



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels,
SEC(2008) ****

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER

REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES

STECF Advice on the TAC for Sandeel in ICES zone IIIa and IV and in EC waters of ICES zones for 2008

STECF adopted this report by correspondence in May 2008

This report does not necessarily reflect the view of the European Commission and in no way
anticipates the Commission's future policy in this area

1. Background

Paragraphs 6 and 7 of Annex IID of Council Regulation (EC) No 40/2008 of 16 January 2008 state the following:

“ 6. The TAC and quotas for sandeel in ICES zone IIIa and IV and in EC waters of ICES zones IIa as laid down in Annex I shall be revised by the Commission as early as possible based on advice from ICES and the STECF on the size of the 2007 year class of North Sea sandeel, taking into account the following principles as well as other relevant elements contained in the scientific advice:

The TAC for EC waters of ICES zones IIa and IV shall be established according to the following function:

$$TAC\ 2008 = -138 + 3,77 \times N1 \times Wobs/Wm$$

N1 is the real-time estimate of age group 1 in billions derived from the exploratory fishery in 2008; the TAC is expressed in 1,000 tonnes; Wobs is the observed mean weight of age group 1 during the exploratory fishery; and Wm (4,75 g) is the long-term mean weight of age group 1”.

“ 7. If the TAC calculated in point 6 exceeds 400 000 tonnes, the TAC shall be set at 400 000 tonnes”.

The EC and Norway requested ICES to provide further advice to the European Community and Norway:

“In order to calculate a preliminary TAC level using the method described in Annex X of the Agreed Records.”

The Commission requested STECF to review the ICES advice and provide any appropriate comments and recommendations.

2. ICES response to the EC and Norway request on in-year management advice for sandeel in the North Sea.

Using real-time monitoring data from weeks 14 to 17 in 2008, the stock size estimate of age 1 sandeel in 2008 is 217 billion individuals and the mean weight is 3.53 g. The calculated value according to the agreed formula is 470 000 t, greater than the agreed maximum TAC of 400 000 t. Therefore, the total 2008 TAC (for EC and Norway combined) should be 400 000 tonnes as specified in the agreement.

3. STECF comments and recommendations

STECF notes the following:

The ICES advice is based on data from the Danish fishery (extracted from the Danish Fishery Directorate's database on 30 April 2008) and the Norwegian fishery (received from IMR 30 April 2008), covering the main historical fishing grounds. Logbook information from 71 trips and data from 63 biological samples of sandeel landings from the period 1 to 30 April 2008 were used to estimate the abundance of age 1 sandeel.

The fishery took place both in the European Community and Norwegian waters, with the largest catches being observed in the Dogger Bank area and in the Norwegian EEZ.

STECF considers that the data and information obtained from the real-time monitoring of the fishery during weeks 14-18 2008 is adequate to provide a reliable estimate of the strength of the 2007 year-class of North Sea sandeel.

STECF also notes that a substantial difference in the size and age composition of landings from the southern and northern parts of the North Sea was noted during weeks 14–18. There is concern about the low proportion of age 1 sandeel in the Norwegian landings from the northern North Sea (40% in numbers up to week 17, 25% up to week 18). The proportion of age 1 sandeel was about 90% in the Danish landings from the southern North Sea. ICES reiterates the observation that fisheries are known to cause local depletion of sandeel. Future management should account for the sub-stock distribution of sandeel in the North Sea (see ICES Advice, 2007). ICES will address this issue at a meeting planned for August 2008.

4. STECF Recommendations for the North Sea Sandeel fishery for the remainder of 2008

In arriving at its recommendation STECF wishes to stress that it has not considered the potential economic consequences of any management decision arising from its recommendations, and that no economic evaluations have been undertaken to assist in formulating its advice. STECF supports the idea that the economic consequences of potential management measures should be evaluated as fully as possible in order to inform the decision-making process. However, in the present case STECF is asked to provide an estimate the strength of the 2007 year-class of sandeel, which is to be applied to an agreed harvest control rule that also takes no account of the economic consequences of the subsequent action.

The agreed harvest rule for 2008 is given in paragraphs 6 and 7 of Annex IID of Council Regulation (EC) No 40/2008 of 16 January 2008, which states:

“ 6. The TAC and quotas for sandeel in ICES zone IIIa and IV and in EC waters of ICES zones IIa as laid down in Annex I shall be revised by the Commission as early as possible based on advice from ICES and the STECF on the size of the 2007 year class of North Sea sandeel, taking into account the following principles as well as other relevant elements contained in the scientific advice:

The TAC for EC waters of ICES zones IIa and IV shall be established according to the following function:

$$TAC\ 2008 = -138 + 3,77 \times NI \times Wobs/Wm$$

NI is the real-time estimate of age group 1 in billions derived from the exploratory fishery in 2008; the TAC is expressed in 1,000 tonnes; Wobs is the observed mean weight of age group 1 during the exploratory fishery; and Wm (4,75 g) is the long-term mean weight of age group 1”.

“ 7. If the TAC calculated in point 6 exceeds 400 000 tonnes, the TAC shall be set at 400 000 tonnes”.

Given that :

- STECF considers that the data and information obtained from the real-time monitoring of the North Sea sandeel fishery during weeks 14-18 2008 is adequate to provide a reliable estimate of the strength of the 2007 year-class of North Sea sandeel and;

- taking into account the provisions of Annex IID of Council Regulation (EC) No 40/2008 of 16 January 2008,

STECF agrees with the ICES advice that the TAC for North Sea sandeel in 2008 should not exceed 400,000 t.

STECF notes that approximately 73,000 t of North Sea sandeel had been landed up to 5 May leaving a potential catch of a further 327,000 t up to 31 July, 2008 when the fishery will close for the rest of the year.

STECF notes that the provision of paragraphs 6 and 7 of Annex IID of Council Regulation (EC) No 40/2008 of 16 January 2008, are based on a proposal from ICES (2007). The biological and economic consequences of the TAC for 2008 resulting from the ICES proposal have not been evaluated by the STECF.

References

ICES. 2007. ICES Advice, 2007. Copenhagen, Denmark.

ICES. 2008. Report of the Ad hoc Group on Sandeel (AGSAN). Copenhagen, Denmark.