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A POSSIBLE REORGANIZATION OF THE ASSESSMENTS IN THE NORTHERN PART  
OF THE ICES AREA

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Based mainly on discussions in the Working Group on Cod Stocks off East Greenland and the Saithe Working Group, ACFM considered during its May meeting proposals for possible reorganization of some of the assessments in the northern part of the ICES area, and would like these proposals to be considered by the Council at the 73rd Statutory meeting.

The Working Group on Cod Stocks off East Greenland has drawn the attention to the problems in assessing the two cod stocks at Greenland separately. The Group suggests that NAFO and ICES explore the possibility of a combined assessment. ACFM felt that an informal arrangement between NAFO and ICES may solve this problem.

The Saithe Working Group addressed two questions, firstly the question of how to organize within a Working Group the assessment of a stock fished by only one nation, and secondly the desirability of assessing the saithe stocks together with other demersal species in the different areas.

Although there are ways of dealing with the "single-nation" question which would ensure broader scientific involvement in those assessments within the present Working Group structure, there is a possibility for a reorganization which could both alleviate the "single-nation problem" and bring stocks together which are exploited by the same fishing fleets. The reorganization could take the following form:

1. Re-establish the North-Western Working Group which existed until 1976. This Group could assess the demersal stocks at Iceland and Faroe. Its links to the East Greenland assessments have to be further considered.
2. Move North Sea and West of Scotland saithe to the North Sea Roundfish Working Group and Arctic Saithe to the Arctic Fisheries Working Group.
3. If possible, it could be considered to move the redfish and Greenland halibut stocks to the new North-Western Working Group and the Arctic Fisheries Working Group.

One could as a start take step 1 and 2, or all three steps could be taken together. In the latter case, the number of Working Groups would be reduced by one and the chances of maintaining an active international membership in the Working Groups would further improve.

ACFM did not at its May meeting take any firm standpoint, but agreed that the proposals should be brought to the attention of ICES delegates and scientists concerned in order to consider it further during the Statutory meeting.