

ICES ACOM REPORT 2009

ICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Report of the Advisory Committee (ACOM)

7–10 December 2009

Lisbon, Portugal



ICES

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

CIEM

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1 Introduction

The chair welcomed the participants (Annex I). The agenda was adopted (Annex II).

The decision rules used within the committee were discussed. Other main topics of the meeting were to review and adopt changes in the advisory framework and in the format of the advice. This was done by reviewing the results of the two workshops that had been held in the week prior to the ACOM meeting. ACOM on this basis further developed the form and the format in breakout groups. ACOM adopted an MSY framework that will be discussed with the Clients with a view to Implement this framework. ACOM discussed how the transition from advice in the PA framework to the MSY best could be made and adopted a number of follow-up actions in 2010 (see Section 7 of this report).

2 Workplan 2010

This plan was reviewed and ACOM

- Agreed Workplan 2010 as a living document.
- Agreed to additional projects to involve students in update assessment reviews under supervision of senior scientist.
- Re-affirmed the understanding of ACOM overseeing of MSFD project as agreed at the September 2009 meeting-This involves
 - Task group reports are in name of authors. No direct ACOM involvement
 - Steering group report will be in ICES and JRC's name. It will be circulated to ACOM for review. ICES will not sign off if there is an objection from ACOM.
 - If ICES submits a substantive comment, it will be approved by ACOM as advice.

The process with the MSFD task groups is not satisfactory and ACOM suggested that asked the ACOM chair or President should warn Delegates. The process is too rushed and involved a big risk of going astray. Such a letter would be communicated with DG Env. in advance to avoid surprise or that DG Env. feels criticized.

2.1 Benchmarks 2010 and 2011

ACOM reviewed three planned Benchmark Workshops for early 2010 and reaffirmed its approval. ACOM decided to add a benchmark on sandeel to the plan 2010 (August/September).

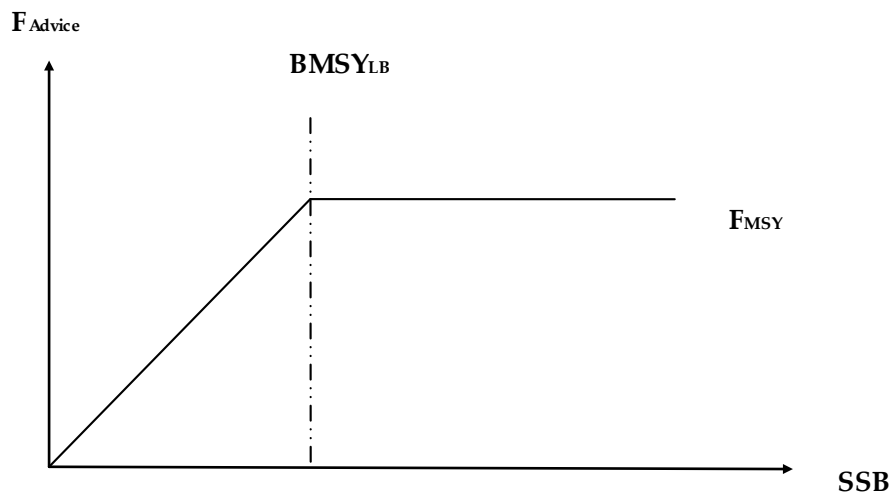
ACOM approved the inter-benchmark protocol. This will be distributed to EGs with a positive message that ACOM welcomes their initiatives to improve bases for assessments.

ACOM discussed the benchmark plan for 2011 benchmarks and agreed this plan. The plan will be presented to and discussed with WGCHAIRS. If necessary, changes will be sent to ACOM for approval.

3 Framework for fish stock advice

The general framework that was proposed by WKFORM is based on an F_{msy} concept and a biomass safeguard against low spawning stock biomass (WKFORM 2009). This is depicted below and referred to as the ICES MSY framework,

ACOM concurred with proposal from WKFORM with revisions as indicated below:



The biomass safeguard is named $BMSY_{LB}$. As an initial proposition ACOM suggested that $BMSY_{LB}$ should be set at B_{pa} where this reference point is available. WKFORM discussed appropriate proxies for F_{msy} . ACOM decided that the details should be further worked out; see paragraph below on 'Next Steps'.

ACOM considered that B_{lim} or B_{pa} might serve as additional biological reference points to be more conservative at low levels of B .

Concerning the advisory structure ACOM decided that

- Advice on MSY on framework in general.
- Advise on alternative HCR agreed by all competent management authorities that have been evaluated.
- Include options for other HCR with description of their performance or statement they have not been evaluated.

ACOM further decided that the framework should be developed through the following activities

- Meeting of ACOM leadership with Clients to discuss 2011 to 2015 transition.

- Concept paper on the ICES precautionary MSY framework.
- Workshop to refine guidance for estimating F_{msy}
- Workshop to consider application of a precautionary MSY approach for so called data poor stocks.

Next steps in the development of the MSY framework

- ACOM leadership to meet with Clients (EC, NEAFC, NASCO, Governments) to discuss 2011 to 2015 transition.
- ACOM leadership to produce a concept paper on the ICES MSY framework.
- Presentation of the MSY framework for WGCHAIRS (January 2010) and the advisory policy for 2010 (ACOM leadership)
- Workshop (Chaired by ACOM member) to refine guidance for estimating F_{msy}
- Workshop (Chair by ACOM member) to consider application of a MSY approach for so called data poor stocks.

4 Format of Advisory Report

ACOM considered the proposal from WKFAR and the worked examples that were presented together with this report. The present s 'book' structure (general, regional, widely distributed stocks, North Atlantic Salmon and eels, Technical Services) is maintained. The goal is a web based document in 2011 that is searchable.

ACOM agreed to

- begin implementing the revised format in 2010 with target for full implementation by 2011. The revised format uses "headers" from new "two pager" beginning in 2010.
- present a fully flesh out template for consideration by WGCHAIRS (Secretariat in cooperation with ACOM leadership (Carl O'Brien, Manuela Azevedo)

4.1 Non-Fisheries Advice

ACOM approved the proposal from WKFAR. ACOM welcomed the intentions laid down in this document to make the advice more direct.

4.2 Quality and Uncertainty

ACOM discussed the presentation of quality and uncertainty in the advisory report noting the wish from ACs on a simple presentation (Traffic light). ACOM noted that the quality of the advice had several aspects inter alia such as: quality of the assessment (data and estimation procedure), ability pro predict the consequences on stock development of management measures and the urgency of the advice. Concentrating

on the quality on the assessment ACOM thought that the approach and “worked example” in Doc 22e was interesting and worthy of further consideration.

ACOM decided that

- Various proposals should be discussed with WG chairs.
- PGCCDBS should be asked to consider a framework for expressing quality of inputs to assessments.

5 Advisory Services

5.1 Haddock Via Management Plan Evaluation

Manuela Azevedo (Vice-chair) leads this work which is in progress and at the moment the analyses are being revised in response to reviews. ACOM members can access the sharepoint site for details. The response is delayed and this delay has been accepted by the Client (DG MARE). There is a planned an ACOM Webex for approval of this advice in January. ACOM took note of this progress report.

5.2 Icelandic Cod Management Plan Evaluation

Carl O'Brien (Vice-chair) leads this work. The technical evaluations have been concluded by the Icelandic scientists and three reviewers have considered this work. There is agreement that the Icelandic technical studies meet appropriate scientific standards and that the study is appropriate as basis for the advice.

Iceland's ACOM member clarified that the request explicitly should have asked for evaluation relative to the precautionary approach. Also, in light of the change in the basis for advice to the MSY approach, this should also be evaluated. ACOM approved the following procedure: Carl O'Brien (ACOM vice-chair) is now formulating the advice and considers in particular how the plan conforms with respect to MSY and precautionary considerations. Advice document will be sent to ACOM for e-mail approval by mid January. One week (excluding 20 Dec-3 Jan) will be given for review. The advisory text will be considered approved as soon as there are 11 approvals without objection. Any objection means that ACOM will convene at a webex meeting. The Secretariat will inform Icelandic officials of delay.

5.3 Approved texts

ACOM approved three texts

- Irish Conservation Box evaluation
- Clarification of advice on TAC rule for stocks that cannot be assessed precisely
- Cormorant- fishery interactions-The review was finalized during the meeting and will be submitted as service (not advice).

In relation to the cormorant text ACOM discussed the rules for accepting such requests. Recognising that the issue is controversial, it would need to be handled with great care. There would need to be a clear understanding of terms of reference by scientists, clients, and stakeholders.

6 Review of Advisory Services

ACOM noted that, in September 2009, it had done a major review of the performance and decided on a number of changes for implementation in 2010. Since then no major new problems had been identified. ACOM agreed that it will make a systematic review of "lessons learned" from the production of each advisory service at regular intervals and that the next review would be at the consultations in September 2010. ACOM also took note of the review planned by the Council.

7 Feedback from the Council Meeting

The Chair reviewed the discussions on the Advisory Services that took place at the Council Meeting October 2009. The basis for these discussions is the report that the chair had provided (Doc 6 and 7). The Chair drew attention to the change in rules for admission of observers that the Council had adopted. These are administrative changes. The Chair explained the Council intentions with its review of the Advisory Services.

7.1 Decision-making in ACOM

The chair reported on a discussion at the Council on the decision making at ACOM. This led to a detailed discussion at ACOM with the following conclusions:

- ACOM strongly prefers decisions by consensus;
- Consensus decision making requires a high degree of cooperation and willingness to yield to an overwhelming majority;
- However:
 - Consensus does not mean that everyone agrees. It means that no one objects;
 - Hopefully, a single member of ACOM will not block a consensus if he/she fails to convince anyone else of his/her point of view.
- If reaching a consensus means an overwhelming majority has to accept watering down advice or making it so ambiguous that it is unhelpful, deciding by majority vote is an option (in accordance with the Convention and feedback from the Council meeting)

These rules will be incorporated in the Guidelines for ACOM working procedures.

8 User Satisfaction Survey

ACOM is very pleased with the survey and suggest that the results be further analysed involving professionals on such user surveys. ACOM used these results to identify actions that would improve the ICES Advisory Services. ACOM decided:

- The survey is now closed;

- The results should be further evaluated to identify priority criticism (e.g., stakeholder view that consistency of advice is a problem), and design corrective action. It would be good to get professional help analyzing data. The report needs editing (e.g., improve colour coding).
- ACOM will consider re-opening the survey to monitor trend in performance. Such information is probably more meaningful than absolute values.
- ACOM identified the improvement of communication between EGs, ADGs and ACOM for immediate action (WGCHAIRS in January 2010). For example, EGs need to understand why an ADG changes their input to advice. Minutes of ADG meetings should explicitly address such discrepancies.
- ACOM suggested that its leadership should present the results to clients and stakeholders. This may elicit more specific feedback. Such presentations should indicate actions that respond to criticisms; e.g., revision of format of advice

9 Protocol for re-opening advice based on summer/autumn surveys

ACOM noted that the procedure for re-opening of advice based on results from recruitment surveys had worked well in 2008 and 2009. However, for Nephrops (biomass surveys) there were problems and ACOM decided:

- To hold a workshop or WG to update protocol adopted in 2008 for application in 2010 for 2011 advice and beyond. The ToRs for this workshop should
 - Cover Nephrops;
 - Broaden to potentially cover all stocks;
 - Revisit statistical criteria for separating signal from noise. Should be “challenging” enough so re-opening is infrequent;
 - Consider possibility of extending method, or alternative methods for a criterion to determine the frequency of assessments.

10 Review of Guidelines

Under this standard agenda item ACOM focused on review of benchmark guidelines with respect to decision making and role of external experts. External chair should do his/her best to find consensus, but should report the perspective of external experts even if it is not included in the consensus. The guidelines will include no reference to voting. ACOM adopted the guidelines with revision of guideline on benchmarks.

There were no other comments on guidelines.

11 Portfolio of Advisory Services

The document has been considered at the September 2009 ACOM meeting. ACOM discussed the document and ACOM approved the Portfolio document with the additional revision to indicate ACOM will be informed about all requests for advice even if ACOM leadership and Secretariat do not recommend accepting the request.

ACOM should be selective in requesting requests. It should not be an easy/cheap alternative to having an organization's own scientists, or contracting scientists, to do the job.

12 Cooperation ACOM–SCICOM

ACOM welcomed the initiative to let ACOM and SCICOM work together on three initiatives on

- Marine Spatial Planning and Coastal Zone management
- Global stock assessment review, and
- Biodiversity

ACOM asked the ACOM leads to circulate drafts on Biodiversity, Marine Spatial Planning and Global Stock Assessment Evaluation to be circulated to ACOM for comment in January 2010.

Furthermore ACOM invited SCICOM to join in two workshops

- on design of integrated ecosystem monitoring system (this cooperation may not necessarily take the form of a workshop);
- on an operational approach to fisheries management in the face of regime shifts.

The proposal to ask the SCICOM Steering group on Regional Seas to take responsibility for the ecosystem overviews were accepted and seen as a very positive step towards improved cooperation between SCICOM and ACOM. ACOM recognised the need to re-think preparation of a report in 2011 on the status of ecosystems. The symposium on biophysical variability is not likely to be an adequate basis. ACOM noted the need to consider OSPAR QSR 2010. Also, ACOM considered EC's interest in "user friendly" reports on fisheries. Such reports would be oriented toward the informed public.

13 ACOM action plan

ACOM asked Experts groups to address the frequency of assessments required respecting scientific needs for a sound basis for the advice. This review should be done with the objective of harmonizing workload with human resources.

14 Any other Business

The next "annual meeting" of ACOM will be 16 Nov-mid day 19 Nov 2010.

ACOM asked the Chair to communicate with HELCOM about Fisheries and Env. Forum. ACOM expressed concern that ICES role not be confused.

15 Closure

The Chair summarised the conclusions of the meeting and wishing everybody a safe trip home and a Merry Christmas.

16 Annex I: Participants

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17 Annex II: ACOM AGENDA

Chair: Michael Sissenwine

Schedule 0930-1800 Monday-Wednesday

0930-1430 Thursday

Plenary

Monday Morning

1. Opening
2. Adoption of Agenda (Doc 1)
3. Review of Advisory Services (Doc 8)
4. Status of recruitment for Head of Advisory Services
5. Feedback from the October Council meetings (Doc 6-7) Admission of observers (Doc 27- for info only)
6. Results of User Satisfaction Survey (Doc 20)

Monday Afternoon

7. Review of pending advice
 - a. Management Plan for Haddock VIa
<http://groupnet.ices.dk/advice2009/adghad/default.aspx>
 - b. Icelandic cod
Evaluation
<http://groupnet.ices.dk/advice2009/ADGICMP/default.aspx>
Draft advice: <http://groupnet.ices.dk/advice2009/iceland/default.aspx>
 - c. Interactions between cormorants and fisheries
Draft review
[\http://groupnet.ices.dk/advice2009/technicalservices/default.aspx
 - d. Irish conservation box
Evaluation:
<http://groupnet.ices.dk/advice2009/ADGBOX/default.aspx>
Draft advice:
<http://groupnet.ices.dk/advice2009/CelticSea/default.aspx>
 - e. EC request on TAC rule when state of stocks not precisely known (Doc 43)
8. Changes in rules and procedures
 - a. Framework for formulation of advice (report from WKFORM, Doc 21, 21a)
 - b. Format of Advisory Report for 2010 (report from WKFAR, Doc22)

Tuesday Afternoon

8. (Continued) Changes in rules and procedures
 - c. Protocol for reopening advice (including Nephrops) based on summer/autumn surveys (Doc 35)
 - d. Review of other guidelines: Docs 24-29 (for information). See Sharepoint site for guidelines:
<http://groupnet.ices.dk/Advice2010/Guidelines/Forms/AllItems.aspx>
 - e. Portfolio of Advisory Services (Doc 31, 31a)
9. Implementation of the Advice Plan (Doc 44, 44a)
10. Cooperation with SCICOM. Doc 18 Science plan and Doc 38 Minutes from ACOM/SCICOM meeting. See Sharepoint Report from SCICOM September 2009
 - a. Initiative on Marine Spatial Planning
 - b. Initiative on Biodiversity
 - c. Initiative on Global Review of Stock Assessment Methods

Wednesday Morning (09:30-11:30)

11. Benchmark Workshops
 - a. How well are benchmarks working (Doc 9)
 - b. Planning for 2010 and beyond (Doc 10)
 - c. An Inter-Benchmark Protocol (Doc 11)
12. Planning for 2010
 - a. Doc 16 and Doc 17; See Sharepoint site (ADVISE 2010)
 - b. Projects 2010 Doc 37: (MSFD, FIMPAS, Eel MP(?), Femern Belt(?), Fish behind the Net (?), UK (Review Introduction of Alien species)

Wednesday 16:00-18:00

Reports from the Breakout Groups including action on Agenda Items

Decisions based on earlier agenda items and results of breakout groups

Thursday 09:30-14:30

8. (Continued) Changes in rules and procedures
 - a. The form of fish stock advice - evolution to MSY framework
 - b. The format of ICES advice
 - c. Adoption of the 2010 Workplan
 - a. Benchmarks- Plan for 2011
13. ToRs and Agendas for MICC, MIRAC and WGCHAIRS (Doc 32-34)
14. Appointment of Expert Group Chairs for WGEEL, WGHARP, WGNAS (Doc 36)
15. AOB
 - a. Dates for ACOM 2010
 - b. HELCOM letter to Commission from 'Fisheries Forum'
16. Chair's Summary of conclusions
17. Closing of the meeting

Breakout groups**Tuesday Morning-**

09:30-11:00 -Groups

- a. Framework of advice (Mike)
- b. Format of advice (Carl)

11:30-13:00 - Groups

- a. Format of advice (Carl) continued
- b. Quality and uncertainty (Manica)

Wednesday 12:00-16:00

12:00- 1300 Groups

- a. Initiative on Marine Spatial Planning (Eugene) -1300
- b. Initiative on Biodiversity (Mark) - 1300
- c. Initiative on Global Review of Stock Assessment Methods (Carl)

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 Groups

- d. Follow-up of user survey (Eugene)
- e. Advisory Action Plan (Mike, Serge)
- f. Benchmark (Carl)
- g. MSFD (Paul)

15:30-16:00 Coffee