

## **REPORT**

### **Meeting of NWWRAC Working group 2**

**12th March 2008**

**09.30-13:00 h**

**Manchester (UK)**

#### **Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

#### **Adoption of Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of WG 2 meeting held on 31 October 2007 were adopted by consensus.

#### **Review of EC Response to NWW RAC Advice on TAC & Quota for 2008 and Cod Recovery in Celtic Sea**

These two agenda items were discussed together.

The EC response to the NWW RAC advice on TAC and Quotas for 2008 was noted. There was disappointment expressed about the content of the response in terms of the issues raised by the NWW RAC. In particular the Commission's response to advice on under-utilised stocks was viewed as disappointing and failed to understand the sound arguments that were made.

It was acknowledged that there was work to be done on improving the scientific data on many of the stocks concerning WG2 and it was agreed that efforts should be made to improve this situation by all involved.

There was further discussion on Area VIIb-k Cod. There was general disappointment that the TAC had been reduced by 9%, despite the scientific and fishermen's based knowledge that had been presented.

All member states reported high Cod abundance based on information from their respective fleets and that it was likely that there would be discarding of Cod in all member states before the end of the year.

There were two key issues identified:

Firstly, the immediate problem of the reduced TAC and the high levels of cod observed by all member state fleets.

It was noted that the Irish fleet were already recording discards of cod over 100kg on their EU log sheets in an effort to illustrate the scale of the problem. It was suggested that other member state fleets should consider doing the same to build up a better picture of the extent of the problem.

It was recommended that the NWW RAC Executive should write to Commission and ICES to request that Area VII b-k cod be re-assessed as a matter of urgency. Furthermore, it should be requested that a specific data compilation workshop should be convened by ICES as soon as possible to look at this stock.

It was recommended that it was vital that an in year increase was sought by the NWW RAC as a matter of extreme urgency (allowed for by the footnote in the TAC regulation relating to Area VII b-k Cod) to avoid massive discarding of Cod during 2008 and an evidence based scientific case was recognised as the key to securing this.

Secondly, the longer term recovery/management plans for area VIIb-k cod. WG 2 re-affirmed its support for the Celtic Sea Closure. It recognised that this cod stock was different to others as it was part of an ultra-mixed fishery. There remained strong opposition to the days at sea type management that has been implemented elsewhere. Once again it was noted that there had been no real assessment of the effects of the closure and that this should have happened.

It was recommended by WG 2 that a specific meeting of the Cod Focus Group be convened to look at the alternatives to day at sea scheme focussing on selectivity, effects of the existing measures taken by fishermen (such as the Celtic Sea Closure) and improving the scientific knowledge. The objective would be to develop proposals that ensured sustainable harvesting of the stock in terms of the biology as well as securing the economic and social future of the fleets concerned.

The NWW RAC Chairman stresses the importance of undertaking a review of the existing regulations in order to reduce discards.

The rapporteur of WG 3 confirmed the support of his working group for these recommendations.

There was concern expressed that WG 2 had not yet seen the Commissions proposals for the hake management plan.

### **Conclusions and Action Points on Deepwater Species**

A note on the meeting held on 5 February 2008 was summarised for WG 2 (available on the NWW RAC web-site for information).

There were a number of concerns regarding the poor and scarce existing data on these stocks and the management proposals that were due to emanate from the Commission on these stocks. All the Focus Group members agreed on the necessity of carrying out further research projects in order to improve the knowledge of these species.

It was agreed that Victor Badiola (Spain) would circulate a paper on blue ling management addressing some of these concerns to members of the focus group for comments and, if agree, endorsement and inclusion as an annex of the Focus Group minutes.

It was recommended that a meeting of the Deepwater Species Focus Group should be convened by the NWWRAC for early June to prepare a position in order to assess the forthcoming Commissions proposals. This would enable to be proactive and to feed the Commission proposal with productive input and sound arguments. It was also recommended that the Focus Group Chairman would submit a draft agenda immediately after the Executive Committee meeting.

### **Conclusions and Action Points on Deepwater Gillnets**

A note on the meeting held on 6 February 2008 was summarised for WG 2 (available on the NWW RAC web-site for information).

A long and detailed discussion focused on the harmonisation of mesh size of fixed nets between areas VI and VII. There was no agreement reached some member states (ES, FR) favoured moving to 100mm whilst others (IRE, UK) were opposed to this at this stage.

It was recommended that the NWWRAC Executive Committee should write to ICES as a matter of urgency asking them to assess the impact of a move to 100mm in areas VII and VIII on the hake stock, fishing mortality and potential negative and positive implications of any such move. This could be achieved either with the existing available scientific information or through new observation campaigns. This would enable the Deepwater Gillnet Focus Group to be re-convened and come forward with recommendations based on the most up to date evidence available.

### **Conclusions and Action Points on Hake Management**

A note on the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2008 was summarised for WG 2 (available on the NWW RAC web-site for information).

Concern was noted about the Commissions apparent lack of concern for proper consultation time frame and that they had stated categorically that a management plan would come into force from January 2009.

It was recommended that the NWWRAC Executive write to the Commission expressing concern regarding the truncated time frame for consultation on the hake management plan. If the Commission wanted to adhere to its ambitious timescales it had to be more efficient in producing its proposals in English, French and Spanish, and allow sufficient time for proper consultation.

It was recommended that the NWWRAC convene a meeting of the Hake Focus Group as soon as the Commissions proposals emerged in order for a suitable response to be developed.

### **Any Other Business**

Concerns were raised regarding the Commissions Shark management plan. It was agreed that the NWWRAC secretariat would circulate the French response to the proposals to all members for information.

It was suggested that this issue could be looked at by the Deepwater Species Focus Group at their next meeting and outcomes reported to the next meeting of WG 2.

It was noted that the 5% by-catch regulation regarding spur-dogs would be discussed by WG 4 but would be treated as an horizontal issue.

### **Summary of WG 2 Recommendations to the NWW RAC Executive Committee:**

- It was recommended that the NWW RAC Executive should write to Commission and ICES to request that Area VII b-k Cod be re-assessed as a matter of urgency. Furthermore, it should be requested that a specific data compilation workshop should be convened by ICES as soon as possible to look at this stock.
- It was recommended that it was vital that an in year increase in the Area VII b-k Cod TAC was sought by the NWW RAC as a matter of extreme urgency (allowed for by the footnote in the TAC regulation relating to Area VII b-k Cod) to avoid massive discarding of Cod during 2008 and an evidence based scientific case was recognised as the key to securing this.
- It was recommended by WG 2 that a specific meeting of the Cod Focus Group be convened to look at the alternatives to a day at sea type scheme for area VII b-k Cod focussing on selectivity, effects of the existing measures taken by fishermen (such as the Celtic Sea Closure) and improving the scientific knowledge. The objective would be to develop proposals that ensured sustainable harvesting of the stock in terms of the biology as well as securing the economic and social future of the fleets concerned.

- It was recommended that a meeting of the Deepwater Species Focus Group should be convened by the NWW RAC for early June to assess the Commissions proposals. This would enable productive input and sound arguments to be presented.
- It was recommended that the NWWRAC Executive should write to ICES as a matter of urgency asking them to assess the impact of a move to 100mm in areas VI, VII and VIII on the hake stock, fishing mortality and potential negative and positive implications of any such move. This would enable the Deepwater Gillnet Focus Group to be re-convened and come forward with recommendations for the NWW RAC Executive based on the most up to date evidence available.
- It was recommended that the NWWRAC Executive write to the Commission expressing concern regarding the truncated time frame for consultation on the hake management plan. If the Commission wanted to adhere to its ambitious timescales it had to be more efficient in producing its proposals and allow sufficient time for proper consultation.
- It was recommended that the NWWRAC convene a meeting of the Hake Focus Group as soon as the Commissions Hake management plan proposals emerged in order for a suitable response to be developed.

Chairman: Hugo González  
Rapporteur: Paul Trebilcock

March 2008