

MINUTES OF THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

ICES
26 October – 4 November 1999

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International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
Conseil International pour l'Exploration de la Mer

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1 MINUTES 26 OCTOBER 1999

The Chair Tore Jakobsen (Norway) opened the meeting at 10:05 a.m., welcomed the participants and introduced himself. The Fisheries Adviser welcomed the participants to ICES HQ and mentioned a number of practicalities. He drew attention to the recommendation made at the ASC in Stockholm that the moratorium on the release of the ACFM advice was now until Monday midday, replacing the former 48 hours moratorium previously observed.

The agenda and time table was adopted with two modifications: redfish in Irminger Sea was moved from Sub-group III to Sub-group IV and a short plenary each morning at approximately 9:00 - 9:15 was added to the time table. The Chair thanked Jake Rice (Sub-group III) and Rob Stephenson (Sub-group IV) for their willingness to chair the two Sub-groups.

Those chairs of the Assessment Working Groups who were present were asked to review TORs for 2000 for their group and report back to the ACFM chair if they found lack of clarity or topics missing. He encouraged ACFM members to take a look at the recommendations of the LRC, RMC and ACFM that were available and asked that Marine Habitat Recommendations should be produced for ACFM considerations.

Concerning the PA reference points the chair reminded the committee that there were three situations. After discussion it was concluded to present these situations in the report as follows

- 1) Management has adopted a set of reference points, e.g., through an action plan or a harvest control rule:
 - a) These reference points are presented in Management objectives identifying their origin and in the table under Reference points. If these reference points are not considered to be in accordance with the precautionary approach this will be stated in a sentence under Management objectives with a short explanation why. The explanation will be further elaborated under Elaboration and Special Comment
- 2) ICES has proposed a set of reference points (mainly in 1998) but these have not been adopted by management. Revisiting the reference points in 1999 produced different values but the basis (apart from adding an extra year of data) has not changed, i.e., the assessment and unchanged historic database
 - a) Under management objectives: "No explicit management objective has been established for this stock".
 - b) Under Reference points: "ICES proposed reference points in 1998."
 - c) Under Elaboration and Special Comment: As the last paragraph repeats the table with the proposed reference points from 1998. The new calculations are not presented.
- 3) ICES has not proposed reference points, the basis for the assessment has changed (revision of database, new conception of the stock structure or productivity) or re-analysis suggests very different values from those previously proposed, (this last point is essentially that there was an error in the previous calculations).
 - a) Under management objectives: No explicit management objective has been established for this stock.
 - b) Under Reference points: ICES proposes the following reference points followed by the table. If these replace reference points previously proposed then include an explanation of why the reference points have been changed.
 - c) Under Elaboration and Special Comment: a detailed explanation of why previous reference points are considered no longer to be valid.

As a general policy ACFM has previously decided not to change proposed reference points unless there are specific arguments and the new reference points represent major changes. Adding the data of one year will in general not be sufficient cause for changing the reference points.

This discussion was concluded by noting that the PA system proposed by ICES still required further explanations to the users and stakeholders. The chair concluded that it would be appropriate to discuss what should be the next step in explaining the PA and said that he intended to slot such a discussion in, on the final day of the ACFM.

The Plaice box was briefly discussed. It was noted that there was no formal request for an evaluation of the effects (either on the fisheries or on the stocks) of this measure but also that ACFM on its own initiative should comment on this report. The chair of WGNSSK informed ACFM that the WG had dealt with this report and that the WG report would be helpful to ACFM in formulating its comments.

It was decided to deal with the EC-Norway special request on reference points and medium term projections for mackerel, and North Sea saithe, cod, haddock and whiting in a single section after the North Sea stocks with a reference from the Mackerel (under widely migrating stocks). The Norwegian request for medium term projections for NEA haddock and cod was missing from the List of Contents.

There was a discussion on how the medium term and the reference points are to be calculated. Kevin Stokes noted that reference points can either be taken as having an intrinsic interpretation or whether the criteria is their management performance. This discussion was not concluded.

In closing the meeting the chair reminded the presenters and the reviewers of their duties. In particular, while the presenters take notes and introduce the needed amendments and corrections in the draft ACFM report, one of the reviewers would be responsible for taking this draft to plenum in the second week of ACFM. He also reminded the presenters on their duties to produce sections of the Technical Minutes where appropriate.

2 MINUTES 27 OCTOBER 1999

The chair opened plenum at 09:00 a.m. He reviewed the progress of the two Sub-groups. Sub-group III was slightly behind schedule while Sub-group IV was on time. However, the review of a redfish survey in the Irminger Sea had been moved from Sub-group III to Sub-group IV.

It was noted that in the case where the F is outside safe biological limits while SSB is inside, the phrase to be used is "the stock is harvested inside/outside safe biological limits" as opposed "the stock is inside/outside" when both reference points are inside/outside. If the F is inside and SSB outside then the phrase is "The stock is currently outside safe biological limits while being harvested inside safe biological limits". The latter situation does not occur very often.

Changing reference points was again discussed. It was agreed that the reference points previously adopted would be changed only if there were compelling reasons, e.g. changes in the database or the perception of the stock (biological model). The changes should be introduced on a case-by-case basis where, in particular taking the magnitude of the change into account. A key point is to maintain the ratio to be in the right direction (e.g. overexploited leads to reduce the catch) between the reference point and the actual estimate.

3 MINUTES 28 OCTOBER 1999

The chair opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and the Sub-group chairs reported on the progress that their groups had made. Both groups were slightly behind schedule.

The sub-group chairs raised the following general points:

1. It was debated whether the advice should be formulated positively (achieving a target) or negatively (avoiding a stock collapse). It was agreed that in general the positive attitude should be used. There were numerous interventions. It was also agreed that the graphs showing probability plots should be standardised and be given the positive flavour, presenting probability of achieving the target.
2. The status of the stock may be different based on the average of F s of three most recent years compared to the estimate of the current year. The general statement in the text under -State of Stock and Fisheries- should be based on the most recent estimates both for F and for SSB . Any difference between the evaluation of F relative to F_{pa} based on the three most recent years and the most recent estimate should be explained in the stock summaries and not only in the introduction. If the projection suggests that the stock (SSB) will be outside safe biological limits in the short run this should be referred to explicitly in the text.
3. The definition of the F_{pa} and B_{pa} should include the assessment uncertainty however, when F_{med} or B_{loss} are used then this is less clear as the calculation basis is different. The basis for using F_{med} is that this value is believed to be far away from F_{lim} .

4. The terminology " *F-status quo*" is unfortunate as this is (may not be) the *status quo* of the most recent year in fact it is the most recent three-year average. Where a trend exists in F, this "*status quo*" is therefore not the true projection of the most recent year *status quo*. However, ACFM decided to maintain the terminology that is well established.
5. Guidelines to ACFM should be updated (blue pages)
6. The discussion on change of reference points were re-opened in the light of perceived bias in some of the North Sea round fish stocks. Such biases are normally not included in the simulations and therefore not in the calculations that form the basis for the proposed reference points. Sub-group III suggested to change the reference points to reflect these uncertainties. This would increase B_{pa} while leaving B_{lim} unchanged. It was noted that the bias of 20 % that is suggested by the Sub-group may be a serious under estimation of the uncertainty. The actual estimates of CV are often not 20 % but rather around 100%. It was concluded that the perception of a bias in the assessment was not so well founded that this would warrant a change in the reference points
7. Remind ACFM on strategy with respect to recruitment in 1999. The recruitment plot should show this point with a different symbol to the rest. The 1999 recruitment estimate should be given in the table.

4 MINUTES 29 OCTOBER 1999

The chair opened the plenary at 9:00 a.m.

Both chairs reported that progress was a little slower than hoped for but both expected to finish that day.

Plenum discussed and decided on three minor points:

1. The medium term request (Mackerel, North Sea Cod, Haddock, Whiting and Saithe) by EC-Norway will be prepared as a single answer to this request and the mackerel answer will be integrated together with the North Sea stocks. In the Mackerel section there will be a reference to where the answer to the Mackerel simulations are found. Sub-group III will take the lead on this.
2. The possibility of bias in the North Sea roundfish assessments was again discussed. In accordance with the decision made by ACFM on the previous day the reference points are left unchanged. It was now discussed if the advice should take any bias into account, the value of 20% (overestimating biomass and underestimating F) was suggested. The conclusions of the plenum discussions should be effectively communicated to the WGNSK.
3. The "Shading policy" applied to the catch options tables will be dealt systematically. Shading will follow the assessment and not take any perceived bias into account.
4. The EC-Norway special request discusses medium term projection in the time horizon of 3-5 years, while ACFM use 10 years in its medium term projections. To avoid confusion it was decided that the heading in catch option table should be labelled Medium Term (10 years). In the same table (Catch Options) the use of phrases like "high probability" should be replaced by giving the value explicitly, e.g. 95%, 90% etc. similar "low probability" should be specified as 5%, 10% etc.

5 MINUTES 30 OCTOBER 1999

The chair opened the meeting on 9:05 a.m.. The chairs of the sub-groups reported that they expected to finish by the end of the Saturday.

The ACFM chair reminded AWG chairs that they review TORs for 2000 and discuss problems with him.

The ACFM chair recalled the discussions in RMC at the ASC 1999 concerning a possible Methods WG. It was his opinion that such a group was needed but also, in accordance with the discussions in CONC, that the TORs needs to be further developed and a chair be identified. There was support in the Committee for this point of view. It was remarked that there are at least two EC financed concerted actions that are relevant in this context: 1) on general assessment (contact point Øyvind Ulltang, Univ. Bergen, Norway and 2) on medium term projections (contact point Kenneth Patterson, Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen). The TORs of a Methods WG should fit in with these and other ongoing

initiatives. There were no specific proposals at this point in time but the chair of RMC (Rob Stephenson) would work on this with a view to have a proposal for CONC in June 2000.

Perceived biases in some assessments were once again brought to plenum and discussed. The ACFM chair presented a brief overview of the retrospective patterns presented to this meeting. There are examples of both over and under estimates. He mentioned that for arctic saithe a bias correction would have been inappropriate according to a retrospective analysis. There is a serious problem identifying when to correct and where not to correct. The bias problem seems not only to be related to VPA based methods; it is also seen in RCT3. There seems to be situations where we are rather clear about the reasons for a bias and therefore are able to correct the assessment model. It was mentioned that a common reason is technology creeping into the CPUE data for commercial fleets. A short-term solution to this problem (to be replaced by estimates of the technological creeping) is to use taper weighting in the VPA. Bias will also influence the PA reference points. The influences vary as to whether the reference points are based on a F-med philosophy, a B-loss or simulations based on a S_R relationship

ICES responsibility was discussed from the starting point that it is the scientists (AWG) responsibility to evaluate if the perception of a bias in the assessment is well founded. It is the responsibility of ACFM to judge if this perception should be included in the advice. ICES should in this evaluation be objective (as possible) and it is up to managers to be precautionary. It would be irresponsible of ICES to ignore the bias if this conclusion is considered well founded and the scientists are probably in a better position to make that judgement than the managers. It was discussed to what extent the PA procedures take bias sufficiently into account. It was recognised that the procedures used at present do not take bias into account and that perhaps the PA reference points should not do so either.

We should also be aware that if we now say that our assessments are biased and if we reject them based on this, then what we advised in the past years has been useless as well.

ACFM was reminded that problems like Tapering, technological creeping in commercial fleets, influence of environment variability on stock productivity, etc. are scientific issues that should be pursued in cooperation with the science committees in particular RMC.

The conclusion of the discussion was a reconfirmation of the discussion that was held on the first day: we do not fiddle around with the assessment to correct for the bias. In cases where we have long time trends and maybe a likely reason for the bias we could consider correcting for it. In summary;

- 1) Decide if the assessment can be accepted or not. Decide if the assessment reflects trends only or whether also the absolute estimates are useful.
- 2) If the assessment is accepted then this is the basis for "state of the stock" and "catch option table".
- 3) Bias should be judged on a case by case basis. Basis should be commented upon in **the Elaboration and Special Comment**. In those few cases (if any) when the evidence of a bias is very strong this bias is included in the **Advice**.

6 MINUTES PLENUM 1-4 NOVEMBER

ACFM plenum was opened on Monday 1 November at 9:00 a.m. with Tore Jakobsen in the chair. He welcomed the NAFO observer Michael Kingsley, Greenland. The chair announced that he would discuss the order in which the stocks would be addressed by the two Sub-group chairs over lunch and then prepare a list.

The Minutes of the ACFM consultations in Stockholm were approved without any comments. The Fisheries Adviser updated ACFM on the progress with the interagency meeting on use of PA terminology, now decided to be on 15-17 February 2000. The involved organisations are FAO, NAFO and ICES. ICCAT have been invited to this meeting but have not yet responded.

ACFM and Assessment Working Group Issues - Working Protocol

ACFM had at the consultations moved haddock in Divisions VIIb-k to Southern Shelf Assessment Group. In response to this, the chair of WGSSDS had pointed out that while this change made sense in a fisheries content the key assessment problem is to resolve differences in age reading between laboratories in Ireland and in Northern Ireland. The age reading expertise on haddock was in the Northern Shelf Assessment Working Group and he therefore found that the transfer of the haddock stock was less well considered. ACFM decided to undo its move of this stock and re-assigned it back to the Northern Shelf WG. Furthermore, ACFM asked WGNSSDS to resolve the age reading problem. When this

has been achieved the stock should be assessed by WGSSDS. TORs for the Southern Shelf and Northern Shelf Assessment WG should be amended accordingly.

ACFM asked its Chair to send a letter to the WG chairs asking them as part of the identification of assessment problems and deficiencies to make prioritised lists and identify tasks of high priority to improve the assessments. This will be fed back to ACFM, LRC and RMC and would help to focus the work of the committees.

ACFM decided that the dates for the October ACFM should be 24 - 28 October for the Sub-groups while the draft recommendations had 25 -28 October. This was an oversight in Stockholm.

The Chair of the Mackerel WG Ken Patterson had informed ACFM that he is stepping down because he will shortly take up a new post in EC-Bruxelles. In that capacity he will no longer be available as chair. ACFM wishing him luck with his new post noted that this possibility had already been discussed in WGMHSA and that the WG had proposed Dankert Skagen, Norway. He is available and was nominated. The nomination was left open until Wednesday morning. When there will be a formal nomination. There will be an election of the new chair on Thursday afternoon.

Concerning the NWWG TORs the WG Chair considered that the TOR concerning the Redfish (oceanic) may be changed in the light of the discussion in ACFM on this stock. This will be considered on Thursday.

CGADV follow-up

Robin Cook informed ACFM on the discussions of the CGADV report from May 1999 that took place in the Delegates meeting at the ASC 1999.. The CGADV proposal for a single advisory structure had not won the approval by the Delegates and instead they had decided to establish a Bureau WG. This group shall work between now and the next ASC after which time a proposal will be put to a vote among the Delegates. CGADV still exists but its TORs are now confined to scooping requests for advice and coordinating the ICES advisory function within the present structure.

A long discussion on the structure of the advisory process followed. There were several interventions that recognised that the structure issue was now dealt with outside ACFM. While the ACFM Chair should try to influence this process it was found more rewarding now to concentrate on the internal ACFM procedures and in cooperation with ACME to establish more smoothly working procedures for ecosystem advice within the present advisory structure.

Concerning the internal working procedures for ACFM. Rob Stephenson suggested two main issues to be discussed 1) Remove the peer review from ACFM (but maintain it in another form) and 2) define request for advice from client better and do not use the assessment working groups as the only mean within the ICES structure to provide the background documentation for formulating the advice. It was also noted that the procedure adopted for the producing in 2000 the NASCO advice and the IBSFC cod review represent a new approach to formulate advice to clients.

The Chair concluded that he together with the Secretariat would develop a proposal for procedural changes for consideration at the May 2000 ACFM meeting.

SCICOM and ASC Theme reports

RMC: The RMC Chair (Rob Stephenson) drew attention to that COMFIE (WGCOMP) was split into a Fishery System (TORs adopted and meeting planned in June 2000) and a the Methods WG (not adopted, TORs need more elaboration before it will again be discussed in CONC). Benoit Mesnil noted that the use of C/E data in tuning and technological creeping were very much discussed at this ACFM meeting. These could be appropriate topics for a meeting of a Methods WG.

LRC There was no specific comments.

Robin Cook noted that parent committee of survey WGs was chosen somewhat at random and he urged ACFM to reflect on a system of parent committees for these WGs that could be discussed in May.

Rob Stephenson drew attention to that Ecosystem advice was discussed in several SCICOM, notably MHC and the Baltic Committee where the test case of the Baltic system is taken forward.

Jake Rice informed on the Biodiversity Minisymposium to be held at the ASC 2000 (he is co-chairing with Mark Tasker).

Theme sessions reports were opened for comments. There was no comments

Introductory Items for the ACFM report

The Chair invited suggestions for topics that should be dealt in the Introduction to the ACFM report. The following points were made for topics to be covered in the Introduction to the ACFM report

1. *Reference points.* It was found that ACFM needs a policy on when to introduce/revise reference points. This should be done when significant changes in the assessment have taken place, i.e. new consideration of the stock population dynamics, revision of data series, etc. Update of an assessment with just another year of data would not be sufficient. ACFM would have to accept that numerical values for reference points would be derived from past assessments.
2. *Form of ACFM advice* There is still a need for further explanation of the PA reference point system derived by ICES. A particular point that was brought up was the need to explain the use of B_{loss} as an appropriate proxy of B_{pa} . This relate to formulating advice for a region in either F or SSB where the stock dynamics are unknown. ACFM considers that this is appropriate and would prefer a text to explain this in more details.

Procedure on intersessional work (QSR 2000, SGFIRENS, Effect of Trawl fishing on benthos communities (Lindeblom-de Groot report)) and ACFM Working Protocol

The Environmental Adviser informed ACFM that the draft for OSPAR QSR 2000 was delayed and will not be available until 20 December 1999. This is after the meeting of WGECO. Therefore, the proposed procedure needs revision. The ACFM Chair agreed to discuss this with the Chair of WGECO, FA and EA. For the two other items (SGFIRENS and Lindeblom-de Groot report) the proposed procedure was adopted.

Working Protocol.

It is recognised that management commissions wants the advice to be timelier. ACFM dealt with this issue at the consultations and proposed a working protocol that will allow the wishes of NASCO and IBSFC to be better met than previously and at the same time would respond to the needs of Iceland and the Faroe Islands. It is expected that the number of requests for more timely advice will increase and that ICES acceptance of the IBSFC cod in-year revision request is likely to be used as precedence, i.e. that ICES shall respond positively to such requests. However, it is recognised that providing advice mid-October as desired by NEAFC, EC and the Norwegian-Russian Commission will be much more difficult, in particular the advice for the North Sea stocks will be difficult or impossible to provide before the end of October. It was recognised that more use of intersessionally produced advice would help substantially. A number of problems with such a working procedure were however recognised.

It was clear from the outset that the full ACFM should be involved in formulating advice. It was equally clear that the science underpinning the advice must be of the highest quality and must be properly reviewed. It was recognised by several interventions that it would be difficult to operate with commitments by individual scientists but that providing human resources and data for the assessment work must be commitments made by institutions.

A number of issues were discussed:

Northeast Arctic Saithe. The advice on this stock is made at the October ACFM meeting. There is a November survey of which the assessment should take account, this survey is after the October ACFM. The possibility of including the survey results in the assessment has received more attention than previously because recent research suggest that the commercial CPUE series are not reliable as stock indicators and thus the assessment now depends more on the survey results than previously was the case. ICES is requested to find ways to include this survey in its advice next year. An alternative might be to have ACFM to look at the saithe assessment in May if the management agency is prepared to accept an in-season revision of the TAC. The idea is to set a preliminary TAC based on the standard assessment in October followed by an updated advice once the survey becomes available.

It was questions what the rational was for considering saithe intersessionally. The problem mainly stems from last years experience that the survey changed the advice quite significantly. However, it was noted that the state of the stock would not change but that the projection of the corresponding catch depends very much on the survey results.

General Discussion. In-season revisions of the advice (e.g. as requested by IBSFC and Norway) may be more numerous than hitherto and this can cause significant extra workload on the AWGs and ACFM. It is a trade-off between meeting

customers' wishes and our own working procedures and available resources. ACFM recognised the risk that if managers are unhappy with an advice they may ask ICES again should new surveys give more optimistic views.

The comments was in particular in relation to the IBSFC request, the NASCO issues are considered to represent a special class of advice and ACFM saw less problem with prejudice ICES response to future requests for in-season revisions.

Management agencies have been encouraged to come up with action plans and HCRs. The procedure should be evaluated in cooperation with the management authorities.

Benoit Mesnil proposed to separate the state of advice from the formulation of the TAC advice. He observed that while the state of the stock in most cases could be assessed with confidence without the results of the most recent survey the TAC advice should include this information. Hjalti i Jakubstuvu noted that this did not only apply to saithe but also to the Norwegian Spring Spawners and a number of other stocks. The Fisheries adviser noted that there were a number surveys in the summer that need be taken into account when calculating the TAC advice.

The ACFM Chair drew attention to the text presented by the former ACFM Chair (J.J. Maguire). He appreciated the insight provided by J.J. Maguire and found his paper very useful. However, he did not find a discussion very fruitful at this moment simply because there were no new elements that had not been reviewed previously at great pain and in details. Together any ACFM member that would like to participate he would with the assistance of the Secretariat to work out a proposal for discussion at the next ACFM meeting.

CONC Chair identified three key issues in the coming discussion:

- Institutional commitments
- Compensation to home laboratories for providing chairs
- Regionalisation of the advisory process

North Sea Conference EcoQO workshop September 1999.

It was noted ICES should take a more proactive attitude to these problems. RMC Chair drew attention to the Fishery System WG as a forum for such discussions.

ACFM/ACME Sand eel request.

The Environment Adviser explained the process and told ACFM that ACME had discussed this advice again in Stockholm and here agreed to clarify the text that was originally issued in June. The clarification was that the reference point "0.5 chicks per well built nest" used for closing the sand eel fishery in a sector was to be calculated as a running three-year average. Reopening the fishery referred to individual years. The revised text on the ICES homepage has been updated.

The process that ACFM and ACME went through in establishing this advice was very cumbersome and in some parts lacked transparency. The process created a significant amount of agony. All parties agree that the procedure needs to be simplified and to become more transparent.

Size of the Workgroup Reports

The Chair noted that WG reports had increased in volume and he suggested that an analysis of the content in relation to the readership would be useful. The discussion on the size and content of the reports is linked to the discussion of the working procedures as the appropriate format of a WG report depends on who are the users. ACFM could immediately identify two key users inside the advisory process: the WG members and the ACFM reviewers. It is however also the only form in which details of the assessments are available and if only for the sake of transparency the information given in the AWG reports must be readily available also outside the inner ICES circles. With respect to the use made by ACFM. Jake Rice found that the documentation available needs to be very complete and that a high degree of details is required. He found the discussion of the format (electronic, printed) useful. Rob Stephenson noted that the WG report is the major depository of information but also that there is a need for better organisation (format) of the reports

Kevin Stokes underlined the need for internal reviews and certification. In particular he found that the process needs to be transparent.

The "Blue Pages" giving guidance to the Working groups need to be updated.

Input from outside readers on what information they want to find in the report and elsewhere would be required to identify the needs. It is possible to make information available to ACFM and the WG on other forms than printing, e.g. on the ICES homepage. It was recognised that the size of the reports was partly in response to explicit request for tables and figures made by ACFM. An intervention suggested that an intermediate level between the WG report and the Stock summary is missing e.g. in the form of an Executive Summary highlighting the major changes and new elements compared to last years assessment. It was noted that this is often included in the presentations made by the chairs to the ACFM Sub-groups but it was also considered that the intermediate level is not practical with the present workload. Jesper Boje noted that the WG report principally is written for ACFM.

There were two proposals for additional information in the reports that would be useful: 1) tabulations of assumptions made in the assessments between years pointing out differences and 2) Specification of the medium term calculation, basis and input data. Jake Rice informed ACFM that MHC asks for executive summaries

It was again noted that the time between WG meeting and the ACFM meeting is very short making it very trying to review the reports. This point was made in particular for the WGNSSK and WGSSDS. In particular it is important that the reviewers get a draft of the report as early as possible.

Quality Procedures

The Fisheries Adviser gave a short introduction to the paper on the Handbook and Manual quality procedures. He explained that this document was prepared in response to CGADV work on the advisory process. The development of these documents should be seen together with the discussion of the Working Protocol and Procedures. There were a number of specific questions but no substantive discussion.

Formulation of Advice - Stock Summary Sheets

General: Having visited the discussion of formulation of the advice under several stocks ACFM concluded that the advice should be based on F levels equal to or below F_{pa} (F_{lim} and B_{lim} are not management reference points). For situations when the current F is below F_{pa} ACFM saw a need to define a consistent strategy for formulating advice. This would depend on the status of the SSB and could be

- 1) $F = F_{pa}$ ($SSB > B_{pa}$)
- 2) Rebuilt to B_{pa} immediately through a reduction of F (SSB is slightly below B_{pa})
- 3) Rebuilding of the SSB in the longer run. There are examples when it is not possible to rebuild in the short term. This is the situation when a rebuilding plan is required.

Time frame for medium term projections: There was also discussion of whether medium term projections should be for 10 or 5 years. It was realised that the projection and also the percentages fractiles were quite uncertain and that 10 years would probably be a too long time horizon. The catch option table is modified to include a 5 year projection, to be introduced in all the catch option tables (Mackerel, Cod, Haddock, Whiting, Saithe - North Sea)

Widely distributed stock

Eel: The SG had brought nothing new and it would only be possible to repeat the advice from 1998. ACFM noted that the SG would deal with American eels at its meeting in 2000. Finally ACFM considered that the view of the Aquaculture group may be able to contribute and the cooperation with ACME should be sought.

There was a discussion on the TORs where the SGEel Chair Willem Dekker (Netherlands) had suggested that the TORs be expanded to also include European aspects. However, the Chair of the 2000 Meeting (Larry Marshall, Canada) preferred to concentrate the TORs on the American problems and ACFM concluded that it would not change the TORs.

Mackerel: The assessment was accepted as basis for the advice. The major part of the discussion took place around the special requests and in particular on the changes in the migration patterns. It was accepted that there has been a shift in the migration pattern and that West mackerel now remains in the North Sea until February. The advice on changing the dates for fishing mackerel in the North Sea was therefore changed to 1 February.

Western Horse Mackerel: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any substantial discussion.

Demersals in Division IIIa

Sand eel The proposal made by the Sub-group was accepted without comments:

Norway Pout: The proposal made by the Sub-group was accepted without comments

Whiting IIIa: The draft was accepted, ACFM considered that the Committee needed to revisit this stock in the light of the discussion on the North Sea Stock. The key element in such a revisit was the need for consistency in the advice.

Plaice IIIa: The discussion was on definition of F_{pa} . This reference point was adopted based on F_{med} .

North Sea

North Sea Cod: Long discussions on whether the assessment is subject to a bias or not. The assumed bias would be to underestimate F and overestimate SSB . ACFM found that it is quite uncertain if there is a bias but certainly there is tendency. ACFM concluded that the advice shall be based on the assumption that the assessment is not subject to a bias of the form described above but that there is a strong suspicion that the assessment is over-optimistic.

Simulation results should be included in the Technical Minutes (5 years medium term projection)

The proposed text for advice was

ICES advises that to prevent further reduction in the SSB in the short term F is reduced to 0.55 this corresponds to a catch in 2000 of less than 92 3000 tons. To rebuild SSB to B_{pa} in the short term (2001) requires a reduction of the F_{sq} to 40 % of the F_{sq} corresponding to a catch in 2000 of less than 73 400 tons.

Haddock IV: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Whiting IV and VIId: The F reference points are not considered reliable based on the low recruitment and while there is no knowledge on B_{pa} ACFM felt certain that the F_{pa} is too high.

For the North Sea Roundfish in general ACFM considered that there is a need to develop a management plan (rebuilding plan). This involves a number of fisheries (other roundfish and *nephrops*). The objectives of rebuilding SSB of several groundfish stocks can only be achieved by regulating effort in other fisheries and not through TAC alone.

Saithe IIIa, IV and VI: ACFM had no comments to this assessment and the proposed formulation of advice from the Sub-group.

Plaice IV: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes. Under this topic there was a discussion of the shading policy in the ACFM report. This discussion was taken up in the light of the management on a target F (=0.3) for North Sea Plaice. The conclusion was that shading practice would not be influenced by management agreements but also that the F level decided upon by management should be part of the catch option table.

Sole IV: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Sand eel: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes. The NSSKWG was asked to consider why M is not varying by age in the assessment.

Norway Pout: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes. The NSSKWG was asked to consider a multispecies assessment where Norway pout would be a central element.

Pandalus: The assessment had been updated with results from the autumn survey. This confirmed the general indications obtained through the assessment made without this survey result and ACFM recommended a decrease in TAC compared to the advice provide last year.

Northeast Arctic

Cod: There were a number of uncertainties recognised in this assessment. These uncertainties were related to 1) varying growth, varying recruitment and cannibalism as a significant part of the natural mortality on the juveniles. However, in spite of these uncertainties ACFM found that the assessment was of sufficient quality to warrant an advice with a very significant reduction of the TAC. The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Haddock: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Saithe: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes. It was noted that survey results

Capelin: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes. ACFM was uncertain of what the precise management objectives are (keeping SBB > 500,000 t).

Redfish: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Divisions V, XII and XIV

Pelagic Redfish in V, XII and XIV: This stock was dealt with at the ACFM May meeting but a survey conducted in the summer 1999 was tabled based on a request from NEAFC to reconsider this stock. ACFM decided to re-issue the advice taking into account the results of the survey. The results however did not change the advice given in May 1999.

West of Scotland

Cod: There was a long discussion on whether a bias could be detected in these assessments. After numerous interventions where the key arguments concerned the retrospective pattern that clearly suggested that the stock has been overestimated in recent year and the possibility to detect this as a bias since this anyway was only 3 or 5 observation in a row. ACFM concluded the discussion by deciding that the advice should be based on the assessments without taking into account a bias. The text should note this fact in the retrospective pattern. ACFM noted that similar considerations applied to several other demersal stocks West of Scotland in the Irish Sea and decided that similar principles in formulating the advice would apply also in these cases. After this discussion the advice as proposed by the Sub-group was changed to reflect the assessment directly and not include any provision of bias.

Haddock: See discussion for Cod (west of Scotland)

Whiting: See discussion for Cod (west of Scotland)

Angler fish: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Sand eel: There were no comments to this assessment but both for sandeel and for Norway pout the Working Group is asked to consider if the present assessment that are quite limited could not be better dealt with through a change in the approach.

Norway Pout: See comment for Sand eel at Shetland (Division VIa)

Division VIIa (Irish Sea and St. George's Channel)

Cod: This stock is depleted and the discussion was on how a rebuilding plan should be suggested, i.e. how quickly the stock should be rebuilt. ACFM found that this should be done as quickly as practical but realised that other considerations than biology might be taken into account in the management decision.

Whiting: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

West of Ireland:

The Chair opened the discussions on formulating advice at 9:00. The discussion started on the stocks covered by the report of the Southern Shelf Demersal stocks.

General comments

PA reference points and Medium term projection: In the light of the discussion of how to calculate PA reference points, ACFM advised AWGs that medium term projections are not considered appropriate for calculating PA reference points. These are related to the long-term considerations and as such are independent of the starting point (current assessment) which medium term projections are not. Medium term projections are primarily a guide to managers to inform whether the stock is at a particular low level at present or whether the exploitation level suggests further decreases.

Catch statistics: The Working Group should provide catch statistics by country, e.g. for angler fish both in VIIIb-k and VII a,b together with Northern hake.

Bicayen and the water around the Iberian Peninsula

Northern hake: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Anchovy VIIIb,c: This assessment had been thoroughly discussed in the Sub-group and nothing new was added to the discussion at this point.

Anchovy IXa: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Sardine: No PA reference points have been proposed and the state of the stock is unknown. However, two weak year classes were observed in the mid 90s. The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Megrim: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Anglerfish: The advice was formulated based on the report from the Sub-group without any major changes.

Election of WG chairs

MHMSAWG: Ken Patterson, UK has resigned as Chair of WGMHMSA because he would on 1 November 1999 take up a position in EC in Bruxelles. Dankert Skagen, Norway was proposed as the next Chair by WGMHMSA. There was some confusion whether the proposal for to fill Ken Patterson's term, i.e. for 1 year or whether this was understood to be for a full term (3 years). ACFM decided that Dankert Skagen should take the chair as an interim measure, i.e. for the remaining 1 year of Ken Patterson's term. It was noted that Dankert Skagen would be eligible for new term (3 years) when the new chair would be duly elected in October/November 2000. It was underlined that this was a matter of protocol and not in any way reflected hesitation on the part of ACFM seeing Dankert Skagen as chair. ACFM noted that this topic was discussed on 1 November and that there had been time for consultations on this matter, also with home laboratories.

At the closure of the meeting the Introduction section was revisited. It was recognised that there is a need for more transparency in how ICES has interpreted the PA in its advice. It was noted that there will be a meeting between the North Atlantic fisheries organisations that will discuss harmonisation of the PA between organisations (ICCAT, NAFO, ICES, FAO). In the light of the outcome of this meeting it may be possible to make more clear explanations. Until this the chair will endeavour to explain the PA to the organisations when he gets the opportunity.

The meeting was closed on 4 November 1999 at 18:00.