

EWG 23-15: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TECHNICAL MEASURES REGULATION

Request to the STECF

Since the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241, DG MARE has convened 3 Expert Working Groups to monitor the implementation of the regulation. One of the main aims of this regulation is optimise the exploitation pattern of commercial fisheries. The main mechanism to achieve this is through amendments to the annexes of the Regulation that set out provisions on the operation and specifications of fishing gears, including minimum mesh sizes and selectivity devices to be used. To this end, STECF was requested (EWG 22-19) to prepare available information regarding the optimal sizes and ages at which the main commercial species (taken individually) should optimally be caught, as well as the types and technical definitions of fishing gear that would be appropriate to achieve this aim.

To progress this work, DGMARE proposes to establish a further EWG 23-15. This EWG 5 will build on the work, and findings, of EWG 21-07 and EWG 22-19. The work of EWG 23-15 will focus on the stocks identified in EWG 22-19 for which changes in technical measures were shown to provide potential gains in terms of yield and protection of juveniles. EWG 23-15 will explore the application of bio-economic modelling to identify the impacts of possible operational changes needed to realise the transition to higher yields. EWG 23-15 will also identify the technical support required to assess at the regional level, the potential socio-economic implications of fisheries-based transition plans for improving yields.

The experts attending the EWG 23-15 (economists, mixed fisheries stock assessors, modellers, and gear specialists) will consider a number of case studies and develop fisheries-based transition plans to inform future research goals and advice needs. A literature review will also enable EWG 23-15 to put the model results into the broader context of the implementation of technical measures.

EWG 23-15 is considered a scoping meeting and should involve stakeholders particularly the Advisory Councils (ACs). The relevant ACs will be contacted and invited as observers to the EWG meeting. A dedicated session will be organised during the EWG to gather industry perspectives.

The findings from this group will feed into further EWGs with the longer term goals inter alia:

- 1) Explore how increased yields of hake (i.e., Atlantic northern hake stock) can be achieved, what long-term benefits and costs could be attained;
- 2) Identifying alternative pathways of gears changes to increase the size-selectivity of mixed fisheries and impacts of fishing gear diversification;
- 3) Assess, for each sector, likely costs and benefits associated with the progressive changes over time.

For this reason, EWG 23-15 will discuss the direction of future work, additional data/tools, stakeholder engagement, and advice needs. The EWG will need to consider the socio-economic barriers and implications to implementing technical measures changes. The outcomes of EWG 23-15, and future technical measure expert working groups, should align with ongoing work at ICES WGMXIFSH-Methodology (ICES 2023a), and in a number of national labs, where bio-economic models have been under production for some time,

and are considered an important tool for future advice need. As momentum in this field of research grows, end users of the ICES mixed fisheries advice have identified bio-economic models as an important tool to deal with future management needs (ICES 2023b).

It is planned to hold EWG 23-15 meeting in Ispra at the JRC facilities to ensure active engagement and collaboration among the very diverse skill set of experts who will attend.

Proposed Terms of Reference EWG 23-15:

ToR 1- Provide a summary of the current knowledge on the tools available to assess the socio-economic implications of changes in technical measures. This review should provide context and support for the analysis to ensure meaningful conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the models identified in EWG 23-15.

ToR 2 – Identify, quality control, and summarise the data required to run a bio-economic assessment of gear changes. In particular, but not limited to, the species and fisheries with the identified in EWG 22-19, for which the highest gains can be achieved (outcomes of EWG 22-19), and species (target & bycatch) caught as part of these mixed fisheries.

ToR 3 - Identify the most suitable models, per ecoregion, to assess where possible:

- a. the impacts of increasing the size-selectivity of gears on the species caught in mixed fisheries in terms of catch, effort, fishing mortality and recruitment.
- b. the likely costs and potential benefits associated with gear changes for fleets on the short-term and longer-term.

Suitability will be assessed on data requirements, ease of parametrisation, short and long-term forecasting capabilities, adaptability for long-term goals.

ToR 4 – Identify meaningful management scenarios that could be produced with these models, and the additional information/data/models that would be required to produce additional scenarios.

ToR 5 - Discuss direction of future work, additional needs, stakeholder engagement, and advice needs.

Reference:

ICES 2023a. Report of the Working Group on Methods on Fish Stock Assessments (WGMG).

ICES 2023b. Second scoping workshop on next generation of mixed fisheries advice (WKMIXFISH2). ICES Scientific Reports.