

Science and the North Sea Regional Advisory Council

**Tuesday 20th March 2007
CPMR & Tuscany House
14, Rond Point Schuman
Brussels**

At its meeting in October 2006 in London, the NSRAC Demersal Working Group decided to establish a sub-group to consider how the NSRAC should interact with the ICES assessment working groups and ACFM to resolve the problems which were recurring each year with the assessments. It would go on to consider new proposals for consulting stakeholders which are emerging from ICES. It would also discuss wider issues of scientific advice in relation to the RACs.

The sub-group is being organised and funded as part of the SAFMAMS project. This project aims to draw insights on the most useful forms of scientific advice for marine environmental management.

Agenda

10:00 – 11:00

Introduction of the Participants

Description of the SAFMAMS project

Presentation: Review of Science and Stakeholder Involvement in the Production of Advice on Fisheries Management: Tony Hawkins.

11.00 – 12.30

Discussion: How can the overall system for producing expert advice in support of the CFP be improved?

13.30 – 14.30

Workshop: Improving the stock assessments. What can stakeholders and the RACs do to help?

15.00 – 16.00

Workshop: How can the RACs obtain the expert advice required to enable them to function effectively?

The North Sea Regional Advisory Council



Demersal Working Group Agreed Record of Meeting 20th October, 2006, London,

6.5 The chair of the Working Group pointed out that every year the NSRAC commented on the ACFM advice, and every year it had identified flaws in the advice and had called for improvements. He asked whether we should produce a WG paper on the improvements we wished to see to the assessments. We might, for example, come up with ways of improving both the landings and discard data through stronger collaboration with the fishing industry. Such initiatives would be a very significant step towards improving the assessments, which we all wanted to see. It was no longer satisfactory to have to draw attention to obvious flaws in the assessments from one year to the next – without any action to improve matters.

6.6 Poul Degnbol noted that the Commission was trying to allow more time for such discussions. In the near future, the RACs would be asked to comment on discussions between the Commission and ICES on changes to the timetable for the assessments. Advice would be prepared in June, based on the available information. The RACs and others would then have time to look more closely at the advice. Then, there might be small technical updates in October. There might be only a few cases where intense discussion would be necessary in October and November. ICES had held internal discussions on this. The Commission aimed to finalise the new arrangements before the end of 2008. Martin Pastoors confirmed that proposals had been made to ICES delegates that ACFM should discuss the North Sea stocks at a meeting in June, rather than October. ICES was also proposing to open up the advisory process. In his view there needed to be interaction with the RACs before the assessments issued from the system. A process was needed for this.

6.7 Chris Darby said that there were two separate issues; when the assessments were done, and their quality. The two were separate. If the assessments were done in May they could not make use of data from surveys done in the autumn. Fishers pointed out that there was a need for interaction with fishers at the Assessment Working Group level to improve the quality of the data and thereby improve the quality of the advice. Merely shifting the timing would not improve the quality. A change in the process of giving advice was required. Scientists and fishers agreed that the North Sea Commission Fisheries Partnership meetings with the WG had achieved a great deal. The benefits from those meetings were in danger of being lost. With respect to the timing, Michel Goujon's paper presented at a previous WG meeting had suggested that the timing should be different for different stocks.

6.8 The Demersal WG agreed that a small sub-group of scientists and other interests should be held as soon as possible to resolve the issue of how the RACs could contribute more effectively to improvements to the ICES assessments and advice. Following discussion over lunch, Tony Hawkins proposed that he should organise a meeting of a small sub-group, with funding from an EU Science & Society project he was engaged in. The sub-group would consider how the NSRAC should interact with the ICES assessment working groups and ACFM to resolve the problems which were recurring each year with the assessments. It would also consider new proposals for consulting stakeholders which are emerging from ICES. In return for funding the meeting, Tony would also wish to discuss wider issues of scientific advice in relation to the RACs. Michael Andersen, Michael Park, Douglas Beveridge, John Nichols, Chris Darby, Martin Pastoors, Pim Visser, Tom Pickerell and Euan Dunn expressed an interest in participating. The meeting is likely to take place in January. It is possible that there will be further consideration of these issues at the ICES Annual Science Conference in Helsinki next year.