

# ICES WGCHAIRS REPORT 2009

ICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ICES CM2009/ACOM:26

## Report of the Annual Meeting of Advisory Working Group Chairs (WGCHAIRS)

13–15 January 2009

Copenhagen, Denmark



**ICES**

International Council for  
the Exploration of the Sea

**CIEM**

Conseil International pour  
l'Exploration de la Mer

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## **1 Introduction**

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The Chair, Michael Sissenwine, welcomed the participants, the Agenda was adopted and each participant presented him/herself in a tour-de-table. The Agenda is given in Annex I and the list of participants in Annex II.

The Chair reviewed the outcome of the December 2008 ACOM meeting and drew the participants' attention to the guidelines that had been adopted at that meeting. These guidelines concern formulating advice and for organising the work in the various groups and lay down the basis for the work in 2009. The guidelines are not yet final and will evolve as we gain more experience with the new advisory system. Expert groups and everybody else involved were urged to comment and propose improvements to the working procedures.

The Chair of SCICOM introduced the reform of the science branch of ICES noting that the implementation plan will be finalized at the planned May 2009 meeting. The importance of good cooperation between the science and advisory branches of ICES was emphasized from both sides.

## 2 Review of activities in 2008

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The Chair reviewed the actions points from AMAWGC 2008. There have been activities on nearly all points but that in particular the move towards integrated advice is slow.

The Chair noted the benchmark process and the planned Joint meeting ICES-STEFC in January 2009 to define criteria for evaluation. ACOM will specify a way forward on how to handle evaluation of outstanding Harvest Control Rules. The ACOM leadership has accepted the message from the Expert Groups that they are overloaded and cannot deal with more tasks and the evaluation of a HCR is a major task.

The meeting reviewed the advisory 2008 process. The key points concerns were:

- 1) Reviews
  - 1.1) There is still a need to clarify the role of reviewers for stock assessment updates. The reviews of update fish stock assessments need to determine that results are reproducible, the Review Groups shall in this case not act like a benchmark group that consider the fundamental approach to the assessment.
  - 1.2) The Reviews that are inserted in the Assessment Reports will carry a "caveat" to indicate that they are constructive feedback from peers, but not necessarily superior to the Expert Group in terms of insights or validity.
- 2) Draft Advice
  - 2.1) According to Council decision, it is the responsibility of ADGs to draft advice. This is for practical reasons to facilitate the work of ACOM but also to promote integrated advice.
  - 2.2) There is a need to be more careful with the formulation of ToRs; these should be should be constructed to respond to requests for advice
  - 2.3) There is interest among EG members to see their work influencing the advice.
- 3) Stock annexes
  - 3.1) Biological information, etc. that does not change between years should also be in the Stock Annexes, also indicating the circumstances in which the methodology was made. Changes in circumstances can therefore also explain the need for benchmarks. In the Report, changes should be noted.
  - 3.2) Stock Annexes should be available online (not necessarily as annexed to the Reports).
  - 3.3) The format used by WGWIDE that uses a short format for the calculation/data part may be of interest for future Stock Annexes.

### 3 Enhanced integration and the ecosystem approach

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As mentioned in the Review of the 2008 activities progress towards an integrated advice has been slow. The participants are interested in pressing on towards this aim but also realize the heavy workload on in particular the fish stock assessment groups and that this workload makes adding new tasks difficult. The meeting made the following observations:

- Benchmark workshops are a mechanism to enhance integration and the ecosystem approach.
- Regional Ecosystem Descriptions should be maintained even if this needs to be done *ad hoc* in 2009. These descriptions should be taken into account in future advice to the extent this is scientifically justified.
- Workshops with managers/stakeholders to prepare “worked examples” of how “new science” might transition to advice could be a useful way forward (e.g. SGMixMan).

#### **4 Advisory strategy plan**

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The outline of the plan was presented by the Chair. There were some few comments which will be taken on in the final drafting of the plan to take place in spring 2009.



## 5 Plan 2009

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The general plan including special requests for the advisory work in 2009 was presented and commented. In this context the meeting reviewed the Table of Content for ICES Advice 2009. There were no changes.

ICES involvement with development of criteria and descriptors for 'Good Environmental Status' (GES) was presented. The first management group meeting would be held in a few days and there are still many unresolved issues. The participants were interested and offered the assistance of their groups where relevant.

Discussion continues on the type of advice to produce. SALY's (Same Advice as Last Year) are asked for in the ToR, This means that the Group is to run an assessment and unless the perception of the stock has changed significantly prepare a SALY. In case where there are mishaps, the ACOM leadership should be involved in the discussion and how best to proceed.

WGCHAIRS asked for an evaluation of the SALY principle.

Scientific support for area-based management is a growing advisory workload. The Chair said that ACOM leadership will consider establishing a special group to respond as a reasonable way forward.

Survey data for elasmobranchs have major problems with species identification, maturity and size ranges in historical data. WGIBTS will work on this problem in 2009, but more work is needed from laboratories.

Other issues that were discussed include:

- Format for recommendations within Expert Group Reports
- SUBFORMAT (new summary sheet for fisheries advice). This cannot be introduced for 2009-technically there is a need for a lead-in time. The Secretariat and the ACOM leadership promised to work with this issue in 2009.

Working documents: an archiving system for this would be good, this works on SharePoint. The Secretariat is looking at a way of keeping up a longer time period for availability of these documents. Indexing of reports and WD's would be desirable.

- The IBTS report is useful for the EGs and should be available in advance of the EGs (when possible) because of useful graphs and pictures.

## 6 Conclusion

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The discussion was lively, indicating that EG chairs found it interesting, maybe useful. The discussion tended to be “fishy”, but there were some energetic discussions on ecosystem issues (e.g. area based management).

Meetings of EG Chairs that support advice should continue, but the relationship of these meetings to similar meetings under consideration by SciCom need to be addressed to avoid redundancy and encourage integration.

Point on the Agenda for next year: list of IC priorities to be reviewed by the group of assessment chairs in conjunction with the DCR agenda item.

## Annex 1: Agenda for annual meeting of Advisory Working Group Chairs

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- Chair: Mike Sissenwine
  - Venue: ICES Headquarters, Copenhagen, Denmark
    - Plenum: 13 January (13–18)–14 January (9–16)
    - Split meeting: Environmental issues 14 January (16–18)
    - Fisheries Issues 14 January (16–18)–15 (9–14) January
- 1) Opening and welcome
  - 2) Adoption of agenda (Doc 1)
  - 3) Review of the December ACOM meeting (report)
  - 4) The new Science Structure and the first meeting of SciCom (report)
  - 5) Review action points from AMAWGC 2008 (report) (Doc 4)
  - 6) Advisory structure-Experience in the first year, lessons learned (discussion)
  - 7) Enhancing integration and the ecosystem approach (discussion)
    - Benchmarks role for promoting integrated assessments
    - Spatial planning-Addressing requests on spatial including evaluation of proposals for NATURA 2000 sites (Doc 6)
    - Integrated advice for ICES regions (e.g. Baltic/Barents Sea) incl.
    - Pilot plan for the implementation of mixed fisheries-based advice in the North Sea (Doc 5)
    - Information about the EU request on MSFD
    - Integrated Advice (Environmental Ecosystem Overviews)-what should be done post WGRED (action)
  - 8) Advice Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup>
  - 9) Implementation/updating of precautionary limit reference points and potential target reference points
  - 10) Recommendations to yourself, to other groups, to work during the next year, etc.
  - 11) Workplan and Guidelines for 2009 (Doc 7)
    - Special Requests (Doc 14)
    - Table of Content for the ICES Advisory report 2009-Chapters and items (Doc 11)
    - Identification of contributions of EG's (Doc 8)
    - Guidelines (Doc 9, 10)
  - 12) Split meeting (see below)

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<sup>1</sup> Subsumes former agenda items on “Novel science and its potential for improving advice”, “ACOM initiatives for establishing links between science and advisory branches”, and “Improving links between Science and Advice.”

- 13 ) AOB
- 14 ) Closing

### **Split meeting**

#### **Environment and ecological items-14 January 2009 (16–18)**

- 1 ) Table of Content of EG reports
- 2 ) Special Requests
- 3 ) Links between EG's and data collection: quality assurance?

#### **Fish Stock Assessment EG's 14 January (16–18) and 15 January 2009 (9–14)**

- 1 ) Table of Contents of Assessment Working Group reports in 2009
- 2 ) Special Requests
- 3 ) Review the links between assessment working groups and the PGCCDBS on the coordination and prioritization of data sampling, and documentation
- 4 ) Review developments in stock assessment methodology in relation to the implementation in the Assessment Working Groups (Doc 13)
- 5 ) Stock Annexes
- 6 ) Benchmarks
- 7 ) Collecting emerging issues from update assessment
- 8 ) Evaluation of management plans (cooperation with STECF)
- 9 ) SUBFORMAT-report (Doc 12a, b, c)

## Annex 2: List of participants

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## Annex 3: Chairman's Brief Summary

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### INFORMATION EXCHANGE

- Action items from the December 2008 ACOM meeting were reviewed. No major concerns were raised.
- There was a briefing on the first meeting of SciCom. WGCHAIRS was pleased to be kept informed.
  - It was noted that scientists in most national laboratories had not been briefed recently.
  - There does not seem to be a lot of tension or nervousness as a result of the changes, but there are uncertainties; e.g., will expert groups report during the ASC?
  - [They will although the details will not be decided until the May meeting of SciCom]
- The report of AWAWCG 2008 were introduced.
  - There were many good ideas.
  - Some positive steps have been taken to address some of them, but others are not feasible, or no longer applicable.

### 2008 Experience

The key points concerns:

1. Reviews-
  - There is still a need to clarify the role of reviewers for stock assessment updates. They need to determine that results are reproducible, not act like a benchmark.
  - Need to “caveat” reviews that are appended to WG reports to indicate that they are constructive feedback from peers, but not necessarily superior to the Expert Group in terms of insights or validity.

### 2008 Experience

The key points concerns:

2. Draft Advice-
  - According to Council decision, it is the responsibility of ADGs to draft advice in order to facilitate integration.
  - ToRs should be constructed to respond to requests for advice.
  - If EGs prepare concise and focused text, tabular material, and figures that respond to ToRs, their work will have a clear impact on advice.

### ENHANCED INTEGRATION AND THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

- Benchmark workshops are a mechanism to enhance integration and the ecosystem approach.
- Scientific support for area based management is a growing advisory workload. Establishing a special group to respond is a reasonable way forward.
- MSFD- EG should be consulted to get their scientific input.

### ENHANCED INTEGRATION AND THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

- Regional Ecosystem Descriptions should be maintained even if this needs to be done ad hoc in 2009. They should be taken into account in future advice to the extent this is scientifically justified.
- Workshops with managers/stakeholders to prepare “worked examples” of how “new science” might transition to advice could be a useful way forward (e.g., SGMixMan)

### Comments Invited

- Draft Advice Strategy
- Format for recommendations within Expert Group Reports
- Table of Content for ICES Advice 2009
- Guidelines
- SUBFORMAT (new summary sheet for fisheries advice)
- .....

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

- The discussion was lively, indicating that EG chairs found it interesting, maybe useful
- The discussion tended to be “fishy”, but there were some energetic discussions on ecosystem issues (e.g., area based management).
- Meetings of EG Chairs that support advice should continue, but the relationship of these meetings to similar meetings under consideration by SciCom need to be addressed to avoid redundancy and encourage integration.