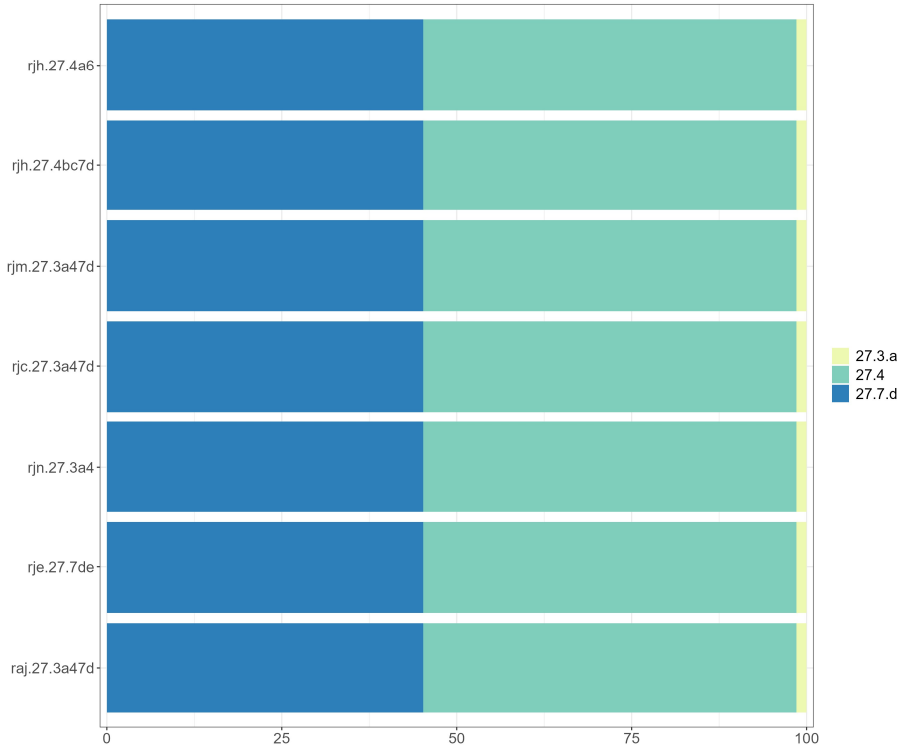
Identifying candidates: Prioritising stocks within the Group TAC

02-09-2025

Key considerations

- Legal obligation to manage fish stocks at **MSY levels**
  - Limit the fishing mortality in line with ICES advice
- Legally **adheres to the TCA** with the UK
  - No change in shares: “no one losing, no one gaining”
- No approach is ‘perfect’:
    - Potential for TACs to be more closely aligned with ICES' advice for specific fish stocks.
    - TACs could be set to match the defined fish stock areas/adjusted to fishing patterns.
    - Address the issue of over- and underutilization of quota.

The “off-which” approach



Keep the SCF agreed split among the areas

SRX/03A-C	SRX/2AC4-C	SRX/07D
1.46%	53.31%	45.23%

“of which” clause

“apply TCA”

SRX/07D		SRX/2AC4-C		SRX/03A-C	
84.21%	15.79%	31%	69%	100%	0%

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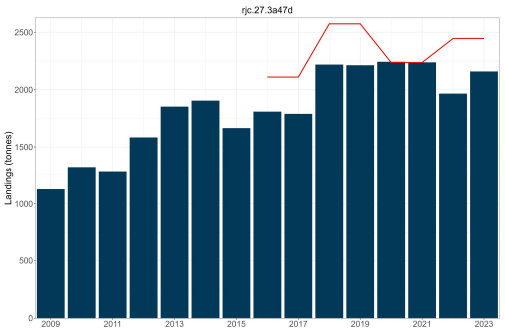
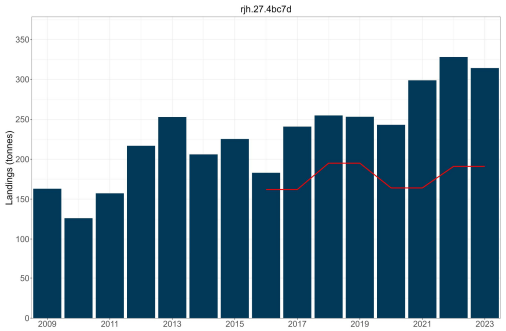
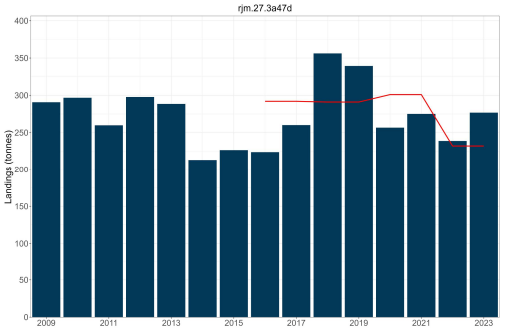
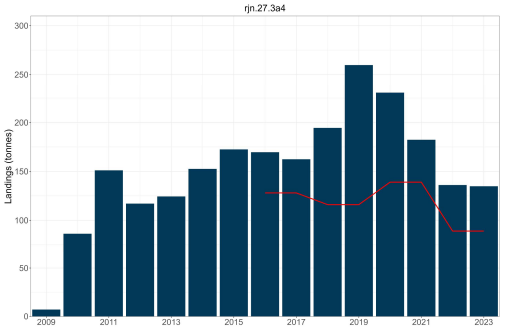
Sustainability of the stocks

- No approach is ‘perfect’ but first steps to:
  - Largely addresses the issue of over- and underutilization of quota
  - TAC are more closely aligned with ICES' advice for specific fish stocks.









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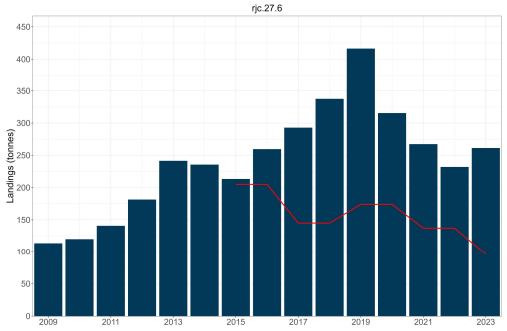
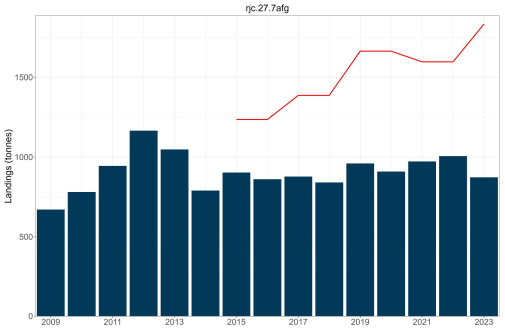
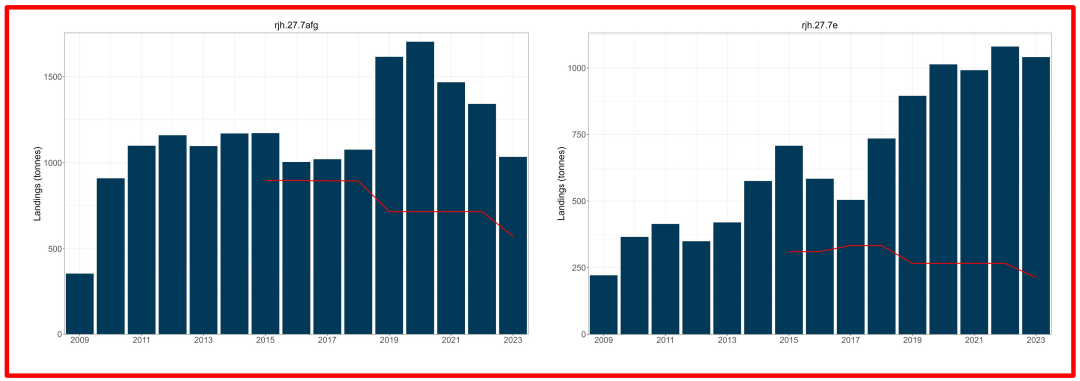
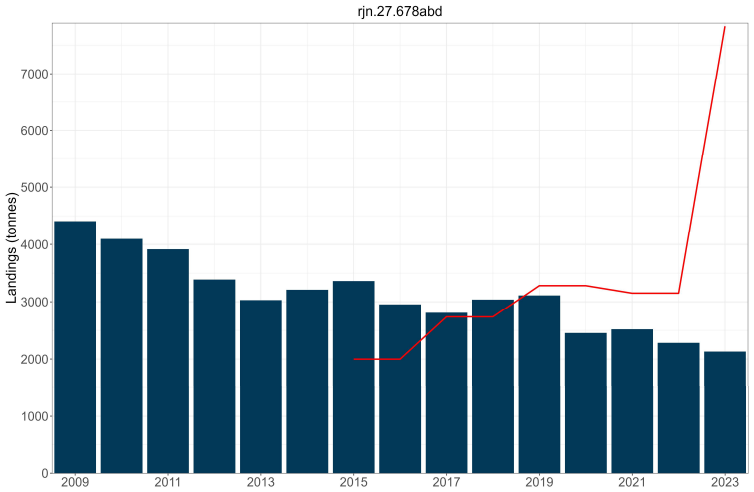
Celtic Sea









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Everything is in a lovely Excel-sheet…

- Calculation of overall Greater North Sea as agreed under the SCF

Species	Stock code(s)	Proportion of stock in area	ICES Advised Landings 2025	ICES Advised Catch 2025	Landings (% of L+DD; ICES report)	**Implied landings**
Blonde ray	rjh.27.4a6	0.1	7			**0.7**
Blonde ray	rjh.27.4bc7d	1		1209	0.724	**875**
Thornback ray	rjc.27.3a47d	1		5307	0.809	**4293.363**
Small-eyed ray	rje.27.7de	0.5	32			**16**
Spotted ray	rjm.27.3a47d	1		1415	0.383	**541.945**
Sandy ray	rji.27.67	0	27			**0**
Shagreen ray	rjf.27.67	0	134			**0**
Cuckoo ray	rjn.27.3a4	1	79			**79**
Rajidae	raj.27.3a47d	1				**137.1333333**
Common skate	rjb.27.3a4	1	0	0		**0**
Starry ray	rjr.27.23a4	1	0	0		**0**
	Total					**5943.141333**

Split by TAC areas

	TAC-split	SRX/03A-C	SRX/2AC4-C	SRX/07D.
	SCF agreed split	0.0146	0.5331	0.4523

Species	Code	SRX/03A-C	SRX/2AC4-C	SRX/07D.
thornback ray	RJC	62.683	2288.792	1941.888
Blonde ray	RJH	12.790	467.004	396.222
Spotted ray	RJM	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cuckoo ray	RJN	0.000	0.000	0.000
Small-eyed ray	RJE	0.000	0.000	0.000
Sandy ray	RJI	0.000	0.000	0.000
Shagreen ray	RJF	0.000	0.000	0.000
Starry ray	RJR	0.000	0.000	0.000
Common skate	RJB	0.000	0.000	0.000
Rajidae	RAJ	0.000	0.000	0.000
Group-TAC	SRX	11.302	412.661	350.116
	Total	86.774	3168.457	2688.226

Split EU and UK based on TCA

TCA split	EU	UK
SRX/03A-C	1	0
SRX/2AC4-C	0.31	0.69
SRX/07D.	0.8421	0.1579

TCA split		SRX/03A-C		SRX/2AC4-C		SRX/07D.	
Species	Code	EU	UK	EU	UK	EU	UK
thornback ray	RJC	62.683	0.000	709.525	1579.266	1635.264	306.624
Blonde ray	RJH	12.790	0.000	144.771	322.233	333.659	62.563
Spotted ray	RJM	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cuckoo ray	RJN	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Small-eyed ray	RJE	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Sandy ray	RJI	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Shagreen ray	RJF	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Starry ray	RJR	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Common skate	RJB	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Rajidae	RAJ	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Group-TAC	SRX	11.302	0.000	127.925	284.736	294.832	55.283
	Total	86.774	0.000	982.222	2186.235	2263.755	424.471

Split by Member State based on current RSK

RSK	SRX/03A-C	SRX/2AC4-C	SRX/07D.
BEL		0.476635	0.105856
DNK	0.779412	0.018693	
DEU		0.023365	
FRA		0.074767	0.888514
NLD		0.40654	0.005631
SWE	0.220588		

EU RSK split		SRX/03A-C		SRX/2AC4-C					SRX/07D.		
Species	Code	DNK	SWE	BEL	DNK	DEU	FRA	NLD	BEL	FRA	NLD
thornback ray	RJC	49	14	338	13	17	53	288	173	1453	9
Blonde ray	RJH	10	3	69	3	3	11	59	35	296	2
Spotted ray	RJM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cuckoo ray	RJN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Small-eyed ray	RJE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sandy ray	RJI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shagreen ray	RJF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Starry ray	RJR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common skate	RJB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rajidae	RAJ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Group-TAC	SRX	9	2	61	2	3	10	52	31	262	2
	Total	68	19	468	18	23	73	399	240	2011	13

Same file for the Celtic Sea

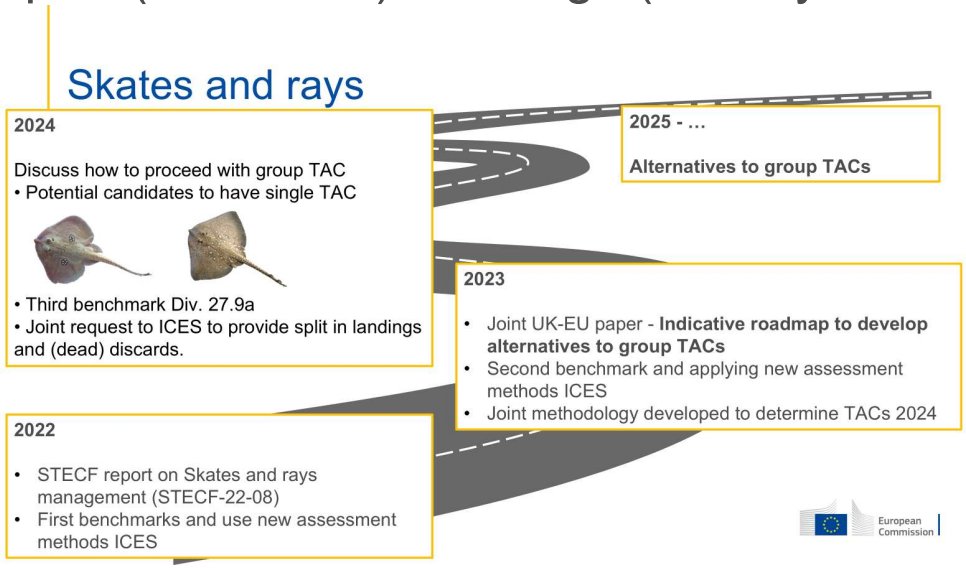
Species	Stock code(s)	Proportion of stock in area	ICES Advised Landings 2025	**Implied landings**	Include in group-TAC	Value	ICES advice
Blonde ray	rjh.27.4a6	0.9	7	**6.3**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
Blonde ray	rjh.27.7afg	1	573	**573**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
Blonde ray	rjh.27.7e	1	213	**213**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
cuckoo ray	rjn.27.678abd	0.676	7799	**5272.124**	☑ Group	TRUE	MSY
Sandy ray	rji.27.67	1	27	**27**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
Shagreen ray	rjf.27.67	1	134	**134**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
Small-eyed ray	rje.27.7fg	1	103	**103**	☑ Group	TRUE	MSY
Small-eyed ray	rje.27.7de	0.5	32	**16**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
Spotted ray	rjm.27.67bj	1	32	**32**	☐ Group	FALSE	MSY
Spotted ray	rjm.27.7ae-h	1	757	**757**	☐ Group	FALSE	MSY
Thornback ray	rjc.27.6	1	67	**67**	☑ Group	TRUE	MSY
Thornback ray	rjc.27.7afg	1	1699	**1699**	☑ Group	TRUE	MSY
Thornback ray	rjc.27.7e	1	170	**170**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
Undulate ray	rju.27.7bj	1	0	**0**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
Common skate	rjb.27.67a-ce-k	1		**6**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
Rajidae	raj.27.67a-ce-k	1		**355.3333333**	☑ Group	TRUE	PA
	Total			**9430.757333**			

Feedback from Member states

- Agreement that the current management system has certain limitations but…
  - Significant loss of fishing opportunities for the industry
    - Explore and analyse uptakes
  - Expected difficulties swapping quota
    - Explore and analyse swaps
  - Creation of additional choke species
    - LO exemption based on survivability for skates and rays in place until 2027
  - Lack of data to have a stock assessment (specifically blonde ray Celtic Sea)
    - Develop scientific surveys or targeted studies (RJH.27.7e and outcomes WKSKATE2)
  - Explore other management measures
    - E.g. a coordinated harmonization of minimum landing sizes

Meetings with the UK on prioritization

- Agreement on the need for alternative approach, which is an SCF-commitment
- Agreed to define scientific key variables to discuss prioritization of species
- Scientific expert (Technical) meetings (30 July and 27 August)



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Prioritization of species

- From a scientific perspective, there were five rationales that were deemed appropriate for the consideration for such ‘of which clauses’:
  1. **Mismatch with ICES advice:** Reported landings much higher/lower than advised.
  2. **Coastal stocks:** Localised, inshore, at risk of depletion.
  3. **Offshore / data-limited:** Poor survey coverage, uncertain stock status.
  4. **Vulnerable life history:** Low productivity, high susceptibility.
  5. **Outside assessment units:** Not fully covered by ICES, no formal advice.

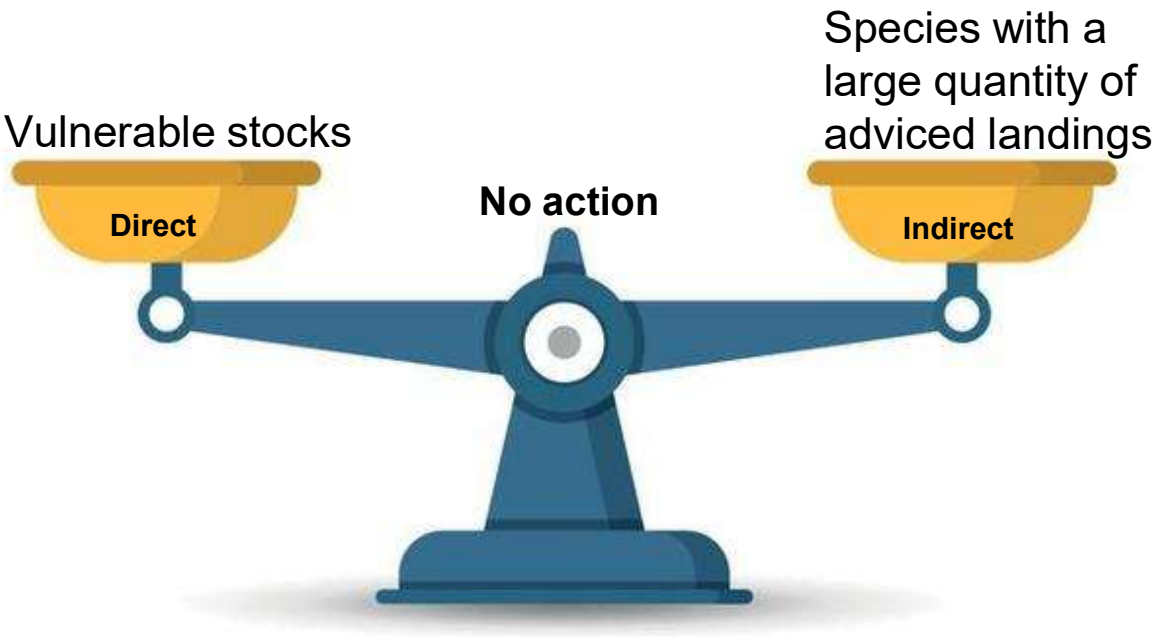
Prioritization of species

- Scientific key elements fit into a table with some examples:

Stock	ICES category	Data availability	Stock status	Distributional concerns	Life History traits	Mismatch (advice vs landings)	Rationale/ Benefit of separation
Thornback ray - North Sea	Category 2 (MSY)	High	F < Fmsy B > Btrigger	None	Moderate growth & fecundity	Landings < ICES advice	Full analytical assessment; moderate resilience and well-monitored fishery
Spotted ray - Celtic Sea	Category 3 (MSY)	Medium	F = Fmsy B > Btrigger	None	low fecundity slow growth	Landings < ICES advice	High vulnerability; medium data availability
Blonde ray - Western English Channel	Category 5 (Catch only)	Low	unknown	Limited survey data	Late maturity low fecundity	Landings > ICES advice	No reliable data; limited info on stock status; high vulnerability
Common skate - Irish Sea	Category 5 (Catch only)	Very Low	Depleted	often offshore	Low resilience	Some landings (0-advice)	Critically endangered; urgent conservation priority
Small-eyed ray - Bristol Channel	Category 3 (MSY)	Medium	F < Fmsy B > Btrigger	Coastal and local	Moderate growth Low fecundity	Landings ~ ICES advice	fragmented stock may get a degree of protection
Blonde ray – Bay of Biscay	No assessment	Very Low	unknown	Local distribution	Late maturity low fecundity	unknown	Advantage could be to afford a degree of recognition and/or protection to unassessed population unit, but problematic to establish a defensible TAC

Initial reflections from COM – UK

- Protection of vulnerable stocks has priority.



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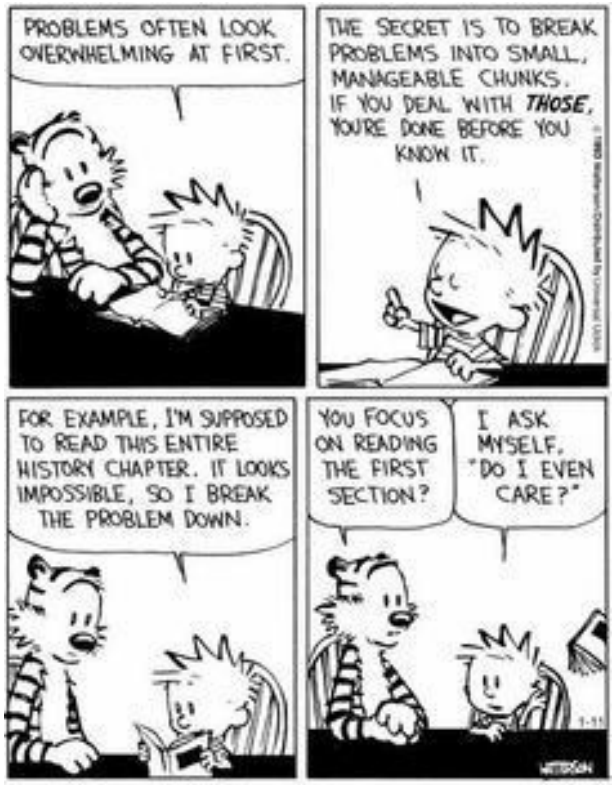
Stakeholder feedback and input

- TAC-split has been long-standing process
- It is essential to take into account the insights of policymakers, fishers, and managers.

1. Stakeholder perception on the key variables for identifying stocks? What is missing?
2. What general issues do you perceive for removing individual stocks from the group-TAC?
3. What stocks in which areas could be identified for removal, and why?
4. If you could redesign SRX management, how would you do it?

To conclude …

- Much progress has been made, but still quite some open ends…



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Thank you

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