updated scientific advice for DG MARE, if there are new scientific evidence received from national scientific institutes (and in particular from Spain). The ACs envisage to be involved in the forthcoming consultations with DG MARE on this topic in the coming months as indicated in the letter received from DG MARE on 14 December 2022 (attached).

EC Consultation Road map:

- (Jan-Feb): Stakeholder meeting on the ICES advice
- (Feb): Bilateral discussions with most concerned Member States
- (March-April): Stakeholder meeting on STECF opinion
- (April): Bilateral discussions with most concerned Member States

### Discussion:

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas (Chair of the Advisory Committee - ACOM - of ICES) informed that during the meeting, the questions would be answered with the help of the whole team of ICES. In this regard, requested Mr. Eugene Nixon to intervene.

Mr. Eugene Nixon informed that the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) would do an assessment on the implementation of deep-sea regulation. ICES has information about the intensity of bottom trawling in specific areas and it is an indication how likely VMEs could persist in that area and economic aspects.

Mr. Alexandre Rodriguez (Long-Distance Advisory Council - LDAC) thanked the explanations and asked if there was any new scientific evidence provided by the Member States in the last months such as new VME features; or a review of indicators such as the abrasion rate measuring the erosion of the seabed in terms of intensity of bottom contact gears. He also wondered whether impacts for different bottom contact gears are going to be clearly differentiated, in particular



the long liners or trawlers operating in the newly designated VME sites. He also asked if ICES foresees having an updated advice which is substantially different from the previous one or not in relation to number of areas proposed for closure and total surface.

Mr. Eugene Nixon informed that the ICES advice tried to provide an arrangement of options to the managers and the advice was based only on bottom trawl gear. The future advice will be divided into bottom trawl gears, long lines and then the combined gears, to understand the implications of different types of gears. The advice drafting group of ICES is still drafting the advice about VMEs since the release of this advice has been postponed. He also informed that Member States requested more studies on VMEs to be carried out recently.

Ms. Matilde Vallerani (Deputy Executive Secretary of NWWAC) thanked ICES for the opportunity to the NWWAC members attend the meetings of the drafting working group and asked if the members could report back to the membership the discussions going in the working group or it would be better to wait for the advice.

Mr. Eugene Nixon (ACOM Vice-Chair) informed that it would be better to maintain the discussions within the working group, since the advice was still being drafted. The advice should be approved by the ACOM and then published.

Ms. Matilde Vallerani asked if it would be possible for Mrs. Eugene Nixon to participate in the next meetings of the NWWAC, in March - in *Santiago de Compostela* - so the members could address questions about the advice. She added that the meetings could be held in a hybrid mode.

Mr. Eugene Nixon demonstrated his interest to participate and present the advice, but only after its release.

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas clarified that the advice will be released in April.

**Action Point:** ICES considers that the socio-economic aspect was expressed on the advice and is studying the impacts of different types of gears. This advice was based on bottom trawl gears and the advice drafting group of ICES is still drafting the advice about VMEs since the release was postponed until April this year. The study of more VMEs are requested by Member States. For now, the discussions should be restricted and within the scope of the drafting group.

### 3.2) PELAC: Guidelines for evaluating rebuilding plans

#### **Introduction:**

In February 2020, ICES organized a workshop (WKREBUILD) to develop guidelines and define criteria which would be considered acceptable for ICES to evaluate rebuilding plans. The workshop generated a guidance table summarizing the best practices for evaluation of rebuilding plans against the potential criteria of acceptability. The workshop recommended that a second workshop be organized for testing the guidelines with actual test cases, with the aim of defining more specific criteria and guidelines. This follow-up workshop was originally planned for Autumn 2021. Instead, two other relevant workshops on the estimation of reference points (WKREF and WKREF2) were held in 2021-2022.

The PelAC has continuously raised the need for ICES to develop clear guidelines for the evaluation of rebuilding plans in recent years. This is particularly key for stocks such as Western horse mackerel and Western Baltic spring spawning herring. The PelAC would welcome an update from ICES on its plans to follow-up on the development of criteria for evaluating rebuilding plans.



## Discussion:

Mrs. Dorleta Garcia (ACOM Vice-Chair) informed that the meeting about rebuilding plans was planned to be in March and that horse mackerel stock would probably be included in the discussions. She clarified that the herring assessment is planned at the same time as the meeting of the rebuilding plans and it was not possible to find other suitable dates.

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue (Chair of Pelagic Advisory Council - PELAC) explained that the issue was not so much the workshops but the lack of existing guidelines, affecting the development of management and rebuilding plans, Western horse mackerel being a key example. He asked where ICES was at in the development of these guidelines. In addition, O'Donoghue referred to the footnote in the UK/EU bilateral agreement stating the need for holding a benchmark for this stock in 2023. The PelAC asked to what extent this has been communicated with ICES and if there are plans in development for this.

Mr. Dorleta Garcia informed that the meeting conclusions were still not released since it should pass by the internal procedures of ICES. She also informed that during the afternoon a presentation about rebuilding plans will be given and rebuilding plans will be given, and rebuilding strategy types could be discussed.

Mr. Joanne Morgan (ACOM Vice-Chair) explained that the Working Groups and Executive Committee are the ones that define the benchmarks and that they don't receive external inputs for benchmarks. However, the Expert Group proposed to do a benchmark for the western horse mackerel, and the group will decide which benchmarks will be done.

**Action Point:** ICES will revert whether it would be possible to address herring at the rebuilding plan workshop. The benchmark meeting for Western horse mackerel is not yet defined and needs to be approved. The ICES workshop on rebuilding plans in March 2023 will give more updates on the criteria for evaluation.

### 3.3) PELAC: **Implementation ICES quality assurance plan**

#### Introduction:

The PelAC recognizes the progress made by ICES on improving quality assurance considerations in the ICES advice process, in accordance with its 2019 Advisory Plan. Nevertheless, the PelAC believes the implementation of a robust quality assurance system throughout the entire advice process, from data collection to the publication of advice, requires continued focus. Part of the quality assurance process is the implementation of the Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF) for all assessed stocks. The PelAC has continuously raised that all future advice issued by ICES should clearly state in the top-line advice whether the advice has gone through the TAF process. The PelAC would appreciate further updates on this from ICES as well as what other initiatives are ongoing to ensure quality assurance.



#### Discussion:

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas explained that there is already a Working Group working on a quality plan. Since ICES would provide a presentation and welcome questions about this plan on the 4<sup>th</sup> point of the agenda of MIACO meeting, he requested to postpone the question.

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue agreed to postpone the discussion to the afternoon meeting (MIACO). However, he explained that the major question was to know if in the top-line of an advice, it would indicate whether it has gone through the Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF) process or not.

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas explained that there was still no agreement about the TAF and proposed again to postpone the topic to the MIACO meeting.

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue agreed.

**Action Point:** ICES already have a specific WG to discuss this plan and proposed to postpone this topic to the afternoon meeting (MIACO)

### 3.4) PELAC: Notification of corrected ICES advice documents

#### Introduction:

The PelAC was made aware by chance that the 2023 ICES advice for the blue whiting stock released in September 2022, was corrected in its headline advice in November 2022 and published on the ICES website. Initially, there was no notification that the advice was changed. Moreover, the fact that the advice was replaced only becomes apparent whilst accessing/opening the advice document.

Recognizing that the corrected advice (including a clarification on the reasons leading to the change) was later notified through the regular ICES advice activities posts, in general the PelAC believes that the replacement of any stock advice should be better visible on the ICES website, and not solely rely on individuals accessing the document in question to discern it has been replaced.

#### Discussion:

Mrs. Lotte Worsøe Clausen (Head of Advice Department) explained that ICES always notified if the advice was changed. ICES sends a letter to the advice requesters and posts it on the advice activities forum. She informed that there was a link on the share point of the MIACO meeting for this advice forum.

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue, thanked the explanation and clarified that the organizations that are not involved in the advice discussions, don't have the same access to this update, so there should be an indication on the website when the advice has been changed.

Mrs. Lotte Worsøe Clausen clarified that besides the notification on the forum advice the most recent advice is updated on the website. She explained that it would create some confusion if all the versions of the advice were stated on the website, this way in the website it only should show the most recent one. O'Donoghue insisted any correction in the advice should become more noticeable on the ICES website. At this stage changes only become apparent when clicking on the advice document. After some discussion about the request, (indicate directly in the front of the ICES webpage, when a correction has been made) Mrs. Clausen informed that she would send the proposal



for analysis of the advice working group.

**Action Point:** ICES always sends notifications when they amend an advice. They notified the stakeholders and the advice' requesters. ICES look at possibilities for making changes in advice documents better visible on the ICES website.

### 3.5) PELAC/NWWAC: **In-person participation ICES to meetings ACs**

#### **Introduction:**

The PelAC refers to its letter to ICES (reference 2223PAC12) sent on October 25, 2022, where it expressed its difficulties with the ICES travel policy in place that restricts the ability of ACOM representatives to physically attend PelAC meetings in the Netherlands. The PelAC organizes two meetings a year (in July and October) to which ICES is invited to present the advice for the stocks under the PelAC remit.

While sensitive to arguments in relation to reducing CO2 emissions, the PelAC feels that the lack of in-person participation by ICES at these key PelAC meetings, negatively affects the quality of the exchanges and the discussion. We therefore request ICES to consider allowing ACOM members to travel to both key PelAC meetings, or to at least one.

Alternatively, the PelAC is open to explore other practical solutions for ICES to present its annual advice on relevant stocks, such as limiting physical attendance by ACOM to one single meeting where the presentation covers the advice of all PelAC stocks combined (during the annual October meeting), or having the locally-based ACOM representative in the Netherlands (from Wageningen University and Research) attend the PelAC meetings to present the advice, thus avoiding travel abroad.

As far as the PelAC is concerned, maintaining the status quo where the designated ACOM representative delivers the presentations virtually to PelAC meetings, is no longer a way forward we would support.

#### **Discussion:**

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas informed that this topic was highly discussed in previous meetings and considering the letter of the European Commission to the Advisory Councils, they made clear the need to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Although ICES recognize that face to face meetings are more effective and propose that the ACOM. He proposed that the ACs where advice was presented by Mrs. Joanne Morgan could organize one meeting together or define just one location/place.

Mrs. Joanne Morgan requested to consider that she only speaks English and since she lived in Canada, a travel of 20 hours would be hard to manage more than one time per year.

Mrs. Mo Mathies explained that the NWWAC meetings have interpretation, and the dates were set for this year. She explained that the meetings usually are in the beginning of July, because it's when the advice is released.

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue thanked the effort of ICES to arrange an agreement and try to attend the meetings.

Mr. Ken Skau Fischer (Chair of North Sea Advisory Council) informed that North Sea Advisory Council (NSAC) didn't have interest in a joint presentation of ICES on the advice, because the North Sea is a defined area with specific issues. He hoped that the presentations could be done as previously.



Mr. Guillaume Carruel (Executive Secretary of Baltic Sea Advisory Council) thanked the availability of ICES to participate by hybrid mode at the last meetings and informed that the next meetings will be in Copenhagen, in June.

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas explained that if the Advisory Councils wanted ICES participation, it was necessary to work together and arrange an agreement. Except for the Baltic and North Act, the ACOM or the secretariat can be in place to discuss and provide a presentation, once a year.

**Action Point:** The letter from the European Commission made clear that is needed to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. ICES values in-person meetings and will try to attend one meeting per year. ICES suggestion: the designated ACOM member will attend one meeting per year for the Pelagic AC. For the ACs to which ACOM member Joanna Morgan is assigned, ICES proposed those ACs to define just on location/place where the advice could be presented by Mrs. Joanne.

#### **4) ACs Specific Issues**

##### **4.1) PELAC: Mackerel fecundity**

###### **Introduction:**

Upon being made aware of the publication by [T. Janssen et al. \(2021\)](#) regarding mackerel fecundity, the PelAC invited Teunis Janssen for a presentation on these main findings to its meetings in July and October 2021.

In this study, the results of an analysis on the amount of proteins and lipids contained in fish later in the year, did not match the current ICES perception of the mackerel fecundity cycle and the current measurements from the egg survey. These results stand in contrast to the stable F measured by ICES under the current accepted notion that mackerel is considered a ‘determinate spawner’, where fecundity is fixed prior to the spawning period. Instead, the findings indicate that mackerel can produce more eggs throughout the spawning cycle depending on food availability, suggesting consistency with an ‘indeterminate’ fecundity type. Fecundity type misclassification can influence SSB estimations based on Annual Egg Production Methods (AEPM). The study therefore recommends looking closely at how to move forward with this data, such as by correcting the AEPM to improve the time series of realized fecundity, which could be done historically with the approach done in the study.

The PelAC considers it important that fecundity, a key parameter of the mackerel assessment, is treated correctly. Based on the discussion with Teunis Janssen following his presentation, the PelAC believes these findings can play a key role in addressing the discrepancies that exist between the mackerel IENSSN survey and the egg survey (even though this was not an issue for 2022). The PelAC has continuously asked the Commission to address these differences with ICES, and there now seems to be a path to examine this.

During the last PelAC meeting held in October 2022, ICES explained that the only formal process to address this issue would be through a benchmark. The PelAC believes that a mechanism should be considered by ICES that enables the incorporation of new ‘breakthrough’ data (of urgent nature) such as these new insights regarding fecundity, to stock assessments as it becomes available outside of the benchmark process. The PelAC would appreciate ICES’ thoughts on this as well as clarifications into what would be required to progress the uptake of these new fecundity findings into the ICES stock assessment process and the time frame involved.





#### Discussion:

Mrs. Dorleta Garcia informed that the expert working group will do a benchmark in the current year. Other issues besides fecundity of the mackerel will be addressed. Considering the benchmark process, the report will only be released in 2024, so it probably won't impact the stocks assessments of the current year.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Kats (Executive Secretary of Pelagic Advisory Council) thanked the clarifications and since the PELAC had some information about the fecundity that would be important, she asked if it was possible to incorporate new inputs in the report, besides the benchmark process.

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas and Mrs. Dorleta Garcia clarified that in order to ensure the quality of the advice, the protocol and guidelines need to be followed, so at this point, new information could not be incorporated into the benchmark and, consequently, the report.

**Action Point:** Benchmark is still under approval. Other issues besides fecundity of mackerel will be addressed. The report will be released in 2024, because the benchmark for the *stocks* will only be approved this year. ICES defends quality processes over quantity.

#### 4.2) PELAC: PelAC workshop on LTMSs (March 2022)

##### Introduction:

In March 2022, the PelAC organized a workshop on Long-Term Management Strategies (LTMSs) in the Hague, the Netherlands, to which ICES contributed significantly, both in terms of a presentation as in participation in the discussion. This was much appreciated by the members of the PelAC.

LTMSs are an important focus area for PelAC work and discussions. The PelAC has a history in contributing to the development of LTMSs, as well as providing advice on plans towards the European Commission and Member States. Therefore, there is a general interest at the PelAC to expand its knowledge on how LTMSs are applied around the world, and which tools can be used when working with Long-Term Management Strategies. That was the main rationale for holding this workshop.

During the plenary session, a number of discussion elements emerged such as balancing complexity vs. simplicity of LTMSs and evaluations, and ICES' tendency to focus on numerical values when estimating risk. Different case studies from around the world were presented in the workshop (from Iceland, the South Pacific and ICCAT) which offered examples of how such processes could be simplified. It was also remarked that recently, the ICES system introduces frequent changes related to small changes in the assessment process leading to changes in reference points, since they are written into long-term management plans. There was an exchange on how this could be addressed. The full report of the workshop can be accessed [here](#).

The PelAC would welcome thoughts and reflections from ICES on the discussions held during the workshop, and whether there are any elements that ICES plans on addressing more concretely. In any case, the PelAC would welcome a follow-up discussion or workshop on this key item with ICES in the future.

##### Discussion:

Mrs. Dorleta Garcia informed that one of the main concerns of the workshop was the used terminology. For example, «long-term» management plans are usually used for a short period. However, the term is not only related to the application period, but the type of reference point used-



Another concern in the report was about the consistency of the terminology of the reports and ICES documents, she informed that there is not a list, and it is an important point to avoid misunderstandings, and took note. ICES had different approaches according to the data available and the approval of a management plan is a complex process, mainly in terms of scientific work and interaction with stakeholders.

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue thanked Mrs. Garcia for the comprehensive reply and added that the rationale for raising this point at MIAC was the workshop had identified a number of key areas for future reflection. The PelAC is keen to not lose that momentum and to maintain the conversation with ICES. He asked how to take this forward so the conclusions can be followed-up on.

Mrs. Dorleta Garcia explained that the ICES still hadn't reflect about possible follow-up discussions. She suggested thinking about it and coming back latter with an answer.

**Action Point:** ICES will analyze and took note to work on this. There isn't a definitive list about *Long Term Management Plans*. ICES don't have long term management plans. MSY is a long term a long-term reference point and as such it is intended to be used for long periods and not for just one year.

ICES to reflect and discuss internally on a follow-up with PelAC on key outcomes of the PelAC LTMP workshop and inform PelAC.

ICES to revise terminology based on WKMSE work.

#### 4.3) MEDAC: Studies of ICES relevant for the Mediterranean Sea

##### Introduction:

In the last years the MEDAC has been contacted by various ICES scientists dealing with the MSP, selectivity in mixed fishery, recreational fishery, European eel etc. So, the MEDAC should be informed about results relevant for the Mediterranean Sea to be updated to the best current scientific information in the provision of members' advice.

##### Discussion:

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas informed that ICES collaboration with DG MARE on the Mediterranean, is mainly due to by-catches studies. DG ENVIRONMENT is also collaborating with ICES on seafloor habitats and possible impacts. ICES collaborate with Several Institutes and Member States interested in the Mediterranean and one of their key partners for Mediterranean studies is the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). They have bilateral meetings to discuss matters of common interest, such as crucial issues on eel and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Informally, ICES have an extremely good relationship with the *Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)* on marine mammals' workshops, for example. ICES also collaborates with ICCAT for tuna fisheries studies for Ecoregions. Considering the DG MARE information about the responsibility's rules, ICES usually don't work on general fisheries issues, on the Mediterranean. When ICES work in the Mediterranean, they published the formal links.



Mrs. Rosa Caggiano (Executive Secretary of the MEDAC) thanked for the overview about the ICES work in the Mediterranean.

**Action Point:** ICES studies on by-catch are one of the relevant studies on the Mediterranean Sea. A key partner of ICES for Mediterranean Sea studies is the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). They have bilateral meetings to discuss crucial issues on eel and MPAs. ICES also collaborates with ICCAT for tuna fisheries studies. ICES should not advise on tuna like issues.

#### 4.4) BSAC: **Question of ecosystem considerations in stocks advices of the Baltic** (seals, parasites, food competition, prey-predator)

##### Introduction:

Last year, BSAC asked several questions pertaining to the inclusion of ecosystem factors in the single stock assessments of cod, sprat and herring. It was unclear how seal predation was taken into account in the advice. ICES was also asked to come back to the BSAC on the sprat predation on cod eggs in the eastern Baltic. Furthermore, ICES ADG member Jan Horbowny's analysis shows that reducing natural mortality is the key driver needed to restore the eastern Baltic cod stock. What recommendations does ICES have for implementing this? How can managers reduce natural mortality of the cod stock?

##### Discussion:

Mr. Henn Ojaveer (ACOM Vice-Chair) informed that the impact of seal predation on cod has not yet been included in the advice. However, the importance of cod in the grey seal diet has already been assessed. Grey seals are distributed in the entire Baltic and cod is mainly found in the south. Work is ongoing on updating data on seal stomach content (available data is from 2016 and is not applicable in the current situation) assessing the effect on cod biomass. Work is ongoing but is not yet ready to put in the assessment model. ICES experts are working on models and collecting new evidence to further quantify the importance of cod in seal diet. Regarding the Sprat predation on cod eggs, he stated that it is one of many factors determining cod recruitment. Hydrographic conditions are also very important. Sprat predation on cod eggs depends on sprat quantities but also depends on the prey (abundance of cod eggs). Experts are of the opinion that reduced sprat abundance will not necessarily lead to better recruitment of cod. He also informed that biological changes in the stock are the main driver. Natural mortality of cod has increased and is now higher than fishing mortality. Cod is affected by natural conditions such as oxygen deficiency and prey availability. Sprat is currently more abundant in the north of the Baltic whereas cod is distributed in the south. It is unclear if parasite infestation is a cause or an effect of poor condition of cod. The actual productivity of cod will remain at low level even in the absence of fishing. Science is investigating these complex issues (eutrophication, climate change, O<sub>2</sub> and seal abundance) and ICES considers it is impossible to quantify the ecological effects.

Mr. Guillaume Carruel thanked for the detailed answer and requested Mr. Henn Ojaveer to share all the detailed information he could.



Ms. Linda Planthof asked if there was any information about what could be needed to improve scientific work and include seal data into the assessments.

Mr. Henn Ojaveer explained that the experts already know what is required and are currently working to elaborate the model.

**Action Point:**

ICES advice still didn't include the impact of seal predation on cod. However, the importance of cod in the grey seal diet has already been assessed. ICES experts are working on models to collect new evidence to further quantify the importance of cod in seal diet. Sprat predation on cod eggs is one of many factors determining cod recruitment. Hydrographic conditions are also very important. Experts opinion is that reduced sprat abundance will not necessarily lead to better recruitment of cod. Cod is affected by natural conditions such as oxygen deficiency and prey availability. Sprat is geographically distributed in the north of the Baltic, whereas cod is distributed in the south.

**4.5) BSAC: Headline advice use for Western Baltic spring spawning herring (see letter being prepared following Pelagic WG)**

**Introduction:**

The BSAC has been preoccupied by this stock for some time. It has advised the Commission to ask ICES to change its headline advice and use the Baltic MAP as headline advice. Was this request received by ICES? Will this be the case this year? Is there any useful information for the future elaboration of a rebuilding plan for this stock coming from the workshop on guidelines and methods for the evaluation of rebuilding plans (WKREBUILD)?

**Discussion:**

Mrs. Dorleta Garcia informed that the herring is a shared stock with Norway. Therefore, it is necessary an agreement between the European Commission and Norway to determine the headline advice for the stock. The basis for the advice on this matter will continue to be the MSY. It won't be possible to develop new advice based on new rebuilding plans or guidelines strategies, since the *WKREBUILDING* is planned at the same time as the *Assessment WG* for the herring stock.

**Action Point:** This is a shared stock with Norway that is analyzed by MSY. There will not exist a rebuilding plan and new developments on guidelines.

**4.6) CCRUP: Quota of *Beryx sp.* in area X - Azores**

**What is the position of the ICES on the delivery of an elaborate derogation by the Azores, with the objective of maintaining the same quotas, in the next biennium?**



## Introduction:

The Azores are one of the largest economic zones in the European Union with 1M. km<sup>2</sup>, but only 1% is explored. It is a region without a platform, poor in nutrients and with few species with commercial value. The fishing sector in the Azores is one of the main sources of activity, representing an important source of income with great social and economic impact, creating employment and community fixation. In the Azores, the sector differs from other communities fishing by the distance, From seamounts of Islands and From main markets. Also, the adverse weather conditions in the archipelago from Azores conditioned the fishing activity.

The fishing practiced at Azores, is - in fact - well known for providing some of the best fish in the world and should also be down positively per exercise one fishing with methods handcrafted, It is considered one fishing sustainable and responsible. Its sustainability results essentially from the continuous use of lines and hooks as a method of fishing and also the absence of industrial fishing. We are witnessing a reduction in the fishing fleet over these years.

### · Beryx

The *beryx*. (*Beryx decadactylus* and *Beryx splendens*) are harvested exclusively by hook's fishing gears and are one of the 8 most important species for The Azores Autonomous Region, representing approximately 71% of total allocation of demersal and deep-sea species.

At the Azores we have been implementing internal management measurements such as: maximum capture limit per vessel, per tide and annual quota, increase of the hook size and minimum catch size of beryx species. This denotes a concern for careful effort management in fishing, to insecure the sustainability of the resources and the fishing activity. The Beryx quota allocated to ortugal (145 tonnes) is shared with the Azores by 85% (123 tons). Normally, this quota tends to end in between the months of September and October.

In 2015, it was established a minimum size capture for *Beryx splendens* (*Alfonsin*) and Beryx Decadactylus (*Imperador*), of 250g, and currently 350mm. And by virtue of a fishery that contributed to the conservation of units population of these species, from 2017 what is implemented is a maximum catch limit for the stock, by tide and by year.

This year we ended up carrying out even more careful and restrictive management, closing the capture of Alfonsin on 30 June. Year after year, the closing of quota precociously, did not allow fishing for Beryx species throughout the year, due to few share what is attributed to Member States and consequently to the Azores.

### · Black spot Seabream

The blackspot seabream species maintains the quota management plan in the Azores and has good stock management, with limits per vessel, with quota allocation per island of the archipelago. There exists a list of vessels that can fish this species, and the catches may not exceed 3% of the annual fishing opportunity. Since 2010, the seabream has had a minimum capture size of 300 mm, currently 330 mm.

We inform you that besides these implemented measures for the species previously mentioned, in 2003 longline fishing became prohibited within 3 miles on the islands of São Miguel and Terceira, and 6 miles on the rest of the archipelago. In addition, in the same year, fishing demersal species was prohibited at the *Condor's* Seamount.

We reinforce that fishermen are available to cooperate in obtaining scientific data and share information about the stocks. According to them, there is a progressive increase in the stock of these species in the waters of the Azores. However, the absence of stock for *Beryx spp.*, through investigation, compromised a new quota limit. Considering the trends of captures (positives) and the valorization of these species in the Azores, reducing the fish opportunities will have negative socio-economic implications and, in this regard, the realization of a study about the socioeconomic impact shall not be discarded in these situations.

## Discussion:

Mr. Rui Catarino (Advice Department Professional Officer) informed that ICES has no position on this type of document sent to the European Commission. Considering that the *Beryx. spp* are in a category 5 - data limited stock – one of the main conditions to have robust advice is the data availability. The only way to change the situation is by collecting data, for example by a survey. CCRUP and local managers should report their data to DG MARE. Extra data about the stock is



needed. In relation to the black spot seabream, he explained that the European Council in December didn't follow the ICES advice on their decision.

Mr. Gualberto Rita, as president of *Federação das Pescas dos Açores*, informed that the fishermen are aware that the current reduction of the TAC is due to the lack of scientific data (intensified by the strike of the scientific cruisers during the pandemic). Although the local fishermen propose to maintain the TAC with the compromise to do a scientific cruise and a plan for the data collection, to be used on ICES advice and recommendations to the European Commission. The fishermen are available to collaborate. He thanked Mr. Rui Catarino for the clarifications.

**Action Point:** ICES as no opposition on these documents sent to EC.

*Beryx* are classified as class 5 which is a data limited stock. ICES needs more data to evaluate. If there is more effort to collect data, ICES could collaborate to analyze the possibility to review the classification of the stocks. The regional management plan should be addressed to the EC and ICES. Regarding the black spot seabream, the European Council didn't take into account the advice of ICES. Local managers don't always take ICES advice into account.

#### **4.7) CCRUP: How is the progress of the VMEs study in all the ORs?**

##### **Introduction:**

Considering the response from the European Commission to our recommendation n° 30 about «*Possible studies on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in all the Outermost Regions*», we would like to know if ICES did deliver an advice in October or in the current month (November) with an identification of areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs)?

##### **Discussion:**

Mr. Eugene Nixon informed that ICES recognize the differences and particularities of the ORs regions, mainly characterized by their volcanic activity, greater depths and static fishing gears. At the moment the secretariat is analyzing the request and considering it. ICES expects to respond to DG MARE in the next few weeks.

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas explained that if there were any experts in the ORs from scientific institutes, available to collaborate with ICES (in the study of VMEs) it would be very helpful, since it is one of the main issues.

**Action Point:** ICES received a request from DG MARE to analyze where the VMEs are likely to occur on the ORs. ICES is considering and will respond to the EC, probably in the week after. It is important to have local experts in the ORs to contribute to this study and support ICES.



#### 4.8) PELAC: Herring and Sprat in ICES areas 6 and 7

##### Introduction:

The PelAC was pleased with the main outcome of the benchmark meeting in February 2022 covering the herring stocks in 6a and 7bc, which was that the split of the stocks had been successful. However, it was only possible to do so for category 3 assessments.

The PelAC considers it important that both stocks transition towards category 1 assessments as soon as possible. The issues raised in the benchmark (low catches from the monitoring fisheries, the aging and maturity issues and the split survey cohort tracking in the 6aS assessment model) are currently being addressed within the PelAC 6a 7bc.

Herring Focus Group, with the aim to bring this work forward to HAWG 2023.

The PelAC would appreciate ICES' feedback on what is necessary to progress the stocks from category 3 to category 1 assessments.

Currently, there is no ICES advice for TACs and quotas for sprat in subarea VI and divisions VII a–c and VII f–k. The PelAC would appreciate feedback from ICES on what can be done to resolve stock-ID issues and improve data generation for sprat in these areas. In this regard, the recent ICES workshop on a research roadmap for Channel and Celtic Seas sprat is worth considering.

##### Discussion:

Mrs. Lotte Worsøe Clausen explained that there are model issues which impact the lack of historical data. ICES is analyzing with the experts, what is necessary and what could be retrieved. Due to the schedule and the benchmark process, it is unlikely to consider the stock again into benchmark, in the next 3 years. The recent Workshop of ICES on a research roadmap was a very successful tool, mainly on the sprat. This year ICES will add an extra day to the *Assessment WG* where experts will consider the roadmap to analyze what could be done in terms of progress. By the end of march, the *Assessment WG* may have achieved some conclusions.

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue thanked the clarifications and commented that several institutes are working on herring stock. He asked if a new benchmark process was needed. Regarding the sprat he explained that for PELAC, since there are a lot of stocks, the management plans are very important. Although, the Roadmap was a very helpful tool. PELAC's work program of this year involves requesting ICES up guidelines on the roadmap.

Mrs. Lotte Worsøe Clausen informed that the WG is still working on herring stock and trying to achieve a best model for the stock assessment. However, when the stock changes from category 3 to category 1, a benchmark process is necessary. She thanked PELAC for giving inputs on sprat data and for informing the European Commission and the interested parties.

**Action Point:** There are model issues that impact the data collection. ICES is analyzing what could be done regarding the stocks assessments. Roadmap was a very successful tool.

#### 4.9) BSAC: Herring stocks in the Baltic

##### Introduction:

Following the Council TAC and Quota decision, a number of remarks were made by the Council on the need to



better assess size and age composition of the stocks. This is necessary data to implement the Baltic management plan which makes specific reference to take this into account when setting quotas. Did ICES launch any particular work on those topics? How will these questions be addressed? and what are the first results envisaged?

#### Discussion:

Mr. Mark Dickey-Collas informed that a benchmark will be released about some pelagic stocks on central Baltic. The *Assessment WG* is preparing a paper that would come out soon. ICES was working on ecosystem interactions on the pelagic stocks, productivity changes affecting the distribution of the stocks, and a consideration on natural mortality. ICES is also trying to create an ensemble model with different sets and assumptions in several models. The European Commission made a request to ICES to consider the pelagic stocks and that request is now under consideration.

**Action Point:** Benchmark will be released. ICES is working to analyze the herring stocks mainly on the central Baltic.

#### **4.10) CCRUP: Knowledge and assessment of stocks in the Outermost Regions namely in Mayotte?**

##### Introduction:

Mayotte members would like to inform about the need to protect the ZEE of the Outermost Regions within 100 miles from the third countries' vessels, namely in their territory.

Can ICES study their stocks in order to reinforce their will to protect their resources?

##### Discussion:

Mr. Rui Catarino informed that it is necessary a formal request, from DG MARE, for ICES to evaluate the possibility to work on this OR (planning, consulting the experts, checking the availability of data and reaching an agreement with the advice requesters).

Mr. Charif Abdallah (*Chambre de l' Agriculture, de la Pêche et de l' Aquaculture de Mayotte*) informed that representatives from Mayotte had meetings with the national representatives in Paris, but they still didn't had answers.

##### **Action Point:**

For ICES to work in Mayotte assessment stocks, it is needed an official request from DG MARE, to consult their experts and reach agreement about these studies.

#### **4.11) BSAC: Cod spawning at depths of 20-30 meters and 30-40 meters**

##### Introduction:

Passive gear fishermen have an exemption for fishing flatfish up to depths of 20 meters. Some fishers representatives observe an increase in sea temperatures meaning that plaice and flounder are found in deeper water where it is colder. This raises questions on an increased depth of cod spawning. Does ICES have any more recent evidence





regarding cod spawning in SD 25 and 26 at depths greater than 20 meters? Are any investigations of the impact of extending this exemption to depths of 30 and/or 40 meters foreseen?

#### Discussion:

Mr. Henn Ojaveer, informed that the best available science shows that the depth range for cod and flatfish has decreased in recent years not only because of temperature changes, but also due to hypoxia and predation risk in the shallow areas. He also explained that cod is unlikely to spawn at depths 30-40 meters because the salinity is low and thus the reproduction success rate is also very low. However, the use of passive gears in waters deeper than 20m could impact pre-spawning and spawning aggregations of cod. So, the bycatch of cod is a more relevant issue if passive gears are allowed deeper than 20 meters.

**Action Point:** Some factors like hypoxia, could influence the spawning of cod. From 20-30 meters the reproduction of cod is very low. Bycatch of cod is a relevant issue if passive gears are allowed deeper than 20 meters.

#### **4.12) LDAC: Joint ICES-NAFO Pandalus Working Group and Ecosystem-multispecies approach for NAFO Flemish Cap (3M) for cod, redfish, and shrimp fisheries**

##### Introduction:

LDAC would like to request ICES to continue working with NAFO in ensuring that timing of meetings and stock assessment is handed over and delivered in time for decision at the NAFO Annual Meeting in the third week of September. ICES noted a strong progress on ecosystem modelling for the Flemish Cap and the inter-relationships between redfish, cod and shrimp, including on multi-species MSE. It was noted that a ‘number of pandalus benchmarks’ took place in 2022 with some interesting results but still there is work to do in terms of data quality and ecosystem modelling for Flemish Cap. The LDAC would be interested in knowing more about this process and agree how best we could provide input to this (benchmark workshops, WKPRAWN).

This item has been addressed in previous MIAC meetings and is still relevant as the fishery remains closed by decision at the last NAFO annual meeting in September 2021. This is causing a serious economic impact in certain EU fleets which are members of the LDAC. The LDAC is planning to assist the DG MARE in negotiating a proposal for allocation keys and management of this fishery and would appreciate discussing with scientists from ICES the status of scientific advice for this stock. An update on the work on ecosystem modeling for the Flemish Cap and a calendar for future benchmark workshops would also be useful to ensure active participation from the AC.

##### Discussion:

Mr. Rui Catarino informed that ICES didn’t attend the NAFO meeting last September. Russian participation in these NAFO meetings was suspended. The scientific work already done was not incorporated in the NAFO Flemish Cap 3M assessment. Last year they tried to do a benchmark about *Pandalus* stock, but the data available was short. Considering this, the stock was categorized as data limited and used the previous assessment model. Also clarified that this year the meetings were not yet scheduled, probably would be in the next 2-3 weeks.

Mr. Alexandre Rodriguez asked if the benchmark process was closed for this stock and if there would be any further action in terms of data gathering and build of datasets.



Mr. Rui Catarino informed that NAFO Flemish Cap (3M) stock is under a joint ICES-NAFO Working Group on Pandalus. The benchmarks of the other shrimp stocks of the Joint Group ICES-NAFO are finished, except the benchmark of the 3M stock. At that moment, the data available for the 3M stock is far from the ideal and continues to be a data limited stock.

**Action Point:**

Some work was being done but not yet incorporated in the work of the NAFO Scientific Committee for evaluations and management recommendations for Shrimp 3M. This year there are not scheduled more benchmark meetings for this stock.

**5) Next MIAC 2024:**

Mrs. Chloé Pocheau (Policy Officer of CCSUD) informed that during the summer they will have elections and that depending on the results, they would inform about their availability to organize the MIAC 2024. In this regard, BSAC proposed to assume the organization of the meeting, in case CCSUD couldn't, and even if they can BSAC will help CCSUD to organize the meeting, since they will have less time to do it.