



## **REPORT**

### **North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council**

#### **FOCUS GROUP ON MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR CELTIC SEA Wednesday 7 July 2010, 14.00-17.30 CNP MEM – Paris**

**Chairman: Jacques Pichon  
Rapporteur: Paul Trebilcock**

#### **1. Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed participants. He gave a brief background to the meeting, highlighting that Celtic Sea Cod was different to other EU managed Cod stocks in terms of its biology, distribution, growth rates and fisheries it is taken in.

Industry initiatives such as the Trevoise Closure and Science Partnerships were highlighted as positives on this stock. While the gap between industry perceptions and assessments as well as scientific uncertainty were highlighted as issues that required urgent attention.

#### **Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

#### **2. Biological Assessment of Celtic Sea stocks (VII fg): Current Situation**

Colm Lordan from the Marine Institute, Ireland gave a presentation on the assessments of the stocks concerned in the Celtic Sea. The presentation is available on the NWW RAC website for information.

In Summary:

#### **Celtic Sea Cod**

ICES advice remains uncertain on this stock. It is possible to identify trends only in assessment, although it is stated that the age structure of this stock appears truncated. Although some signs of reduced Fishing mortality (F) there is a high degree of uncertainty.

Given the significant reduction in effort it was anticipated that there would be a significant reduction in F. This has not been shown in assessment process and needs to be explained. Therefore at present there is no evidence of a link between decreasing fishing effort and reducing F in this stock.

Given that this stock is at the southern extremity of its range uncertainties in natural mortality due to temperature, feed distribution and natural predation (such as seals) could be factors in unaccounted mortality.

A positive feature of this stock is that it is extremely fast growing. There is evidence that suggests reduced amounts of high grading and new tagging data is being collected by using DST and conventional tags that will be used in future assessments.

#### Celtic Sea Haddock

Trends: increasing SSB, F fluctuating but low in recent years. There are no reference points for this assessment and there has been good recruitment recently. There is a perceived issue with discards in some fisheries.

#### Celtic Sea Whiting

Trends: increasing SSB, F fluctuating but low in recent years. There are no reference points for this assessment and there has been good recruitment recently. There is a perceived issue with discards in some fisheries.

#### Celtic Sea Plaice

Trends: SSB low but improving in recent assessments, F fluctuating but decreasing in recent years (possibly effect of Trevoise Closure).

#### Celtic Sea Sole

Trends: SSB high and increasing, F low and reducing (below MSY targets). Recruitment good.

#### Celtic Sea Nephrops (FU20-22)

Trends: Landing relatively stable, overall reduction in fishing effort

#### Megrim VII

Catch in Celtic Sea less than 10% of TAC, no increase in effort or catches.

#### Anglerfish VII & VIII

Catch in Celtic Sea less than 10% of TAC, no increase in effort or catches

#### Hake VI, VII & VIII

Catch in Celtic Sea less than 5% of TAC, data missing from assessment but recent trends generally positive on SSB and F.



### **3. Presentation of the Activity of the Fleets / Métiers and Capacity**

Colm Lordan from the Marine Institute, Ireland gave a presentation on the activity and fleet levels concerned in the Celtic Sea. The presentation is available on the NWW RAC website for information.

In summary:

#### Fishing Effort

Overall reduction in fishing effort from over 25million KW days in 2003 to around 15million KW days in 2008. Particularly large decreases in French TR1 trawling effort and Beam-Trawl effort since 2003.

Numbers of vessels operating in Celtic Sea have remained consistent since 2000.

Effective effort trends by ICES statistical rectangle clearly demonstrate significant reductions in all gears. Significant reduction in beam trawl gears in Trevoise Closure rectangles and more general reduction across Celtic Sea.

#### Comments From the Floor

The Group felt that in considering the most appropriate management measures for the Celtic Sea mixed demersal fisheries based on the presentations the following important conclusions could be made:

The trends overall in the stocks and fleet activity were positive and moving in the right direction.

Although there are acknowledged uncertainties in the stock assessments, there has been a significant reduction in fishing effort deployed. However, there appears to be a very weak correlation between this reduction and a reduction in fishing mortality. The truncated age structure for cod suggests that discards or possibly seal predation may be significant factors in the high level of unallocated removals.

This suggests that the Commission's advocated approach based on progressive reductions in effort from a recent baseline is misplaced in that it would be unlikely to deliver the desired outcome – a reduction in fishing mortality for cod and other demersal socks in the Celtic Sea.

A determined effort is required to reduce the level of uncertainty in the stock assessments by improving the quality and quantity of the input data.



Alternative, more tailored means of reducing fishing mortality in the Celtic sea mixed fisheries are required. A focus on the different elements within *total removals* is required, including ways of successfully reducing discards

#### **4. Current Regulatory Framework in Area VIIIfg and Adjacent Areas and Proposed Way Forward: EC Non-paper on Effort Management-Ecosystem Approach**

The group heard from the Commission that:

- \* The Commission non-paper was not focused just on Cod but on a range on species in the Celtic Sea.
- \* It was an attempt to introduce a concept for managing a range of species in the Celtic Sea.
- \* There would be an exemption for pelagic fisheries.
- \* It was an attempt at an ecosystem based approach.
- \* A major concern was preventing an increase in fleet activity or effort in the Celtic Sea.
- \* The Commission felt this was an opportunity to be seized and that industry should participate in this process.

#### **5. Proposed Management Measures from the Fishing Industry**

In light of the scientific evidence and the Commissions statements it was felt that the Industry should reflect on its position a draft a response to the non-paper based on the latest facts and figures.

It was suggested that mesh size be considered for Cod selectivity but it was stated by Colm Lordan this would not be an appropriate avenue to explore.

Some members suggested the idea of a capping of capacity to control the transfer of fishing effort from the Cod Recovery Zones to area VIIIfg

Greater industry/science liaison and partnership initiatives should be seen as a priority to address data deficiencies and uncertainty in the assessments.

EU wide tagging schemes were viewed as a possible means of improving knowledge of Cod stock in the Celtic Sea.



## 6. Planning of next steps

A draft response to the Commission non-paper should be produced incorporating the outcomes of this meeting.

A further response on a LTMP for the Celtic Sea should be produced to secure an improved management regime in this area. This should detail criteria and principles for a LTMP that must be consider when developing a LTMP for the Celtic Sea.

**End of the meeting**



## Annex I. List of attendees:

Jacques Pichon	ANOP-FROM- PMA (Chairman)
Paul Trebilcock	Cornish FPO (Rapporteur)
Fuensanta Candela	European Commission
Kenneth Patterson	European Commission
Colm Lordan	Marine Institute
Pieter-Jan Schon	AFBI
Tom Blasdale	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Johnny Murt	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Robert Bellail	IFREMER
Lionel Pawlowski	IFREMER
Sofie Vandemaele	ILVO
Luc Corbisier	SDVO
Alan Coghill	Orkney Fishermen's Association
Rory Crawford	RSPB-Birdlife International
Sam Lambourn	NWWRAC Chairman
Jim Portus	SWFPO Ltd.
Ted Breslin	Killybegs Fishermen's Association
Lorcan O'Cinnéide	Irish Fish Producer's Organisation
Eibhlin O'Sullivan	Irish South and West Fish Producers' Org.
John Crudden	European Anglers' Alliance
Brendan Price	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Joe Maddock	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Hugo González	ANASOL-ARVI
Jesús Lourido García	Puerto de Celeiro S.A.
Juan Carlos Corrás	Pescagalicia-Arpega-Obarco
José Luis Otero González	Lonja de La Coruña, S.A.
André LeBerre	CRPMEM Bretagne
Richard Brouzes	Copeport OPBN-FEDOPA
Marc Ghiglia	UAPF
Stéphanie Tachaires	CNPMEM
Eamon Mangan	Ministry of Agricultura and Fisheries of France
Borja Velasco	Secretaría General del Mar (España)
Conor Nolan	NWWRAC Secretariat
Alexandre Rodríguez	NWWRAC Secretariat