



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

**NORTH WESTERN
WATERS**
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES



Joint NWWAC/SWWAC Workshop on Hake

in the framework of the VarMer Project

—
29 April 2026



www.nwwac.org

Meeting etiquette

- Please arrive on time so we can dive straight into the agenda.
- Listen actively: Give speakers your full attention, avoid side conversations or interrupting.
- Create a supportive environment: Be respectful, value diverse opinions and use inclusive language.
- Treat people fairly, promote an integrated way of working and respect the dignity of members at all times.
- Use discretion and respect others. Harassment, bullying, intimidation or discrimination in any form are unacceptable.



Agenda

15:00 – 15:10	1. Welcome & introductions - Serge Larzabal, SWWAC WG Chair
15:10 – 15:25	2. Stock dynamics of both stocks of North East Atlantic European Hake - Dorleta Garcia, AZTI
15:25 – 15:40	3. Spatial distribution of North East Atlantic European Hake - Marina Santurtun, AZTI
15:40 – 15:55	4. Genetics/Population structure of European Hake - Naiara Rodriguez-Ezpeleta, AZTI
15:55 – 16:10	5. Hake dynamics from an ecosystem perspective - Dorleta Garcia, AZTI
16:10 – 16:25	Q&A Session
16:25 – 16:40	Coffee break
16:40 – 16:55	6. AC presentation - Jean-Marie Robert, NWWAC Vice-Chair
16 :55 – 18 :20	7. Discussion & Feedback from AC members
18:20 – 18:25	8. AOB & Next steps
18:25 – 18:30	9. Closing remarks - Jean-Marie Robert, NWWAC Vice-Chair

Terms of Reference

Background

- Long-standing NWWAC engagement on Northern hake management (since 2007)
- Early focus on replacing the recovery plan with a management plan
- Joint NWWAC/SWWAC opinions submitted in 2008 and 2009
- Additional NWWAC submission in 2013 (year TAC review)
- June 2023 NWWAC workshop on Northern hake management
- AZTI presentation and updates on VarMer Project (2025)

Ongoing Discussions & Challenges

- Key concerns raised by members:
 - Data gaps & area closures
 - Recruitment & predation
 - Biomass stability & baselines
 - Species interactions & juveniles
- Identified issues:
 - Disconnect between stock assessments & fishers' experience
 - Effects of vessel displacement & gear changes
 - Limits of current ICES models
 - Density dependence


Rationale for the Workshop

- Need for direct dialogue between scientists and industry
- Support ongoing research under the VarMer project
- Discuss pathways forward with the European Commission

Purpose of the Workshop

To bring together scientist and stakeholders to discuss in detail and progress the following issues:

- ICES advice:
 - Ecosystem factors as drivers of low recruitment and progress towards ecosystem-based fisheries management
 - Link between recruitment and SSB, particularly in light of historical high biomass between 2002–2019, and whether sufficient ecological and ecosystem data exist to explain these peaks and inform expectations for stabilisation around MSY or continued decline.
 - Densodependence in maturity and condition of the fish.
 - Integration of regulatory dynamics, including technical measures and closed/ prohibited fishing areas (e.g., VMEs), into stock evaluations, addressing data gaps on hake distribution in these areas.
- Explore whether regulatory changes since 2013 (e.g., quota exchanges, fishing authorisations) explain spatial differences in catch levels
- Concerns that MSY-based management under the NWW MAP may limit fishing opportunities and explore the potential role of density dependence for future management improvements
- Potential changes in catch composition for longline and gillnets through industry-provided information
- Different mesh sizes and implications
- Predator-prey dynamics and the impact of other species on hake recruitment, with particular attention to horse mackerel interactions and changes in juvenile hake distribution in the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay.
- How to achieve better biomass and recruitment



1. Welcome & introductions
Serge Larzabal, SWWAC WG Chair



Items 2-5. Presentations from AZTI



Q&A Session

Coffee break

16:25 – 16:40 CET

6. AC presentation

Jean-Marie Robert, NWWA Vice-Chair



Suggested guiding questions:

1. Over the last 10 years, did some regulations change the hake fishing activities ? In which way?
2. Over the last 10 years, has there been other changes in the fishing fleet, regarding the gears ?
3. Over the last 10 years, did some of your skippers observe some more biological changes regarding hake (zones, depths, eggs, size...)?



7. Discussion & Feedback from AC members





8. AOB & Next steps

9. Closing Remarks



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