



## Draft Minutes

### WORKING GROUP 3 (ENGLISH CHANNEL)

Ghent, 01 July 2024

#### 1 Welcome & introductions

Matilde Vallerani, NWWAC Secretariat, welcomed all participants and explained that she was chairing this meeting due to both the Chair and Vicechair being unable to travel. Apologies were received from Manu Kelberine, Mathieu Vimard and Olivier Lepretre. The agenda was adopted with the addition of a point on targeted fisheries for squid added under AOB.

Action points from the last meeting

1	Le groupe de travail continuera à suivre les travaux irlandais sur les essais CSJ. Les résultats des prochains essais devraient être prêts pour la réunion du groupe de travail en juillet. D'ici là, le Secrétariat tiendra les membres au courant des travaux du groupe des États membres EOS.
	<a href="#">Webinaire sur la coquille Saint-Jacques le 19 juin, essais irlandais reportés à l'automne 2024.</a>
2	Le Secrétariat recueillera les contributions des membres du GT sur le projet de recommandation conjointe sur la Limande sole et le projet d'avis au groupe des États membres EOS.
	<a href="#">Avis soumis le 11 avril, la mise à jour de l'évaluation du CSTEP devrait être disponible au moment de la réunion.</a>
3	Le Secrétariat s'informerait auprès de la DG MARE par courriel sur le travail de leurs services juridiques qui analysent toute discrimination, disproportionnalité et si les actions sont conformes à l'avis scientifique concernant les 13 AMP établies par le Royaume-Uni et sur la façon dont cela serait abordé. Le GT recommande que le groupe de réflexion conjoint CC EOS/PelAC Spatial Squeeze suive les discussions entre l'UE et le Royaume-Uni sur les AMP et poursuive le sujet en donnant des conseils.
	<a href="#">Courriel envoyé, abordé dans le forum inter-CC sur le Brexit.</a> <a href="#">Ongoing process on both EU and UK side. On hold now due to elections in UK and FR.</a> <a href="#">When finished, the COM will publish official information.</a>
4	Le Secrétariat rédigera un avis à l'intention du groupe des États membres EOS pour une recommandation conjointe sur le Rouget barbet, sur la base du document produit par le CNPMEM.
	<a href="#">L'avis a été soumis le 11 avril, d'autres discussions sont attendues au sein du groupe des États membres.</a>



<b>5</b>	Le Secrétariat assurera le suivi avec la Commission sur l'organisation d'événements liés à l'élaboration de la stratégie pluriannuelle pour la CSJ (proposée et approuvée par le ComEx sur la base d'un dialogue avec la DG MARE).
	<a href="#">Séminaire en ligne sur la coquille Saint-Jacques le 19 juin</a>

Dirk van Guyze commented on point 2 that the STECF evaluated the work and that the Commission is not accepting the joint recommendation. Member States, and specifically Belgium, are preparing additional information and discussing this with the relevant scientists.

## 2 ICES advice for the Channel – Joanne Morgan, ICES ACOM Vice-Chair

List of acronyms

DLS	data limited stocks
CHR	constant harvest rate
Rfb	Equation: $r$ = biomass ratio (survey trend), $f$ = fishing proxy (length data, target), $b$ = biomass safeguard
CAA	catch at age
SAA	survey at age
SR	Stock recruit
B	biomass
BMSY	biomass at maximum sustainable yield
XSA	Extended survivor analysis
SAM	Stock assessment model
SCAA	statistical catch at age
SPiCT	Surplus production in continuous time
SS	stock synthesis
SSB	spawning stock biomass
Blim	Limit reference point for spawning stock biomass (SSB)
Btrigger	Value of spawning stock biomass (SSB) that triggers a specific management action
Itrigger	Index trigger value below which the biomass safeguard reduces the catch advice
F	Instantaneous Rate of Fishing Mortality
AAP	Aarts and Poos assessment

- Guide to ICES advisory framework and principles ([link](#))
- List of ICES acronyms and terminology ([link](#))
- ICES fisheries management reference points for category 1 and 2 stocks ([link](#))



- ICES technical guidance for harvest control rules and stock assessments for stocks in categories 2 and 3 ([link](#))
- ICES reference points for stocks in categories 3 and 4 ([link](#))

Links to all ICES technical guidelines can be found [here](#).

Morgan explained that ICES was hit with a cyber-attack last week which presented difficulties in preparing the presentation and that some advice sheets may not be fully fixed yet. However, the headline advice and all information contained should be correct.

#### Brill 4, 3a, 7d

- Advice for 2025, MSY: Catch  $\leq 2970t$  (+21%)
- F declining, below FMSY
- stock size above FMSY Btrigger
- Increase in SSB but also upward revision in SSB and downward revision in F (retrospective)
- SPiCT model used

#### Cod North 4, 6a, 7d, 20

- Advice for 2025, MSY: catch  $\leq 19321t$
- Multi stock SAM
- Southern stock, MSY: catch  $\leq 3074t$  (-22%)
- Benchmark 2023
- below Btrigger
- fishing mortality above FMSY
- SSB retro
- North western area, precautionary: catch  $\leq 12158t$  (-10.1%)
- F above FMSY
- SSB above Btrigger
- Decrease in stock size, lower recruitment, lower F (adjusted due to status of southern stock)
- Viking advice for 2025, precautionary: catch  $\leq 4089t$  (-22%)
- F above FMSY
- SSB above trigger
- Retrospective in stock size, lower recruitment, lower F (adjusted due to status of southern stock)



#### Lemon sole 4, 3a, 7d

- Advice for 2025, MSY: catch  $\leq$  1450t (-30%)
- Data limited stock – chr – stability clause (-30%) applied
- F below FMSY proxy
- Stock size indicator declining but above Itrigger
- 17% discards

#### Plaice 7d

- Advice for 2025, MSY: catch  $\leq$  2600t (+9.8%)
- Parts of the catches in 7d are from the Western Channel and North Sea: advice is 3113t when taking other stocks caught in 7d into account
- F below FMSY
- SSB below MSY Btrigger
- Increased selection on age 1 and 2 – more exploitable biomass
- AAP assessment

#### Plaice 7e

- Advice for 2025 and 2026, MSY: catch  $\leq$  927t (-24%)
- F above FMSY proxy
- Stock size above Itrigger
- But has declined and results in lower advice
- Rfb rule
- since 2024 the TAC includes considerations on how much can be fished in each of the divisions 7e and 7d

#### Seabass 4b-c, 7a, and 7d-h

- Advice for 2025, MSY: catch  $\leq$  2776t (+14.1%)
- SSB below MSY Btrigger
- F below FMSY
- Higher recruitment, SSB now closer to trigger so adjustment to F is less
- Stock synthesis (Age disaggregated category 1 model)

#### Sole 7d

- Advice for 2025, MSY: catch  $\leq$  1209t (-19.6%)



- F below FMSY
- SSB below MSY Btrigger
- Recruitment lower since 2011
- Lower stock size – farther below Btrigger – lower target F
- SAM assessment

#### Sole 7e

- Advice for 2025, MSY: catch  $\leq$  1151t, (+8.9%)
- F below FMSY
- SSB above MSY Btrigger
- SSB declining but advice higher – upward revision in SSB and downward revision F (retrospective)
- Extended survivor analysis (FLXSA)

#### Whiting 4 and 7d

- Advice for 2025, MSY: catch  $\leq$  237 008t (+85%)
- F below FMSY
- SSB above MSY Btrigger
- About 20% of the catches are taken in the eastern Channel area
- Increase in advice - increase in estimate of FMSY as natural mortality estimates updated
- SAM assessment

#### Witch SA4, 3a, 7d

- Advice for 2025, MSY: catch  $\leq$  1969t (+25%)
- F above FMSY
- SSB above MSY Btrigger
- Increase in advice – increase in SSB – now above Btrigger so target FMSY
- SAM assessment

In relation to seabass, Jean-Marie Robert remarked that Blim is based on the lowest value ever observed in biomass for this stock in 2018. This method was stopped following the 2019 benchmark. Since the retrospective approach is available an additional year is added with the result that the biomass of that year is decreasing significantly. *“We had about 10300 t and now we are under 8000 t, which has clearly an impact on management”*. Today the fishing mortality value needs to be adjusted so as to not go beyond the precautionary approach. However, he wondered why the reference points could not be adjusted as analysed in the most recent ICES advice with the new data available.

Morgan responded that ICES do not usually adjust the reference points according to retrospective



pattern and that this stock did not have such a pattern in recent years.

Robert clarified that the biomass level in 2018 was at 10 000 t and now is at 8000 t. He felt that the biomass estimated today is twice as high as the limit, but that the stock cannot be recovered. *“So the question is about this reference point.”* He added that in his opinion this stock cannot be compared to other stocks as normally, when the reference point is set, previous years are used. For this stock the biomass level does not evolve as there is no retrospective, so it is unclear what is used for setting the reference points and why the level is so close to the benchmark year.

Morgan commented that the SSB in 2024 is 13000t, and the trigger is 14000t based on the relationship between the trigger and Blim trying to take into account uncertainty. Blim is the lowest observed value in the time series in 2018. There is a retrospective pattern in that time period in the model. This is rather unusual. Morgan said she would point out the issue for discussion within ICES.

Emiel Brouckaert referred to previous discussions on how to align what is being observed at sea and what is appearing in the ICES advice. He felt that the stock category could be included in the presentation to better explain the basis for the advice.

Morgan commented that lemon sole is a Category 3 stock and explained how the categories are established. For Cat. 3 a series of methods is available that can be used on data limited stocks depending on how much information is available for the stock. All methods have been tested against the precautionary approach to ensure stock sustainability for the future. The one used for lemon sole is called constant harvest rate method which has a harvest rate that is a proxy for FMSY. This is based on the harvest rate history of the species. A biomass safeguard is also available so that if the stock falls below the trigger a multiplier is applied to ensure the stock does not fall any further.

The rfb rule is also used for data limited stocks, for example for plaice in the western Channel. The rfb rule also includes a trigger value as well as a stability clause. The fishing mortality proxy is based on the length frequencies that are collected in the commercial fishery. Most northwestern waters stocks are Cat. 1 and Cat. 3 stocks. In the advice sheet, the catch option table gives the derivations in the Cat. 3 stocks.

Brouckaert clarified that he wondered how the stock biomass is approaching MSY Btrigger. Morgan stated that this is based on the biomass index which usually comes from surveys or catch per unit effort.

Dominique Thomas queried the 85% increase for whiting in the eastern Channel as this was not observed at sea as only very limited numbers of whiting are seen there.

Morgan agreed that this was a very large increase explaining that the stock distribution was wider than the Channel which could be part of the explanation. Information is taken from other models regarding the natural mortality which was updated this year. This is going to affect the fishing mortality reference points and that resulted in a large increase in the reference points leading to the increase in the advice.

Dominic Rihan expressed his concern regarding the large increase over the past two years for this stock whereas the stock adjacent to this area is very low. He stated that most of the gadoid stocks



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

have very low recruitment in the Celtic Sea and the North Sea and felt that this stock was such an outlier.

Morgan commented that she would have to review each assessment to see what difference there is in the advice between stocks to understand the assessment. She clarified that all assessments are carried out separately unless natural mortality estimates from the multispecies modelling are included. Stocks are deemed separate though they may be adjacent which is why the assessments are not linked.

Franck Le Barzic agreed with the colleagues regarding the reduction in productivity in whiting and that the opposite can be seen in the western Channel 7e. However, the stock perception in ICES is different as it refers to a decline and he was wondering why there was such a difference. He also pointed to a potential link between the plaice stocks in 7d and 7e. In his understanding, ICES takes into account a migration from the western to the eastern Channel that takes place in the first quarter leading to an adjustment of 15% and therefore a decrease in the advice. He wondered why the migration was taken into account for this particular stock and not for other stocks. Management can take this migration into account in the flexibility rate between the zones.

Morgan explained that she would address “concurrent” fisheries in her presentation at the Horizontal Working Group and that ICES aims to take this into account whenever this occurs. Unfortunately, the information is not always readily available which may lead to stocks being unintentionally overexploited.

**ACTION:** Points discussed will be included in the advice on fishing opportunities to be developed by the FG Landing Obligation.

### 3 Follow-up on June webinar on scallop management

Vallerani explained that the webinar had been arranged by the NWWAC on request by DG MARE as they are planning to hold a workshop with UK counterparts to delineate their multi-year strategy for king scallop in the Channel. However, there is still uncertainty around this workshop mainly due to the elections in the UK. This makes internal planning for the AC difficult, however, it is envisaged to call a meeting of the FG Scallop in preparation for the in-person workshop. She referred to the upcoming Irish trials in the Channel and mentioned that the final report from the webinar is currently being finalised.

John Lynch asked whether the UK administration or the stakeholders would participate.

Vallerani confirmed that the UK administration would be involved in this meeting which was focussed on scallop specifically.

Brouckaert pointed out that the report from the webinar will be very valid and recommended that all interested members should review this in detail and send any points for discussion to the Secretariat.

Vallerani added that the workshop is envisaged before the end of September and that notice for a Focus Group meeting prior to this may come at short notice. She stated that the Commission had



commented that dialogue between EU and UK stakeholders was important.

#### 4 AOB

Vallerani explained that the NWWAC noted that the Member States are requesting to amend the general derogation from the baseline mesh size of 40mm for directed fisheries for squid as listed in Annex VI, Part B of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241. In particular, the draft Joint Recommendation is proposing to increase the minimum mesh size to 80mm for bottom trawls and seines in all ICES Area 7 except for 7j, where the 40mm derogation should be maintained. The 40mm mesh size should also be maintained for pelagic otter trawls in 7e. The majority of NWWAC members is in favour of such amendments and believe that the increase in the mesh size could reduce the unwanted catches of juvenile fish species. However, it was not possible to reach full consensus to reflect this in a revision of our 25 March 2022 advice.

A proposal was put forward by French members to reduce the area in which an 80mm mesh can be used to target squid to 4, 7d and e for bottom gears as otherwise there may be implications for the management of red mullet.

Brouckaert confirmed that the JR had been sent to the Commission and was not sure if there was added value in sending additional advice as this information was anticipated by the MS and is included in the JR.

Le Barzic agreed with the previous speaker and felt that there was no point in repetition. He stated that the JR had been accepted in the North Sea and that it is important that MS move fast and that the recommendation is validated as soon as possible.

Brouckaert wondered if the MS were looking for additional information and advice for the NWWAC

Van Guyze felt that the advice sufficed and that the additional remarks should be cleared fairly quickly.

#### 5 Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

##### Actions

1	The Secretariat will keep members updated on EU-UK discussions on UK MPAs.
2	The Secretariat will keep members informed regarding Commission's next step in relation to the organisation of a workshop on scallop management with the UK.
3	Comments made following presentation of ICES advice will be taken into account in the preparation of the AC advice on Fishing Opportunities by the FG Landing Obligation. Members are invited to send any other contribution via email before the FG meeting on 24 July.





CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

**NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS**  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

## Participants

<b>NWWAC members</b>	
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Franck Le Barzic	COBRENORD
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Geert Meun	VisNed
Philippe Perrot	CRPMEM Bretagne
Corentine Piton	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Erwan Quemeneur	CDPMEM 29
Jean-Marie Robert	Pêcheurs de Bretagne
Pauline Stephan	CNPMEM
Dominique Thomas	OP CME MMN
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord
<b>NWWAC observers</b>	
Patrick Murphy	ISWFPO
Aodh O'Donnell	IFPO
Dominic Rihan	KFO
<b>Experts and observers</b>	
Kylie Kronal	Department for Agriculture and Fisheries
Joanne Morgan	ICES
Dirk van Guyze	Department for Agriculture and Fisheries
<b>NWWAC Secretariat</b>	
Mo Mathies	Executive Secretary
Matilde Vallerani	Deputy Executive Secretary