



MINUTES

NWWAC Focus Group Whelk

Virtual meeting via Zoom

14 April 2021, 10:00 – 11:30 CET

Participants

Anais Roussel	CRPMEM Hauts-de-France
Delphine Roncin	From Nord
Anais Mourtada	CNPMEM
Pascal Coquet	Peche durable et responsable
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Didier Leguelinel	CRPMEM de Normandie
Manu Kelberine	Pecheurs de Bretagne
Mathieu Vimard	Organisation des pêcheurs Normands
Dominique Thomas	OPCMEMMN
Dimitri Rogoff	CRPMEM de Normandie
Xavier Tetard	CRPMEM de Normandie
Lucile Aumont	CRPMEM de Normandie
Anais Roussel	CRPMEM Hauts-de-France
Delphine Roncin	From Nord
Anais Mourtada	CNPMEM
Pascal Coquet	Peche durable et responsable
Matilde Vallerani	Secrétariat CC EOS
Mo Mathies	Secrétariat CC EOS

UK observers

Charlie Brock	Leach Fishing Enterprises
Lewis Tattersall	Seafish
Martyn Youell	Waterdance
Bill Brock	Leach Fishing Enterprises
Chloe North	Western Fish Producers' Organisation

1. Welcome and introductions

The Secretariat welcomed all the participants to the meeting. No apologies were presented in advance of the meeting. The agenda was adopted as drafted.

2. Decision on Chair and Vice-Chair positions

Xavier Tétard was nominated to be the Chair of this group. However, he will be away from May to September, which may not suit the Focus Group timeline and work. Thus, it was proposed that Dimitri Rogoff is made Vice-Chair and takes over while Xavier is away. Members agreed to this arrangement.

3. Finalisation of Terms of Reference

The Secretariat shared the draft Terms of Reference and asked for proposals regarding the timeline.

Mathieu Vimard: We should consider at least two years minimum, because we do not know at this stage how whelk fishing will be managed in terms of catch limits as it is a non-TAC species. I think that by the end of the year we should aim to submit a general framework for managing the stock, as we already mentioned maximum length of vessels, technical measures and possibly licenses. By next year we should be able to make this more specific, as we should know more about Brexit by then.

Members agreed with this time frame and the proposed actions as put forward by Mathieu Vimard.

Dimitri Rogoff: As Mathieu said, it is important to envisage things in two phases. This is a fairly recent fishery and we must have a clear picture of the fleets involved, also in terms of vessels volume, landing volumes and the value this fishery has for each Member State. For example, in Normandy whelk is the second most important species in terms of value. We must know these details before we can agree a framework.

Pascal Coquet: I agree, very often what we lack is data and transparency as far as MS are concerned. Thus, it would be a good idea to have this data supplied by all MS to have full transparency before anything is agreed.

Manu Kelberine: Do we agree that the area we are going to focus our work on is between the 12-mile French limit in the Channel and the median line, so just the EU waters?

Mathieu Vimard: I think that we should consider the area between the French 12 miles and the UK 12 miles UK, if possible.

Manu Kelberine: Yes, in absolute terms we should think about this area when we discuss the stock. But as things stand now, we cannot really get involved in Brexit negotiations and in those stocks that are not shared stocks. Until there is clarification on that, we must focus on the area inside the median.

Anais Mourtada: I just want to confirm that we are talking about 7d and e and that we are also taking into account 4c?

Secretariat: Area 4c is not within the remit of the NWWAC, this falls into the remit of the NSAC, so this FG can only discuss measures in 7d and e. However, there is the possibility to make this a joint Focus Group with the NSAC if members feel this is important.

ACTION: Secretariat to update the draft ToR and circulate amongst members. Any comments and suggestions from members should be sent in for consideration prior to the ToR being submitted to ExCom for approval.

4. Discussion points

a. Welcome UK observers

The Secretariat welcomed UK observers: Lewis Tattersall (Seafish), Charlie Brock and Bill Brock (Brighton and Newhaven Fish Sales), Martyn Youell (Waterdance), Chloe North (Western Fish Producers' Organisation).

b. Stock management measures

Chair: For this discussion, it would be interesting and helpful to have figures on the fishery and on the various stakeholders in the Channel. What we are interested in is developing a framework that applies to all on technical measures, including: a maximum number of fishing vessels, sorting grids, maximum length of vessels, weekly closures and geolocation measures.

Mathieu Vimard: Maybe we should have some sort of deadline and a representative per country who can report back on the proposed measures. Perhaps in June we could say that each country could come forward with a description of their fishery?

Chair: Yes, that is a good idea. With a deadline in June that would give us two months to get organized.

ACTION: Secretariat to prepare template for data call to be agreed by members of the FG.

Dimitri Rogoff: We need data on length of vessels, but we also need economic figures to understand what the value of the fishery is for each stakeholder and what the landings represent in value for each fleet. We need to have a goal in mind, so objectively we must consider the difficulties we have with running a fishery alongside others as we do not have the scientific data that we need. To put the right measures in place we need data to base this on. We do not want to end up overfishing and having to put in place restrictions. We need to act carefully and have very precise figures.

Pascal Coquet: In the questionnaire we should have technical data because the grids are different and the markets are different. The economic aspect is important too, we should take into account landing size as well.

John Lynch: Ireland has no whelk fishing in the Channel, but is interested in what management advice may come from this FG. There has been talk about various management measures over the past years. The only technical measure in place is the minimum landing size, which is 45mm in length and 25mm across the face of the shell. The fishery is more than 30 years old with exports going to Asia. When cod was still fished with longlines, whelk was potted for use as bait. Commercial fishing for whelk has been very successful for at least the past 30 years with most vessels below 15 meters in length.

Bill Brock: The data that is being asked for and the list of characteristics of vessels is all very sensible, is this only for vessels operating in EU waters or is this for all vessels fishing in all waters of the Channel?

Pascal Coquet: We are considering the area between the UK 12 mile and the FR 12 mile, I think that was our original idea at the last meeting of WG3.

Manu Kelberine: As far as data is concerned, we certainly need an overview of the whole area so that we know exactly what we are talking about. However, at present we cannot prejudge what the

negotiations will arrive at between the UK and the EU. As far as what we are aiming for, it is certainly the 12-mile limit, but we need to refer for the time being to the median as long as the negotiations have not finished.

Mathieu Vimard: The first issue which started the debate at the last WG3 meeting is the size of the fishing vessels. Last year, there was a 40m length Dutch vessels, which frightened everyone. We have seen this problem with the Danish seine fishery already and we have realized that we need set limits. The first thing to do is to put a ceiling to the size of the vessels allowed to fish for whelk. This could be done independently to the Brexit negotiations and the volumes fished.

Pascal Coquet: I agree with Manu Kelberine, but French whelk fishing vessels fish beyond the median line already and the UK vessels operate between 12 and 60 miles. Thus, we need to be clear regarding our data, for now we should have more practical data, and I think it is a priority to put an end to oversized vessels. At present, whelk vessels are not very big. I think we should propose that any vessel up to 18 meters can keep their license, but in future we may wish to limit this to 16 meters.

Bill Brock: First of all, I agree that it is important to start with a list of vessels to establish the data on length. When compiling the questionnaire, it would be useful for all concerned to consider the two areas of operation, from the French 12 miles to the median line and then from the median line to the UK 12 mile, so that we are specific on where those areas of operation are and we can get a view on which vessels are fishing where. Secondly, scientific data collection was mentioned in the discussion earlier. The UK has started a national whelk management group and we are in the process of collating whelk science in various whelk capture areas around the UK including the Channel. So, we should bear this in mind and share this once we have good data.

John Lynch: The first objective of this group should be to assess the quantity of the fishery. I think restricting it to the 12mile limit will not assess the whole fishery. In the Irish sea, the vast majority of the fishery takes place within the 12-mile zone. Then, whatever management proposals will be agreed should perhaps be brought to the COM and to the UK members to their own governance bodies.

Manu Kelberine: I totally agree with what Bill said, but Pascal's comment leads me to believe that the situation is very different in the western Channel compared to the eastern Chanel regarding the fishing effort and the proximity to the 12-mile limit. We might want to distinguish the two areas as far as their management is concerned. First of all, we must have an overview of what happens in these areas.

Martyn Youell: Is there any background information on the five proposed measures as described by the Chair which could help the UK representatives understand how to gather the information?

Chair: We have already done a certain amount of thinking about these measures and before we go further, we should gather more information on the activity. As far as knowing about the different areas, we should possibly concentrate on 7d where we have the most amount of data and the most precise data.

Dimitri: If we have suggested these technical measures, it is because we have some experience regarding whelk management. For example, the fishery in Granville Bay, which has been managed for more than 20 years, has been certified with the MSC label, so these measures, which are in place in Normandy, are very relevant. We have more than 100 whelk fishing vessels and the annual

extraction is more than 12.000 tonnes. We have got a certain overview which enabled us to suggest technical measures. In the western Channel we may have different problems, for example overfishing, which may require different measures regarding the development of the fleet. At the next meeting, we should examine the measures in place in Normandy in more detail and also discuss the negative issues related to current management practices.

ACTION: Secretariat to organize a presentation on the MSC certified whelk fishery in France for the next meeting.

Dimitri Rogoff via the chat: Normandie Fraicheur Mer can present the MSC ecolabel applied to whelk.

Secretariat: As members pointed out, another issue is the lack of scientific information on the whelk stock. What does the FG think might be the best way of influencing and promoting scientific data collection in this regard? Should the NWWAC ask the COM to make a request to some of the national research centers or contact the MS regarding this? Are members aware of any ongoing work?

Anais Roussel: There is an ongoing project on assessing whelks in the western Channel with results expected at the end of 2022. It's a project led by the Fishery Committee of the Hauts de France, the Fishery Committee of Normandy, Ifremer, the University of Caen and SMEL.

ACTION: Secretariat to organize a presentation on this research project for the next meeting.

Charlie Brock: Is this the correct forum to consider in terms of technical measures and scientific data, how those measures will affect fleets activities geographically in terms of interaction with other metiér types and cohabitation in the Channel?

Secretariat: Yes, this could be considered in this Focus Group but it is maybe for a later stage, when we know more about the fishery.

5. Next steps & planning

Mathieu Vimard: June would be the deadline for gathering information and we should have a meeting right before the NWWAC meetings in July. We could then report to WG3 on the progress made.

ACTION: Secretariat to launch a doodle to establish the next meeting date.

Secretariat: As we are trying to collaborate with the UK colleagues, maybe the NWWAC FG Whelk members could attend the future meetings of the UK Whelk Working group as observers too?

Bill Brock: Absolutely, we will take this back to the next UK Whelk WG meeting, as well as the suggestion to share the data as it comes together. The next meeting of this group is on 29 May.

Dimitri Rogoff via the chat: The French interregional program which is interested in the whelk fishery is called ESHANO, a presentation could be made at our next meeting.

Anais Roussel via the chat: Can we ask SMEL to come and make a presentation on this point?

Chair: A number of programmes were put in place by SMEL. We could have a presentation to discuss the various studies that have been undertaken and that are ongoing now in the western and eastern Channel.

Secretariat: The group may wish to consider having a look at the template used by the NWWAC FG Skates and Rays and see if this might be useful to tweak for the needs of this group.

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

1	Secretariat to update draft ToR and circulate amongst members. Any comments and suggestions from members should be sent in for consideration prior to the ToR being submitted to ExCom for approval.
2	Secretariat to prepare template for data call to be agreed by members of the FG.
3	Secretariat to organize a presentation on the MSC certified whelk fishery in France for the next meeting (ask Normandie Fraicheur Mer to present).
4	Secretariat to organize a presentation on the research project by the Fishery Committee of the Hauts de France for the next meeting (ask SMEL to present).
5	Secretariat to launch a doodle to establish the next meeting date.