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Report of Channel Scallops (VIIde) GAP2 Workshop – Brixham (UK)

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Context

The following note is a reflection of the Channel scallop workshop and is intended to capture core themes of the 2 day event. It therefore does not prescribe solutions or set out next steps. That information is currently being prepared in a full report which the workshop organizing committee will circulate to all participants in July.

Background

Over 60 par a two-day workshop in Devon to exchange views on management measures for the Channel Scallop fishery. This is the most valuable non-quota fishery for Britain, Normandy and Brittany, bringing in XX GBP annually.

The event was organised by the GAP2 project (an international EC funded research project) and supported by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) – UK, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC). The event was run by a team of facilitators working with a diverse group of individuals composed of fishers/skippers, POs and fishery managers, scientists, NGOs and Government representatives. They all took part in industry-led discussions on what should be the first steps in securing a sustainable, regional and collaborative long-term management plan. Discussions were wide-ranging and participants were eager to voice a diversity of view, particularly around the need for more science and taking a co-management approach to future management of this species.

Facilitators led participants through a SWOT (*Strenghts, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*) analysis where participants were asked to identify a number of priority areas they would like to focus on in the workshop but also the key areas work on within the next 2-3 years. The priority areas were then grouped in themes and participants were divided in smaller breakout groups to discuss each theme in greater detail. These themes, along with overarching views of the group, are set out below.

Theme 1. Science

1.1. All participants agreed that robust science is essential to underpin well informed and evidence-based management decisions. While the Channel scallops stocks were perceived to be in relatively good biological condition, the need to ensure they are sustainably managed for the future was a prevalent discussion point.

1.2. The importance of adequate funding was highlighted as critical in ensuring robust science to support the health of the stock. The wider issue of funding for research and scientific assessments on non-TAC species, particularly for shellfish, was also raised.

1.3. More resources must be devoted to scientific research programmes under both EU (HORIZON 2020, LIFE, LOT1) and national (EMFF) programmes. In France the industry contributes and provides financial support to scientific campaigns, this is seen as a positive and proactive approach where lessons could be derived.

1.4. The newly created ICES Working Group on scallops is welcome. This group should contribute to improve stock assessments and identify data needs and gaps and help provide a supportive scientific framework for assessing the health of Channel scallops.

1.5. The importance of using fishing vessels as potential research platforms was acknowledged by the group. This innovative approach to data collection could provide several types of real time data relevant for scientific analysis (e.g. VMS, e-logbook, sensors for measuring water temperature and salinity, seabed mapping, etc.).

Other considerations on science were discussed, such as how to take forward any spatial management through a pragmatic and rational approach as well as how to ensure water quality and deal with fito-sanitary issues to maximize the health of the stock. These issues need priority action in the short term.

Theme 2. Regulatory framework

2.1. Although EU rules are quite general and the VIIde scallop fishery is mainly affected by provisions in relation to technical measures (MLS and ring size on EC Reg. 850/1998) and fishing effort (western waters regime), they are both in process of revision and need to be aligned with current CFP objectives and the EU governing framework (e.g. MSY and the landing obligation).

2.2. There is a huge disparity between UK and French national measures in relation to scallops. This creates confusion, particularly for the Eastern Channel (VIId). A certain harmonization of provisions for vessels fishing in the same area was discussed as a means to increase mutual trust and confidence in the system and create a level playing field that will help to build a culture of compliance.

2.3. It was generally agreed that while EU institutions should be responsible for setting overarching principles and objectives, management measures should be taken at a regional or sea basin level.

Theme 3. Integration of Industry knowledge and cooperation

3.1. In order to gain wider industry cooperation and knowledge sharing across the Channel, there needs to be greater understanding of relative fishing activities, on both sides of the channel. To get a better picture of activity on the water it is essential to gather accurate data that can be used to help devise appropriate management solutions. More transparent data on the number of vessels, tonnage, allocation of days at sea (percentage of kw/day), amount of dredges used at sea, etc., will help establish greater knowledge of fleet composition and how industry might share knowledge and cooperate within and across different fleet segments.

3.2. For example, there are different fleet profiles depending on the Member States. In France there are only about 600 vessels (mostly family businesses and small boats below 15 metres) and in UK about 200 (most over 15 metres and run by companies).

3.3. Participants were keen to discuss access to the fishery and felt that this is a topic that would need further discussion. There was recognition that access would need to be considered at an appropriate scale (Regional vs. UK vs. local) and within the context of potential displacement issues as a result of fishermen moving out of quota species as a result of the landing obligation.

Theme 4. Market aspects

4.1. Shellfish fishery is hugely important for France, UK and Ireland as opposed to fin fish, counting approximately between 50-65% of total volume of landings.

4.2. Scallops alone are the 3rd most valuable fishery in UK and the 1st in Normandy and Brittany. Participants therefore recognized the importance to further develop internal markets and improve marketing techniques to derive a higher value for their product.

4.3. There was recognition that globalisation of markets can be problematic in terms of competition (i.e. the lowest common denominator effect) and differentiation in the market from other species of scallops can be difficult. There should be greater discussion about how to achieve market differentiation for the various species and improve quality of scallops for the market. Traceability and sourcing can play an important role here.

4.4. Some participants were interested in exploring market schemes to improve quality and value of product, such as labelling and certification.

Theme 5. Management

5.1. Management plans

5.1.1. Most participants agreed that good management would deliver benefits to the future of the Channel scallop fishery. Effective planning and the use of appropriate tools need to be part of the design of any management plan. A robust plan must also take into consideration overarching EU requirements, such as compliance with marine conservation legislation such as achieving good environmental status by 2020 in line with MSFD requirements and OSPAR/Natura2000 sites.

5.1.2. A plan needs to be set at the right governing level and resource users must be part of the process and take the plan forward through a co-management approach. Goals should also be ambitious but achievable and broken down in short and long term objectives with specific measures to help implement the objectives. A well thought through plan will aid in greater clarity around access to the resource as well as incentivize responsibility for the fishery at an individual level, which will help in maintain and enhancing the health of the stock.

5.1.3. EDF presented seven key design steps for a management plan which participants might wish to consider if engaging in the development of a management plan (to note that this is not a lineal process):

a. Define your goals
b. Define and quantify the available resource
c. Decide who will be included in the programme (access rights and new entries)
d. Define the privilege
e. Assign the privilege
f. Develop Administrative systems (example, who will pay for the collection and processing of data)
g. Assess performance and innovate

5.2. Capacity

5.2.1. There was a noted difference between the way the Channel is regulated on the French and English side and presentations from . For example, the French have a more regulated system with proposals and measures coming from the fishermen themselves and sanctioned/endorsed by their authorities (bottom up approach). However, in the UK, regulation is characterized by more of a top-down approach with little regulation, e.g. there is no limitation to enter the fishery.

5.2.2. There was discussion around the differences in allocation of kw-days among boats in the UK which would benefit from further dialogue to avoid conflict and misunderstanding between fishermen.

5.2.3. How to define access rights and exclusivity through a clear licensing system was raised by some of the participants. Recognition that there should be room for flexibility and potential transferability of licences without increasing capacity. e.g. members or shareholders should be able to buy, sell and/or lease shares. In any system of allocation there must be clear and objective criteria to ensure that a system of allocation is designed to meet the goals of the fishery. This subject was a big issue for participants with most recognizing that a further discussion on capacity within the fishery would be useful.

5.3. Technical measures

5.3.1. There were various scenarios presented by speakers on measures to enhance the health of the stock while at the same time ensuring the fleet remains profitable. Options, such as spatial management with clearly defined zones (including zones that could assess stock interactions and zones where fishing activity occurs) could be identified and set out in an industry-led plan.

5.3.2. There was willingness among the group to sit down and discuss a number of technical measures with the view to achieving a set of common technical regulations that all users of the Channel scallop fishery could agree on. . This discussion also raised the need to clarify measures that affect both the inshore and offshore.

Some elements for discussion here could be:

- Use of VMS to better understand the fishing effort, geo-positioning and the fishing areas/grounds.
- Reducing fishing effort through limitation of the number of vessels in UK.
- Seasonal/rotational closures introduced through a co-management approach with buy in from the scallop industry.
- Harmonisation of measures such as a limit on the number of dredges used on-board each dredge or ring size in trawls for offshore waters.

Theme 6. Governance

6.1. Examples must be drawn from experiences on both EU and international fisheries such as Shetland, Isle of Man, Wales or Maine (US) and analysis applied as to how these management systems might look in the Channel scallop fishery

6.2. The new CFP must be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat for collaboration between stakeholders and Member States to develop bottom-up proposals to improve fisheries management at fishery/sea basin level.

6.3. A regional approach was strongly supported. The Advisory Councils, which are EU fisheries stakeholder-led bodies, seem to be a natural forum for dialogue and interaction between fishermen and fishing industry representatives, policy makers, scientists, national administration, and other stakeholders and with the North Western Waters dedicated Channel Working Group (WG3), it seems a natural forum to take forward such issues. However, there was support for the idea of a separate, industry-led group to drive management change. These issues need further discussion and debate.

6.4. Scallops representatives must ensure that their fishery is a priority species in need of dedicated attention and focus both from industry representatives and fisheries managers. Fishermen and regulators must therefore work together to deliver through a co-managed approach in order to secure genuine buy-in and achieve a sustainable fishery.

Theme 7. Communications

7.1. There was support to improve the consumer perception on scallop dredge fisheries to highlight those fisheries that are engaging in initiatives that support greater sustainability within the fleet. MSC certification may be one tool to demonstrate sustainable practices and to boost reputation and credibility of the industry. However, participants were cognizant that MSC it is quite expensive for small scale fisheries and is therefore not attainable for all segments of the fleet.

7.3. Participants would like to see information released in the media to be factual and representative of the fishery. Media should also be evidenced based and underpinned by science where possible.

7.5. Media should be part of the process towards greater sustainability of the stock to help the industry improve perception from critics and demonstrate industry's compliance with the rules.