

## STECF PLENARY MEETING 19-02

01 JULY 2019 (START 9:00H) - 05 JULY 2019 (END: 16:00H), BRUSSELS

### Draft Terms of Reference 24/06/2019

#### Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	2
2.	List of participants .....	2
3.	Information to the Plenary .....	2
3.1.	Presentation on STECF .....	2
3.2.	Renewal of the STECF – Election of the STECF board.....	2
3.3.	Director General MARE address to new STECF.....	2
4.	STECF initiatives.....	2
5.	Assessment of STECF EWG reports .....	2
5.1.	EWG 19-03: Social data in the EU Fisheries Sector.....	2
5.2.	EWG 19-04/06: Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet .....	3
5.3.	EWG 19-05: Evaluation of mandatory surveys under the DCF.....	3
5.4.	EWG 19-07: Review the implementation of the EU regulation on the incidental catches of cetaceans.....	3
5.5.	EWG 19-08: Evaluation of Landing Obligation joint recommendations .....	4
5.6.	EWG 19-09: Evaluation of the 2018 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission Failures of 2018 data calls.....	5
6.	Additional requests submitted to the STECF plenary by the Commission	6
6.1.	Consultation on the revision of the EU-MAP after 2021.....	6
6.2.	Joint Recommendation concerning implementation of EU-Norway Agreement on Technical Measures in the Skagerrak .....	9
6.3.	Evaluation of by-catch reduction plans and control measures (North West Waters Group, i.e. Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom, and the Commission).....	10
6.4.	Evaluation of Joint Recommendation on new Discard plan for Venus Clams in Italian waters	11
6.5.	Evaluation of new management hydraulic dredges in Italian waters.....	12
6.6.	Presentation and possible use of MARE/2016/22 ‘Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (STREAM)’ quality checks to assist in the stock assessment process.....	13
7.	Items/discussion points for preparation of EWGs and other STECF work	14
7.1.	New STECF - Discussion and possible agreement on STECF rules of procedures .....	14
7.2.	Preparation of EWG 19-15 on the EU fish processing sector.....	14
7.3.	Preparation of the EWG on Outermost Regions .....	14
7.4.	Follow-up of WGMIXFISH and WGECON .....	14

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

[Does not belong to the ToRs but is listed here to avoid confusion with the section numbering when editing the plenary report.]

## **2. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

[Does not belong to the ToRs but is listed here to avoid confusion with the section numbering when editing the plenary report.]

## **3. INFORMATION TO THE PLENARY**

### **3.1. Presentation on STECF**

**Presenter:** Hendrik Doerner

### **3.2. Renewal of the STECF – Election of the STECF board**

Following the appointment of the new Committee for the three-year term July 2019 – July 2022, elections for the positions of chair and two vice-chairs of the STECF are to be held. The elections will be chaired by the Commission.

### **3.3. Director General MARE address to new STECF**

## **4. STECF INITIATIVES**

**Possible STECF Rapporteur:**

**Possible Presenter:**

**Request to the STECF:**

## **5. ASSESSMENT OF STECF EWG REPORTS**

### **5.1. EWG 19-03: Social data in the EU Fisheries Sector**

#### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting, evaluate the findings and assess the delivery by the STECF Expert Working Group on the terms of reference and make any appropriate comments and recommendations with a view to enhancing STECF support to the social dimension of fisheries. STECF is specifically requested to formulate recommendations on how the work by the next STECF Expert Working Group on Social data can be prepared and organised in an optimal manner, including as regards data availability, data verification and coherence with the work of other STECF activities, in particular in the economic area.

## 5.2. **EWG 19-04/06: Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet**

### **Request to the STECF**

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

## 5.3. **EWG 19-05: Evaluation of mandatory surveys under the DCF**

### **Request to the STECF**

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

## 5.4. **EWG 19-07: Review the implementation of the EU regulation on the incidental catches of cetaceans**

### **Background**

Under article 6 of REGULATION (EU) No 812/2004 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, Member states are obliged to provide to the Commission a report on the implementation of the regulation. Under article 8 of the regulation, the Commission is also required to undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of the regulation and where appropriate submit an overarching proposal for ensuring the effective protection of cetaceans. ICES, through the Working Group on Bycatches of Protected Species (WGBYC) provides an analysis of the MS annual reports on an annual basis, however it is necessary to undertake an more in-depth and holistic analysis of the overall efficacy of the regulation. A new technical measures Regulation will shortly enter into force (see [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014\\_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/PECH/AG/2019/03-07/1177957EN.pdf...](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/PECH/AG/2019/03-07/1177957EN.pdf...)) which carries over many of the technical provisions laid out in 812/2004 and makes provisions for the updating of the technical specifications to acoustic deterrent devices and the possible introduction of other mitigation measures. It also foresees the setting of maximum by-catch limits for marine mammals. STECF is asked to provide an overview where such maximum thresholds have been developed and applied.

### **Terms of Reference**

- To provide a holistic review of the effectiveness of the current regulation based on ICES advice and other sources of information in terms of mitigating by-catches of cetaceans.
- To provide observations on potential shortcomings of the regulation and where appropriate, indicate possible revisions to the technical specifications laid out in the regulation.
- To provide a summary of candidate maximum by-catch thresholds for the species most typically caught as by-catch.

## **Request to the STECF**

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

### **5.5. EWG 19-08: Evaluation of Landing Obligation joint recommendations**

#### **Request to the STECF**

Based on the previous evaluations, suggested structure of the next STECF evaluation, the ad-hoc contract 19-01 on temporary de minimis exemptions, the likely joint recommendations that will be submitted by MS regional groups, the following draft terms of reference are proposed, STECF is requested to:

1. Review the supporting documentation underpinning exemptions on the basis of high survivability in respect of:
  - a. Exemptions agreed for 2019 on the basis of high survivability where there was a requirement for further information to be supplied. In such cases, STECF should assess the quality of the information supplied and, where possible, provide a qualitative assessment of the ongoing efforts to address the needs for further information identified by STECF last year.
  - b. New exemptions based on high survivability. In data poor situations, assess what further supporting information may be available and how this could be supplied in the future (e.g. survival studies, tagging experiments).
2. Review the supporting documentation (biological, technical and/or economic) for de minimis exemptions on the basis that either increasing selectivity is very difficult to achieve, or to avoid handling unwanted catches would create disproportionate cost in respect of:
  - a. The combined (multi species) and single de minimis exemptions agreed for 2019 where there was a requirement for further information to be supplied. In such cases, STECF should assess the quality of the information supplied and, where possible, provide a qualitative assessment of the ongoing efforts to address the needs for further information identified by STECF last year.
  - b. New de minimis exemptions. In data poor situations, assess what further supporting information may be available and how this could be supplied in the future (e.g. discard data collection, selectivity studies).
3. Review whether there is sufficient information to support proposed minimum conservation reference size(s) that deviate from existing minimum landing sizes, and whether they are consistent with the objective of ensuring the protection of juveniles.
4. Review the supporting documentation provided for technical measures aimed at increasing gear selectivity for reducing or, as far as possible, eliminating unwanted catches. This should include, if relevant, an indication of where further selectivity is currently difficult to achieve in a specific fishery, where possible provide information on the possible causes and if research should explore potential solutions.

5.6. **EWG 19-09: Evaluation of the 2018 Annual Reports for data collection and Data Transmission Failures of 2018 data calls**

**Background provided by the Commission:**

Article 11 of the Data Collection framework (DCF) Regulation (EU) 1004/2017 (recast) prescribes that Member States shall submit to the Commission an annual report (AR) on the implementation of their national work plans (NWP) and that STECF shall evaluate: (a) the execution of the NWP; and (b) the quality of the data collected by the Member States. Therefore, the role of EWG 19-09 is: 1) to evaluate the Annual Reports submitted by Member States by 31st of May 2019, describing national data collection in 2018; and 2) to evaluate the apparent data transmission failures as reported by end users for the data obligations/data calls launched during 2018, for the data collected by Member States until 2017.

A pre-screening exercise will take place to facilitate the work of the EWG. In that respect, the EWG evaluation should be developed as a second level assessment, focusing on topics where the pre-screeners have raised a problem/or where the pre-screeners final assessment of a particular point has revealed to be contentious. This type of assessment may take the form of specific questions addressed to the EWG, based on the outcomes of the pre-screening exercise.

The Commission may address additional requests to the EWG in relation to specific issues that arise from the pre-screening exercise.

The EWG should produce the following:

1. Overview of the assessment and overall evaluation of Annual Reports, including performance of Member States, major issues and recurring issues across many Member States
  - Per Member State: (i) an evaluation of the annual report in the template provided by the Commission, which will already include the result of the pre-screening exercise (ii) Member State-specific issues relating to data collection.
  - In their feedback, the EWG should identify the comments that require a reaction by the MS (resubmission of the Annual Report or clarification to the Commission) and those that are 'for information' only.
2. Overview of the assessment and overall evaluation of data transmission failures, including performance of Member States, main issues per end user and recurring issues across many Member States
  - Per Member State: (i) an evaluation of the data transmission failures to end users, via the online IT platform, (ii) Member State-specific issues relating to data transmission.
  - In their feedback, the EWG should identify the comments that require a reaction by the MS and those that are 'for information' only.

All produced files will be communicated to Member States in order to help them improve data collection, reporting and transmission for next year. The EWG should take into consideration the relevant files from previous STECF EWGs (STECF EWG 15-15; STECF EWG 16-08, STECF EWG 17-10; STECF EWG 18-10; STECF EWG 18-18) and particular attention should be paid to the Evaluation guidelines and guidance for the submission of documents produced by EWG 17-17, EWG 17-13, EWG 18-10 and of the 7-8/02/2018 technical meeting on the AR template.

**Request to the STECF:**

STECF is requested to review the report of the STECF Expert Working Group meeting (specifically, an overview of the assessment and overall evaluation of Annual Reports and Data Transmission failures, including a general outlook of MS' performance, major issues and recurring issues across many Member States), evaluate the findings and make any appropriate comments and recommendations. STECF is also requested to suggest any improvement action if needed.

## **6. ADDITIONAL REQUESTS SUBMITTED TO THE STECF PLENARY BY THE COMMISSION**

### **6.1. Consultation on the revision of the EU-MAP after 2021**

#### **Background provided by the Commission**

European Member States have a long history of structuring and harmonizing their data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sector through the European Data Collection Framework<sup>1</sup>. The successive EU Regulations since the early 2000 have helped build an ambitious framework based on National Work Programmes and coordination of sampling activities, formally driven by end-user needs as set out in the new Common Fisheries Policy<sup>2</sup>, where end-users are defined as bodies with a scientific or management interest.

The coordination of sampling activities in the EU is based on six Regional Coordination Groups (Baltic Sea, North Sea and Eastern Arctic, North Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea, Large pelagics and Long Distance Fisheries) and two expert subgroups assisting the European Commission on data collection issues: a group dealing with socio-economic issues (PGECON) and a forum where issues that affect several marine regions are assessed and discussed, called the Liaison Meeting.

The timely delivery of data to end-users is paramount to the framework (EU Data Collection Framework Regulation, Articles 6 and 7) in close link with formalized end-users expectations. Since 2017, the Liaison Meeting dedicated a full day of discussion with end-users, emphasizing the need to improve the communication and feed-back on quality issues with the users of the fisheries data. It must be acknowledged that some end-users (mainly STECF and ICES) were initiators in the interaction on the quality of the data they receive through formal data calls. Other end-users (GFCM, IOTC, ICCAT, NAFO etc) detail their data expectations through binding resolutions and recommendations.

The quality of the data provided to end-users is central to the organization of the data collection within each of the European Member States. To address the challenge, the European framework for data collection is moving towards better coordinated sampling schemes, better transparency and efficiency in processing the data within regional data bases and to an improved dialogue with end-users.

In the coming months, the EU with the assistance of Regional Coordination Groups and its scientific body STECF will prepare a revision of the EU Multiannual plan for data collection<sup>3</sup> (EU-MAP) for the period after 2021. It is therefore the moment to re-articulate the end-user needs and seek for improvement in the communication routes between data providers and end-users.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy.

<sup>3</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1251 of 12 July 2016 adopting a multiannual Union programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors for the period 2017-2019.

In this perspective, the Commission would like have a reply of STECF on the consultation document, prepared by experts on the basis of an inventory of possible issues signaled over time and which should be taken into account in the future EU-MAP for data collection. Your contribution and proposals for modifications to the current EU-MAP should be clearly underpinned with justification for these modifications in the attached document.

## **Consultation of end users on the potential revision of EU-MAP biological data and socio-economic data<sup>4</sup>**

### **Biological data:**

1. Should Table 1A contain species priority as given in 1C?
2. Should this prioritisation be done by the end user in the first instance and then revised by the RCG responsible for those stocks taking into account NWP & RWP resources to optimise data collection?

*[As regional work plans override national work plans, the Table could be revised as necessary (species list and priority) during the lifetime of EU MAP (and used by the relevant RCG) and the final updated Table – with amendments would become the Basis for use in the next revision of EU MAP.]*

3. Should the species prioritisation already be part of the revised EU-MAP corresponding Table 1A or can this prioritisation stay at regional level only? Please justify if recommendation is to make a revision in the EU-MAP and indicate an order of priority.
4. Should Tables 1A and 1C be combined in the EU-MAP revision?

*[Given that stocks in both tables have end-user defined sampling requirements is it necessary to separate them?]*

5. Should Table 1B be revised to cover only species in or EEZ not covered by ICCAT IOTC WECAF CECAF SIOFA?

*[Can RCG LDF to reply/contribute for the revision of the table (preferably at species level)?]*

6. Should Table 1D be updated and if so, what would be the concrete points to be changed (added / removed)? If Table 1D needs to be updated, could this be done at regional level or should it be at EU level? For recommendation of revision at EU level, please justify your reply.
7. What variable(s) can be included in the future EU-MAP to achieve the goal of estimating the level of fishing and the impact of fishing activities on marine biological resources and on marine ecosystems, such as effects on non-commercial species, predator-prey relationships and natural mortality of fish species in each marine region (chapter III, point 3 c) of the EU-MAP) for which currently MS have in place pilot studies?
8. Should diadromous species be removed from Table 1A and should Table 1E be revised to include marine Union waters? Are there major RCG concerns relating to moving diadromous species out of Table 1A? Are there any other concrete points for revision (to be added / removed)? Can this revision be done at regional level or does it need to be at EU level? For recommendation of revision at EU level, please justify your reply.
9. Should Table 3 be a subset of Table 1 (for instance as a new Table 1F?), in order to group all species list together? What are the concrete points for revision (to be added / removed)? Should the species list in the Table be revised at RCG or pan-RCG level to include all species where catches impact on assessments? For a recommendation of revision at EU level, please justify your reply.

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<sup>4</sup> The data requirements referenced in this paper are those of Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1251 of 12 July 2016 adopting a multiannual Union programme for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors for the period 2017-2019 (OJ L 207, 1.8.2016, p. 113).

10. Should the pilot study to evaluate the impact of recreational fisheries against commercial fisheries be converted into regular data collection at EU level? If so, variables should be collected and where should they be placed? Can this revision be done at regional level or does it need to be done at EU level? For recommendation of revision at EU level, please justify your reply.
11. Does Table 2 meet current needs or are there some groupings missing (i.e. currently no code for glass eel fishing (Level 4))? What are the concrete points for revision (to be added / removed)? Can this revision be done at regional level or does it need to be done at EU level? For recommendation of revision at EU level, please justify your reply.
12. In Table 4, should any of the variables be revised and if so, which ones?  
*[What is included in this Table will depend on the revision of the Control Regulation and would need to be reviewed in light of this.]*
13. Will introducing small scale fisheries (SSF) as a separate grouping affect the fleet segmentation in Table 5B fleet economic data? What are the concrete points for revision (to be added)? Should a new section on SSF be included in the revised EU-MAP or can requirements be established at regional level only? For recommendation of revision at EU level, please justify your reply.
14. Is the current stratification in Table 5C suitable for use for both biological and economic data aggregation? Do we need a region header in the sets of Table 1?
15. Given that assessment data is usually given at the stock level (which does not always match the management unit) what is the most appropriate level for reporting biological data collection in the national work plan / annual report that the RCGs require?
16. What are the concrete points of revision for Table 10?  
*[Revision in place under future STECF EWG on surveys. This has been covered by RCG comments on EWG 18-04 in preparation for a survey review in 2019.]*

**Socio-economic data:**

1. Should the any definitions be clarified in the future EU-MAP (i.e. population for economic data collection for the fleet, for the fish processing etc) or can these clarifications be done in PGECON recommendations and methodologies? For action at EU level, please justify.
2. Should the Fishing fleet segmentation in Table 5B be revised? What are the concrete points for revision (to be added / removed)?
3. Should the segmentation on aquaculture and processing, currently included in the Guidance documents, be included in the revised EU-MAP? What segmentation should apply?
4. Does the frequency for the social data collection appear appropriate (three years or more)?
5. How should the data collection on social variables indicated in Table 6 and Table 11 be presented in EU-MAP (instead of pilot study)?
6. Should the threshold on the social and economic data on aquaculture be kept or should it be revised?
7. Should the reference on Guidance documents on Definitions / Methodologies / Quality be integrated in the revised EU-MAP?

*[Currently there is no operational guidance on data validation and quality reporting except for the document on Quality of socio economic variables described in EU-MAP. PGECON should discuss the applicability of this document and possibilities to further improve the quality assurance framework for economic and transversal data, taking into account the Guidance document on Methodology of socio economic variables described in EU MAP 2018 consolidated and the Handbook on statistical procedures which will be available in 2019.]*

**General comment**



Please provide comments on the provisions of the EU-MAP and areas where requirements can be clarified / amended or any other concrete point for revision you may have, followed by proper justification of action at EU level.

### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to provide comments on the provisions of the EU-MAP and areas where requirements can be clarified / amended or any other concrete point for revision you may have, followed by proper justification of action at EU level.

## **6.2. Joint Recommendation concerning implementation of EU-Norway Agreement on Technical Measures in the Skagerrak**

### **Background provided by the Commission**

Regulation (EU) no. 2018/973 establishes a multiannual plan for the management of demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks. Article 9 of Regulation (EU) no. 2018/973 empowers the Commission to adopt delegated acts in order to supplement this Regulation regarding technical measures in accordance with Article 16 of this Regulation. Such technical measures may entail specifications of characteristics of fishing gears and rules governing their use, as well as limitations or prohibitions on the use of certain fishing gears and on fishing activities, in certain areas or periods.

In accordance with Article 18 of the Regulation 1380/2013, where the Commission has been granted powers to adopt measures by means of delegated acts, Member States with a direct management interest may submit joint recommendations (JR) to achieve the objectives of the relevant Union conservation measures, the multiannual plans or the specific discard plans. Against this background the Scheveningen group adopted a Joint Recommendation with a view to implement measures consulted and agreed with Norway in 2018<sup>5</sup>. These measures result from the work in the EU-Norway working group on technical measures in the Skagerrak and were agreed upon in consultations between EU and Norway on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 in Goteborg, Sweden, and in line with art 3 and 4 in the EU-Norway Agreement on reciprocal access to fishing in the Skagerrak<sup>6</sup>.

Once the joint recommendation is received, it is necessary to evaluate the various elements of the joint recommendation on the introduction of additional technical measures in the context of real time closures (RTCs) and the proposed reduction of mesh size from 120 mm to 105 mm for the Danish anchor seine fisheries in EU waters of Skagerrak. This calls for the review of the supporting scientific information provided.

This information has been reviewed and summarized in an ad hoc contract.

### **Request to the STECF**

Based on:

- The report of the STECF ad hoc contract;
- The Joint Recommendations;
- Any other relevant sources of information

STECF is requested to:

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<sup>5</sup> Agreed record of fisheries consultations between the European Union and Norway on technical measures in Skagerrak. Göteborg, 6 September 2018

<sup>6</sup> Agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Norway on reciprocal access to fishing in the Skagerrak for vessels flying the flag of Denmark, Norway and Sweden

1. To assess the details as provided in the Joint Recommendation for the introduction and implementation of a Real Time Closure (RTC) system for the Northern prawn (*Pandalus borealis*). This RTC system was agreed with Norway during the consultations on 5-6 September 2018. The assessment should particularly assess whether the conditions outlined for the implementation of the RTC, and in particular the conditions set to exempt gears inside the RTC and the conditions for operating therein, meet the standards and requirements mentioned above in the introductory paragraph on the tasks under the ad-hoc contract.
2. To assess the Joint recommendation to reduce the current mesh size in Danish Seines fisheries, from 120mm to 105mm. To assess if this reduction is warranted against the standards and requirements mentioned above; this assessment needs to be based on the supporting scientific documentation, in particular if this provides sufficient evidence that the expected exploitation pattern of fisheries with 105mm for Danish Seines is at least as selective and/or reducing unwanted catches as of fisheries with a 120mm trawl. Comparisons with selectivity data from other experiments using similar gears for the key species concerned may be used. If the assessment is positive, to describe potential impacts on technical regulations expressed in definitions of gears and detailed rules governing the use of different mesh sizes.
3. To assess the Joint recommendation to supplement existing gear exemptions in Regulation (EU) No. 724/2010<sup>7</sup>, in accordance with Article 9(1)(a) of Regulation (EU) 2018/973, with two additional gears to be exempted:
  - *Pandalus* trawls equipped with a Nordmøre grid without a collecting bag, and
  - *Nephrops* trawls equipped with a species selective grid.

In particular, assess whether the selectivity characteristics and operational conditions of these two gears to be exempted from moving-on or exclusion provisions are sufficient are consistent with the objectives of the RTC system and provide for improved selectivity, reduction of unwanted catches and protection of juveniles of marine organisms, as referred to in Article 9.1 of Regulation 2018/973.

### 6.3. **Evaluation of by-catch reduction plans and control measures (North West Waters Group, i.e. Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom, and the Commission)**

#### **Background**

As part of setting the Fishing Opportunities for 2019, the Member States forming the regional group for the North West Waters committed to develop a by-catch reduction plan for the five stocks that received zero catch advice by ICES; Cod and Whiting in the West of Scotland, Whiting in the Irish Sea, Cod in the Celtic Sea and Plaice in ICES division 7hjk under the following statement:

"Member States cooperating in the North-Western Waters, in close cooperation with the North Western Waters Advisory Council, will prepare a by-catch reduction plan to ensure that by-catches of the stocks for which ICES has issued zero catch advice for 2019 are reduced through selectivity or avoidance measures. To this end the Member States concerned will submit to the Commission a by-catch reduction plan at the latest on 30 April 2019. By-catch reduction plans will contain measures such as more selective gears, area closures, real time closures, avoidance measures and move-on rules. They may build on the latest relevant discard plans. The by-catch reduction plans should be adapted to the species in question and be chosen from the above catalogue of measures according to the specificities of each fishery.

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<sup>7</sup> Regulation (EU) No 724/2010 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of real-time closures of certain fisheries in the North Sea and Skagerrak

The plans will be assessed by the STECF regarding their effectiveness. The Chair of the North Western Waters Group will report to the Commission by 1 October every year on progress achieved with the by-catch reduction plan.

In line with the Control Regulation, the Member States will undertake all appropriate control measures to ensure that by-catches of the stocks for which ICES has issued zero catch advice for 2019 are strictly unavoidable and that no discards take place beyond levels allowed by the discard plan. By 1 July 2019 the Member States concerned will inform the Commission of the control measures taken."

### **Request to the STECF**

The STECF are asked to review the North Western Waters Regional Group's Bycatch Reduction Plan (BCReP) and consider the following:

- Effectiveness: Assess and where possible quantify the improvements in selectivity that will be provided in the fisheries covered by the BCReP upon the bycatches of the five stocks concerned, compared to practices until 2018). What would be the impact upon the five bycatch stocks concerned? Will continued application of the measures beyond 2019 continue a reduction in by-catches and fishing mortality in the medium term (2020-2022)?
- Comprehensiveness: has the plan considered sufficiently the possible selectivity elements which are readily available for the conditions of the respective fisheries, and which can be realistically applied from a practical and socio-economic perspective (including the dimension of loss of marketable catches or physical replacement costs or lost fishing opportunities)? This should include, if relevant, an indication of where further selectivity is currently difficult to achieve in a specific fishery, and where possible, provide information on the possible causes and if research should explore potential solutions.

#### **6.4. Evaluation of Joint Recommendation on new Discard plan for Venus Clams in Italian waters**

##### **Background**

The landing obligation is compulsory, as from 1 January 2017, for the species that define the fisheries (other than small pelagics) and that are subject to a minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) according to Annex III of the "Mediterranean Regulation"<sup>1</sup>. The fisheries targeting the mollusc bivalve Venus clams (*Venus gallina* – as originally described – or *Chamelea gallina*)<sup>2</sup> are therefore subject to this provision.

In light of this, in 2016 Italy submitted to the European Commission a proposal of a three-year discard plan for the fisheries targeting Venus clams by hydraulic dredges in the Northern Adriatic Sea (see Annexes of the present report). With the derogation at the basis of the discard plan expiring in December 2019, the IT administration is submitting a new Joint Recommendation accompanied by a discard plan.

The draft discard plan is supported by a study which evaluates the possible effects of re-defining the MCRS and the monitoring of the previous two years of implementation.

##### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to review and make any appropriate comments and recommendations on the draft discard plan for the fisheries targeting Venus clams in the Northern Adriatic Sea and its supporting study.

In particular, STECF is requested to:

- Provide an opinion whether the survivability of Venus clams has been scientifically underpinned in the discard plan, and assess the potential survivability rates of Venus clams, taking into account the characteristics of the fishing gear, the fishing operations, the biological state of the Venus clams after the fishing operations, and the environmental conditions of the re-stocking area.
- Assess the potential past and future impacts on the stock of the proposed change in the MCRS for Venus clams from 25 mm to 22 mm on exploitation rates and stock biomass.
- In light of the results of the monitoring programme for the period 2017-2018, assess whether the proposed new scientific monitoring programme is likely to provide adequate data and information to evaluate the effects of the discard plan

In making this evaluation, STECF is asked to take into account the works of the STECF-EWG 15-14, 16-06<sup>8</sup>, 19-01, and of the European Parliament<sup>9</sup>.

The evaluation of this discard plan is linked to the evaluation of the National Management plan for hydraulic dredges in Italian territorial waters.

Documentation: The discard plan for the fleets fishing Venus Clams in the Northern Adriatic

#### 6.5. **Evaluation of new management hydraulic dredges in Italian waters**

##### Background from the Commission

Under Article 19 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 (hereafter referred to as "MEDREG"), Member States are expected to adopt management plans for fisheries conducted by trawl nets, boats seines, shore seines, surrounding nets and dredges within their territorial waters.

In 2013, the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) introduced new elements for conservation such as the target of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for all the stocks by 2020 at the latest, the landing obligation and the regionalisation approach.

In line with these two regulations, the plans shall be based on scientific, technical and economic advice, and shall contain conservation measures to restore and maintain fish stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield or MSY. Where targets relating to the MSY (e.g. fishing mortality at MSY) cannot be determined, owing to insufficient data, the plans shall provide for measures based on the precautionary approach, ensuring at least a comparable degree of conservation of the relevant stocks.

The plans shall also contain specific conservation measures based on the ecosystem approach to achieve the objectives set. In particular, they may incorporate any measure included in the following list to limit fishing mortality and the environmental impact of fishing activities: limiting catches, fixing the number and type of fishing vessels authorized to fish, limiting fishing effort, adopting technical measures (structure of fishing gears, fishing practices, areas/period of fishing restriction, minimum size, reduction of impact of fishing activities on marine ecosystems and non-target species), establishing incentives to promote more selective fisheries, conduct pilot projects on alternative types of fishing management techniques, etc.

<sup>8</sup> [https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/discards/-/asset\\_publisher/b1zP/document/id/1450181?inheritRedirect=false](https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/discards/-/asset_publisher/b1zP/document/id/1450181?inheritRedirect=false)

<sup>9</sup> Scarcella G. & Cabanelas A.M. (2016) Research for PECH Committee - The clam fisheries sector in the EU - The Adriatic Sea case. Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, Fisheries, 60 pp. doi:10.2861/401646.

In 2016, Italy submitted consolidated management plans for hydraulic dredges in Italy to the European Commission (EC) and these were adopted at national level. Italy submitted new management plans for these gears which should be re-examined by the STECF after the update performed by the Italian Administration.

### **Request to STECF**

1) *To assess and advice whether the management plans for marine commercial fishing carried out with hydraulic dredges in the territorial waters of the Republic of Italy contains adequate elements in terms of:*

#### The description of the fisheries

- Recent and historical data on catches (landings and discards) of the species concerned, fishing effort and abundance indices such as catch-per-unit-effort (or CPUE).
- Data on length-frequency distribution of the catches, with particular reference to the species subject to minimum sizes in accordance with Annex III of the MEDREG.
- An updated state of the exploited resources.
- Information on economic indicators, including the profitability of the fisheries.

#### Objectives, safeguards and conservation/technical measures

Objectives consistent with article 2 of the CFP and quantifiable targets, such as fishing mortality rates and total biomass.

Measures proportionate to the objectives, the targets and the expected time frame.

Safeguards to ensure that quantifiable targets are met, as well as remedial actions, where needed, including situations where the deteriorating quality of data or non-availability places the sustainability of the main stocks of the fishery at risk.

Other conservation measures, in particular measures to fully monitor catches of the target species, to gradually eliminate discards and to minimise the negative impact of fishing on the ecosystem.

#### Other aspects

- Quantifiable indicators for periodic monitoring and assessment of progress in achieving the objectives of the plan.

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Documentation: The management plan for the fleets fishing with hydraulic dredges

### 6.6. **Presentation and possible use of MARE/2016/22 'Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of fisheries data collection in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (STREAM)' quality checks to assist in the stock assessment process**

#### **Background provided by the Commission**

The MARE/2016/22 STREAM project "Strengthening Regional cooperation in the area of fisheries biological data collection in the Mediterranean and Black Sea" aimed at providing support to the Commission and MSs to build up experience in new areas of regional cooperation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea for the realization of Multiannual Regional Work Programme (MRWP). The STREAM project started in December 2017 with an initial duration of 15 months, which was extended to 17 months, in recognition of the workload on staff in scientific institutions. STREAM was organised in 9 Work Packages, 9 Tasks (3 sub-Tasks), and issued 20 deliverables. The final evaluation meeting took place on 14 June and the draft final report is under finalization.

Work Package 6 dealt with 'Procedures to assess the quality of biological data stored at regional level'. In one of the tasks of this Work Package (Task 6.1), a set of quality checks were developed, to detect errors in both raw data (*a priori*) and in the raised data required by the end-users (*a posteriori*), using R-scripts. The *a priori* data quality checks can detect errors or inconsistencies on the sampling data, before the raising procedures are applied. A *a posteriori* quality checks work on the Med & BS Data Call formats, focusing on providing information on the spatial coverage among the strata (i.e. quarter, metier) and on the assessment of the completeness of biological information.

### **Request to the STECF**

STECF is requested to take into consideration the data quality tools developed by STREAM and to discuss their potential use in EWGs dealing with stock assessment. Pending a positive outcome of this discussion, STECF is requested to promote their use in STECF EWGs on stock assessment and assess their performance after one year, based on feedback from the relevant EWGs.

## **7. ITEMS/DISCUSSION POINTS FOR PREPARATION OF EWGs AND OTHER STECF WORK**

### **7.1. New STECF - Discussion and possible agreement on STECF rules of procedures**

**Possible STECF Rapporteur:** STECF board elect

### **7.2. Preparation of EWG 19-15 on the EU fish processing sector**

The collection of fish processing data is now voluntary. Potential data gaps for important MS may lead to a distorted picture of the EU overview. In order to avoid this, DG MARE 19-15 are working on a protocol to impute missing data from other sources (e.g. Eurostat) and historical data, which will be presented to the plenary for review and possible endorsement.

### **7.3. Preparation of the EWG on Outermost Regions**

The PLEN 18-03 report indicated that a specific EWG on ORs should identify in 2019 the concrete issues and the necessary processes for addressing the four challenges already identified: data collection, stock assessment, ecosystem knowledge and social & economic impacts. STECF concluded that the aim of the EWG on ORs should take the form of a scoping and prioritization exercise, to allow for the development of a roadmap for the subsequent meetings that will form the basis for the permanent network of research institutes.

### **Request to STECF**

STECF is requested to further discuss and advise on the content and organisation of the EWG on ORs. The Plenary should propose draft ToRs and give indication of a date/place/composition of the EWG on ORs.

### **7.4. Follow-up of WGMIXFISH and WGECON**

### **Request to STECF**

STECF is requested to elaborate on the results of the ICES WGMIXFISH meeting and draw conclusions for the possibilities for the future work regarding socio-economic assessments of mixed fisheries plans.