

STECF PLENARY MEETING 15-01

13-17 APRIL, BRUSSELS

Terms of Reference – draft 08 April

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1. INTRODUCTION

Does not belong to the ToRs and is listed here to avoid confusion when editing the plenary report (section numbering...).

2. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Does not belong to the ToRs and is listed here to avoid confusion when editing the plenary report (section numbering...).

3. INFORMATION TO THE PLENARY

3.1. Feedback on STECF opinion since last plenary

4. STECF INITIATIVES

5. ASSESSMENT OF STECF EWG REPORTS

5.1. STECF 14-19: Mediterranean assessments part 2

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting, evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

Terms of reference of the WG: See STECF website

5.2. STECF 15-01: Technical measures

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting, evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

Terms of reference of the WG: See STECF website

5.3. STECF 15-02: Multiannual management plans (North Sea)

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting, evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

Terms of reference of the WG: See STECF website

6. ADDITIONAL REQUESTS SUBMITTED TO THE STECF PLENARY BY THE COMMISSION¹

6.1. Request to STECF to review the NSAC advice document on the long term management for Nephrops fisheries in the North Sea

Background

¹ *Background documents will be placed in the STECF ftp server on <ftp://s-jrciprvn-ftp-ext.jrc.it> upon reception from DG Mare contact point.*

The North Sea Advisory Council has submitted an advice document outlining their views on the long term management of North Sea *Nephrops*. The overall goal is to ensure that further development and improvement in the *Nephrops* fisheries can take place in a sustainable way, without affecting natural resources adversely. It states that fishing must be at a level that will allow *Nephrops* and other stocks to be maintained at levels that can achieve MSY, whilst ensuring an economically viable fishing industry.

This document has been developed by the stakeholders on their own initiative. It is unclear how the NSAC would expect such a stand-alone initiative to fit within the framework of a multi-annual plan, or into the implementation of the landing obligation or into the framework of regionalisation as envisaged under the CFP. However, there appear to be some elements in the NSAC document that could be of utility for the management of *Nephrops* fisheries within the multi-annual plan for the North Sea that is currently under development and DGMARE wishes to seek advice from STECF on these.

Terms of Reference

STECF is requested to:

1. Review the proposed NSAC advice document for compatibility with the objectives of Council Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 (CFP).
2. In particular, assess and comment on whether the management measures proposed in the NSAC advice document are likely to deliver the CFP objectives.
3. Comment on the utility of managing *Nephrops* fisheries at the level of the Functional Unit and the utility of the proposed reference point Bbuffer as a basis for providing advice on the management of North Sea *Nephrops* fisheries in the framework of a North Sea multi-annual plan.

6.2. Assessment of Recreational Fisheries for Seabass

Background

STECF has previously provided an assessment of the seabass fisheries in the Atlantic and North Sea, in addition STECF are also preparing advice on recreational catches.

The Commission has already introduced a closure for fishing with OTM and PTM from February to April, in 2015 to reduce the mortality applied to the stock in the Celtic Sea, Channel, Irish Sea and North Sea.

In addition a 3 fish Bag limit for recreational fishermen has been introduced, and further proposals to limit catches by metier are under development. It is also expected to increase the MCRS to 42 cm for all recreational and commercial fishermen.

Request for STECF

STECF is asked to determine the possible reduction in mortality that has resulted from the closure of the spawning areas and that might be expected from the introduction of the recreational bag limit in 2015.

In addition STECF is asked to consider potential catch limits that could be imposed upon commercial fisheries by gear type. STECF is asked to determine a range of catch limits for each gear type, and the mortality reduction that would be achieved in 2015.

6.3. Assessment of measures implemented by the Portuguese authorities in relation to the management of red seabream in ICES sub-area X

Background

Red seabream is caught in hook-and-line, artisanal handline and longline fisheries off the Azores in ICES sub-division Xa₂. The fishery is regulated by EU legislation². In addition, specific national and local management measures³ have also been implemented establishing (i) a minimum landing size for red seabream, (ii) access conditions for fishing deep-sea species including red seabream, (iii) effort limitation and (iv) other technical measures.

Terms of Reference

The STECF is requested to advise on the conservation effects of the relevant national and local measures in place for the management of the red seabream fishery off the Azores, collectively and individually.

If not enough information is available to quantify the effect of measures, STECF is asked to identify the information that should be requested from Member States to allow for a quantitative evaluation to be made.

6.4. Distribution of haddock fisheries in the North Sea and West of Scotland

Background

ICES, as a result of the 2014 benchmark, identified that stocks of haddock in the West of Scotland and the North Sea were biologically a single stock and consequently provided catch advice on this basis. However, in setting of fishing opportunities in 2015 the two quota were maintained with the advised TAC split between the areas.

A request for flexibility between the areas has been received allowing for a Member State to catch an agreed percentage of one quota allocation for a particular area in another quota allocation area. In this instance the request is to fish part of the North Sea allocation in the West of Scotland. For example a vessel having, haddock quota in area IV, and saithe quota in area VI. When the vessel fishes in area VI, it is discarding haddock, while in area IV the opposite happens.

The Commission prefers that certain criteria are met for such flexibility to be exercised; it should be one stock; MS have access to other quotas in that area; and that all Member States with

² Council Regulation (EU) No 1367/2014 of 15 December 2014 fixing for 2015 and 2016 the fishing opportunities for Union vessels for certain deep-sea fish stocks.

³ "Portaria n.º 1/2010 de 18 de Janeiro de 2010" and "Portaria n.º 50/2012 de 27 de Abril de 2012".

allocations in the two impacted areas are in agreement. In the case of haddock in areas IV and VI there is an additional concern; the potential impact on the stock of cod in the West of Scotland. Stocks of cod in the North Sea and West of Scotland are separate stocks. ICES identify the West of Scotland (VIa) stock to be highly depleted and the advice remains for no directed fisheries and minimisation of by catches.

Terms of Reference for request to STECF

Consider the advantages and disadvantages of introducing inter-area flexibility into the haddock TAC and in particular the likely impacts on the cod stock in ICES Area VIa.

Identify the level of inter-area flexibility that might be applied in further management of the haddock stock(s) across the two areas, which would not risk increasing fishing mortality on the stock of cod in VIa to such an extent as so creating a risk for their recovery

Review earlier advice on cod avoidance, identifying any areas of spatial or temporal separation in the cod and haddock distributions.

6.5. Sole VIIa, VIId, VIIf and VIIg - Assessment of the management measures taken by Belgium

Background

During the Fisheries Council in December 2014, the Belgian authorities issued two distinct statements in which they committed to increasing no later than 1 April 2015 the selectivity of their vessels catching sole in VIIa, VIId, VIIf and VIIg (see 'Documents'). The increased selectivity will be achieved in beam trawls by increasing the mesh size in the extension piece from 80 to 120 mm and the Belgian authorities translated this commitment by means of a ministerial decree. Gear trials were conducted in VIId and IVc in January 2015 and the Belgian fisheries institute ILVO provided a document summarising the results of the trials (see 'Documents').

Documents

- Statement made by the Belgian authorities and the Commission in December 2014 (on sole VIIa, VIIf and VIIg)
- Statement made by the French and Belgian authorities and the Commission in December 2014 (on sole VIId)
- Report on the sea trials submitted by the Belgian authorities
- Raw data pertaining to the sea trial submitted by the Belgian authorities
- Additional information on sole in the Irish Sea

Request to the STECF

The STECF is requested to assess the report submitted by the Belgian authorities. If data deficiencies or other constraints prevent the STECF from fully addressing any of the questions, the STECF is requested to provide a qualitative answer if possible and indicate what additional data are needed to provide a quantitative answer. In order to frame the assessment, the STECF is

requested to answer the following questions and is invited to make additional comments if appropriate.

1. The STECF is requested to comment on the representativeness of these trials based on 48 hauls performed from 3 to 11 January 2015. Comment on the representativeness of the trials carried out in terms of catch composition in other areas as well as the robustness of the data collected from the experiments conducted.
2. With such gear, what selectivity change is expected for targeted and non-targeted species, including species usually discarded? If suitable, a table or other format may be used to answer this question.
3. To answer the following questions, the STECF shall consider *i.a.* that only Belgium committed to implementing these selectivity improvements, hence the selectivity effects on the respective sole stocks would depend on the Belgian quotas and/or the so called 'adapted quotas' (*i.e.* taking into account swaps), if applicable. Depending on data availability, the STECF may examine this question within the context the MSY framework or the precautionary framework.
 - a. What would be the effect of such gear on the reaching of MSY? If managers follow the TAC advice, would the enhanced technical measures help attain Fmsy within a shorter timeframe?
 - b. What is the expected contribution of that gear in terms of decreasing fishing mortality (i) of the sole stocks, (ii) of other target species, (iii) on decreasing catches of undersized fish and (iv) on decreasing catches of unintended catches? The STECF shall *i.a.* comment on the effect of such gear on the stocks concerned, for instance on the L₅₀. Results may be presented in a table if suitable.
4. Assess the effects of such gear on the profitability of the Belgian fleet exploiting the sole stocks in VIIa and VIIfg.
5. The STECF is requested to inform the Commission on possible alternative gear settings (including a combination of selective device and gear) that would allow achieving better results in terms of (a) selectivity, (b) commercial catch loss and fleet profitability, (c) social impact, if possible and (d) environmental impact, if possible.
6. The STECF is requested to assess and comment on the environmental, economic and social effects brought about by the possible utilisation of such gears referred to in question 1 and 5 by all the EU fleets targeting sole in VIIa, VIId, VIIf and VIIg.

6.6. Skates and rays – Assessment of the TACs calculation method proposed by the French authorities

Background

Until 2009, the skates and rays were landed in the European Union under the generic term 'rays' under FAO code SRX. As a consequence, data available at species level were scarce and ICES advice pooled together a certain number of species. For the first time in June 2014, ICES presented individual advice for a range of skates and rays species. However, the TAC is a combined TAC covering a range of skates and rays.

During the Fisheries Council in December 2014, the French authorities proposed a new TAC calculation method for skates and rays. Various Member States indicated that they could support this method (see 'Documents'), but Council and Commission agreed to first ask for scientific assessment of the method. The method is designed to take into account the magnitude of the landings of the various rays' species when setting the TACs.

Documents

- Joint statement made by the Council and the Commission in December 2014
- Calculation method presented by the French authorities
- Simulation of TACs calculations when applying the new method
- STECF advice on a possible by-catch allocation for the undulate ray in certain ICES areas⁴

Request to the STECF

The STECF is requested to assess the proposal submitted by the French authorities. If data deficiencies or other constraints prevented the STECF from fully addressing any of the questions, the STECF is requested to provide a qualitative answer if possible and indicate what additional data are needed to provide a quantitative answer.

1. The STECF is requested to assess the TAC calculation method submitted by the French authorities. In particular, the STECF shall take into account the foreseeable effects of the application of this method on the species with less favourable conservation status, taking *i.a.* into account the patchy distribution of skates and rays (e.g. impact on species which may be vulnerable but locally abundant). To perform the assessment, the STECF shall answer the following questions and is invited to make additional comments if suitable:
2. What would be the effect of such method on the reaching of MSY? If possible, the STECF is requested to provide a separate answer for each skate or ray species assessed by ICES. If suitable, the answers may be collated in a table. Depending on data availability, the STECF may examine this question within the context of the precautionary framework.
3. In light of the response to question 2, the STECF is requested to list possible accompanying management measures and provide advice as to the efficacy of those measures, in particular as regards spatial and temporal closures if possible, and the development of a code of practice. To answer this question, the STECF may build on the list of recommendations made in the context of the recent STECF report on undulate ray⁵ (see 'Documents'), taking into consideration, where suitable, that the scope of the two requests is different⁶. If closures are deemed useful, the STECF is requested to identify them. As regards a possible code of practice, the STECF is requested to determine

⁴

http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/55543/2015-03_STECF+15-03+Possible+by-catch+provisions+undulate+ray_JRCxx.pdf

⁵ See report above, section 3 on pages 15 and subsequent. Pages 29 and 30 provide a summary of the options assessed: '*Suite of measures*'. Page numbers refer to the Annex I appended to STECF's report.

⁶ This request concerns all skates and rays caught in targeted and non-targeted fisheries while the request on undulate ray only concerned provisions for the management of by-catches.

whether recommendations other than those made for the undulate ray⁷ are necessary for skates and rays species in general.

4. If the assessment of the methodology is positive (likely positive effects outweigh potential negative ones), the STECF is requested to comment on the expected environmental, social and economic effects ensuing from the application of this method.

6.7. Survivability of skate and ray discarded

Background

Article 15 paragraph 2(b) of the landing obligation allows for the possibility of exemptions from the landing obligation for species for which "*scientific evidence demonstrates high survival rates*".

STECF have carried out several reviews of existing information on survivability of discards including skates and rays, (STECF -14-19). STECF have commented on the multitude of factors that influence survivability.

STECF has provided guidance on best practice to undertake survival studies. This includes a detailed description of the methodological approaches available, their advantages and disadvantages and what factors need to be considered when undertaking such studies including sample sizes, selection and treatment of specimens and protocols for the various methods. In this regard EWG 13-16 has identified three methodologies for conducting survival experiments (i.e. captive observations, vitality/reflex assessments and tagging/biotelemetry experiments).

The UK has identified a number of fisheries for skates and rays in North West Waters and North Sea, identifying the relative catch by gear type. (Table 1 below and the background documents). STECF EWG 13-17 provided guidance on the development of survival exemptions from the landing obligation and the evidence base that might be required to underpin such exemptions.

Request to STECF

STECF are asked to:

- (1) Review available survivability data for skates and rays detailing the gear type to which this data emanates;
- (2) Identify where more scientific evidence is required in order to support an exemption from the Landing Obligation on the basis of high survivability for the areas and métiers listed in table 1 below

Table 1. UK skate & ray fisheries	
	Gear

⁷ See report above on page 31: 'Discard survival and development of a Code of Practice'. Page numbers refer to the Annex I appended to STECF's report.

		BT1&2	GN1	GT1	TR1	TR2	LL1
ICES Area	North Sea (IVab)				Y	Y	
	North Sea (IVc)		Y	Y		Y	Y
	Eastern Channel (VIId)	Y	Y	Y		Y	
	Western Channel (VIIe & VIIh)	Y	Y		Y	Y	
	Bristol Channel (VIIIfg)	Y	Y		Y	Y	
	Irish Sea (VIIa)		Y		Y		
	West of Scotland (Vb, VIab)				Y	Y	

6.8. UK request of high survivability exemption for Cornish Ring Netters

Background information

The UK has a small-scale fishery for sardine using ring nets in ICES Divisions VIIe and VIIIf, within 6 miles of the Cornish coast. Ring net are surrounding nets similar in construction and operation to purse seines and lampara nets:

This fishery is exempted from the landing obligation for pelagic fisheries introduced from 1 January 2015 as sardine are not subject to catch limits in area VII; However, in this fishery that are often incidental catches of TAC species, including herring, mackerel and horse mackerel. Such catches are either retained or discarded (slipped) depending on individual vessel quotas and for operational reasons. Such catches of TAC species will come under the landing obligation at the latest by 2019 meaning such catches will have to be landed and counted against quotas

This imposition will be problematic for the vessels operating in this fishery. The fishermen participating in the fishery argue that the method of fishing has a low impact and that fish slipped from ring nets have a high survivability. However, to prove this definitively would be difficult given the nature of the fishery.

Commission Delegated Regulations (EU) No 1393/2014 1394/2014 provide for exemptions to the landing obligation for purse seine fisheries targeting mackerel, herring, anchovy and horse mackerel on the basis of high survivability. Given the similarities between the fishing methods there may be a basis for granting an exemption for the ring net fishery in the future using the information underpinning the existing exemptions as a basis.

Request to STECF

STECF is asked to consider:

- (1) On the basis of the available information on the operation of the ring net fishery and the supporting information supplied to support the exemptions for high survivability in purse seine fisheries whether an exemption for the ring net fishery is justifiable.
- (2) Identify whether additional information should be developed to support an exemption taking account of earlier advice on survivability experiments provided by STECF..

6.9. Joint recommendation for conservation measures in Natura 2000 sites in the Kattegat and in the Baltic Sea

Background

In accordance with Article 11 of Regulation 1380/2013 Member States having a direct management interest in certain areas or fisheries may submit joint recommendations for fisheries conservation measures. Providing these measures are compatible with the CFP and environmental legislation the Commission can adopt these measures by way of a Delegated Acts.

Denmark began discussing the development of joint recommendations with Sweden and Germany for conservation measures in seven Natura 2000 sites in the Kattegat and three sites in the Baltic Sea in 2014. After several consultations amongst these Member States, stakeholders and NGOs these MS intend to submit the final joint recommendation to the Commission by 13 March 2015.

Under Article 11 it is necessary for the Commission to evaluate the various elements of the joint recommendation submitted by DK and to identify areas if and where additional supporting information may be required. This calls for the review of the supporting scientific information provided.

Terms of Reference:

1. Review whether the joint recommendations are in accordance with the objectives of Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013.
2. Review whether the proposed measures will contribute towards ensuring that the habitats of community interest addressed in the recommendation are maintained and restored at favourable conservation status inside the delineated areas as stipulated under Article 2 of Directive 92/43/EEC.
3. Review how the special areas of conservation set out in Article 6 of Directive 92/43/EEC referred to in the joint recommendations would be impacted without the proposed fisheries measures in place.

7. STRATEGIC ISSUES/DISCUSSIONS

7.1. Data used by STECF

STECF is asked to map the use of data from the different data calls issued by the Commission (DG MARE) and served by the JRC in support to STECF and other sources. The map should include an analysis on which datasets are used for the different tasks performed by STECF (by the EWGs, the Plenary, ad-hoc contracts) and if possible also information on use by other end users/institutions This analysis should show if there are any datasets called by the Commission (DG MARE) in support to STECF not used, and if datasets have multiple use i.e. they are used for several tasks and whether the use of these datasets is consistent and efficient.

7.2. Report on the DCF workshop on transversal variables

The Workshop on the Transversal Variables took place in Zagreb from the 19th to 23rd of January, 2015 mainly to tackle the issues related to the increasing need of having fisheries fleet economic data and fisheries biologic data on a level of disaggregation that would allow a proper interoperability between datasets to underpin bio-economic modelling. For that several analyses were carried out and conclusions drawn. Analyses were: 1.comparison of economic and biological effort data calls both with respect to their level of resolution and the landings and effort values obtained from equivalent aggregations was performed. This was compared to what would be needed in order to undertake bio-economic modelling for a chosen management plan. 2. The description of how MS are calculating effort variables and a proposal on the way forward to harmonize approaches, 3. Conclusions on how to harmonize levels of resolution, the variable definitions and the codification in use amongst data calls, in order to make them comparable and based on coherent standard codifications.

STECF is requested to review the report of the DCF workshop, evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations i.e. in relation to the formulation of future data calls issued by the Commission in support to STECF and possible implications for maintenance and further developments of the associated databases.

8. ITEMS/DISCUSSION POINTS FOR PREPARATION OF EWGs AND OTHER STECF WORK

These items do not need to go into the plenary report. It is more a compilation of points for discussion to prepare work.

1. Preparation for EWG-15-06 Monitoring Common Fisheries Policy in the Mediterranean basin/Standardization of stock assessment models for MED

The chair of EWG-15-06 will attend the plenary meeting to discuss with STECF members and DG MARE and prepare for EWG-15-06.

2. Preparation for EWG-15-XX on revising the scoring system used by the Balance-capacity EWG

The EWG on Balance-capacity (STECF-15-02 report released in February 2015) suggested a revision of the MS fleet report scoring system (the system the EWG uses to score the MS reports) because the old/current system would no longer be in line with the new CFP / the indicator guidelines. STECF should look into this and draft ToRs for a (small) EWG which could take place in autumn to report to the November plenary.

3. Preparation for EWGs on MAPs for NWW and SWW

The chair of EWGs will attend the plenary meeting to discuss with STECF members and DG MARE and prepare for the work to be carried out by these EWGs.

4. Preparation for EWG 15-14: Landing Obligation - Part 6 (Mediterranean demersal)

Under the timelines indicated in Article 15 of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013, the landing obligation is set to apply to demersal fisheries in the Mediterranean from 1 January 2017 with full implementation for these fisheries by 1 January 2019. By way of preparation and to facilitate the relevant MS and Advisory Council in the formulation of discard plans for these fisheries an EWG meeting of STECF (EWG 15-14) has been scheduled for later this year.

In this context, it is proposed to hold a scoping meeting during the STECF plenary (15-01) to formulate TORs for this EWG meeting.

9. ANNEXES