



▶ Pelagic AC

Joint PELAC-MAFMC meeting
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Skaga Hotel
Hirtshals
Denmark

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Meeting report

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Jesper Raakjær opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He referred to the origins of this joint meeting which can be traced back to the MareFrame research project on how to overcome barriers to adopting an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management (EAFM).

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen presented the week's program and the main topics of discussion.

The role of the ICES advice in EU fisheries management, Eskild Kirkegaard, ICES

Questions and comments:

The presentation triggered questions about reference points, the way they are calculated and the data used for that. In particular, the way CPUE are used in the EU -mostly as quality check for the assessment and by the industry as real-time management- and the standardization process were talked about. There was interest in trying to compare EU and US reference points. Giving advice for 2 or 3 consecutive years was raised.

- What is Blim in relation with $\frac{1}{2}$ of Bmsy?

Blim is defined as the biomass below which recruitment becomes impaired. When there is no stock-recruitment relationship Blim is defined as the lowest observed biomass.

ICES does not use Bmsy, because Bmsy does not exist. Stocks fluctuate naturally around a range. Even if a stock is fished at Fmsy, there will be fluctuations.

- What is the risk policy in the EU?

Long-term simulations based on collected data show that the stock has a chance of less than 5% of falling below Blim given a particular fishing mortality.

- Does ICES try to give advice for 2 to 3 years to smooth the fluctuations?



ICES advised its clients that they should ask for multiannual advice. This would give more stability and stop the fluctuations that are sometimes more the reflection of a change of the data/surveys than of the actual stock biomass. A 2 or 3 years advice does not have to be the same for the 3 years, it can be a trend. But there is political pressure to annually negotiate TACs. Sometimes, the EU even asks for bi-annual advice when surveys are carried out late in the year.

- Do you use, and if yes, how do you use CPUE? In the US, CPUE is popular but how to take into account differences between e.g. old and new vessels?

CPUE data are standardized, according to several techniques. It needs to take into account the age and size of vessels and also the skipper's experience. The same applies to survey indices from different research vessels.

What is done depends very much on the specific case. In many cases, ICES does not usually use CPUE, especially when the fish shows schooling behavior as CPUE data is then more inconsistent.

An exception is the industrial fishery for sandeel where CPUE has been standardized to a certain vessel size.

For the main stocks fishery-independent data are being used.

On industry vessels CPUE data are collected and standardized. Another problem of CPUE is that there are less vessels now than before which has an impact on the data.

CPUE data can be useful as a quality check for the assessment (if not used in the assessment).

Fishing effort definition can also be problematic. With VMS, the quality of data is a lot better. When VMS data is available, the vessel speed is used to know whether or not it is fishing.

The role of fisheries scientists working for the pelagic industry, Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn, Danish Pelagic Producers Organisation

Questions and comments:

The way industry scientists work was of great interest to the participants. Specifically when taking part in scientific expert groups and the reaction this triggers from other scientists. Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn explained that they were very much accepted as scientists and were respecting a code of conduct while attending ICES meetings. The acceptance by other scientist was linked to the understanding that the industry can bring a lot of knowledge to the table.

The difference in the way eNGOs operate in the EU and US was also highlighted. The use of the court of justice is a lot more common in the US where stakeholders often sue NOAA's decisions. This can result in policy decisions made much more in relation to the risk of being sued than in relation with the best available practices.

Other comments were about public relations of NGOs, the US management strategy evaluation and the impossibility to achieve Bmsy for all stocks simultaneously.

- Are industry scientists allowed to participate in expert groups, and other scientific meetings?



Industry scientists can join expert groups when they are appointed by the national governments as their experts. Other meetings, e.g. Advice Drafting Groups and Benchmarks are open for observers and anyone with a legitimate interest can attend those meetings.

- Has industry science been taken into account when making decisions?

Yes, e.g. 6a herring industry surveys.

- How much does popular opinion override science in the EU political decisions? This is very much happening in the US.

In general people in the EU accept the advice produced by ICES which is now also being used by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC).

- NOAA is often sued by eNGOs and (to a lesser extent) by fishers. Some people in the US have the impression that NOAA is therefore more likely to side with those people who would otherwise sue them instead of following the best available science and practices.
- The way fishermen are seen by the public seems to differ between the EU and the US. In the US, fishermen are generally viewed quite negatively. This might be the result of PR campaigns against commercial fisheries.
- The terminology in the US is such that overfishing is only caused by the industry being greedy. Environmental conditions and poor recruitment are never mentioned.
- Management strategy evaluations in the US receive inputs from a large diversity of stakeholders. Some fishermen found that the consultation was too broad, giving the floor to people who weren't really concerned with the subject. In the EU it is mainly the Industry and the scientists who are giving inputs.
- The US federal goal of having all stocks individually at Bmsy is impossible to reach.

Presentation on marine spatial planning in the EU (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) – Henrik S. Lund, Danish Producers Organization

Questions and comments:

The participants showed interest in the way windfarm compensation is paid to fishermen in Denmark and to the overall way that areas are chosen for installing the windfarms.

- How is compensation for fisheries closures due to windfarms calculated in Denmark?

It depends on the fishery going on before. Usually it's a one-off payment. For some windfarms the money goes to the producers organization, because the fishermen fishing 10 years ago are not the same as today.

There is no compensation for static gears.



Advisory Councils on their route toward EAFM in the EU, Paulina Ramirez, Aalborg University

Questions and comments:

The questions and remarks were mainly focused on the Baltic Sea multiannual multi species plan. There was interest in trying to compare this approach with some US approaches to ecosystem based fisheries management. The need for flexibility for fishermen and the risk of prioritizing some species against others were brought up. Globally, the definition of EAFM remains somewhat unclear. Some participants pointed out that a lot of the actions undertaken because of EAFM would have been carried out anyway, e. g. developing multiannual plans and addressing issues like density-dependency. The EAFM is just a concept that receives meaning through practical applications.

- Did the Baltic Sea multiannual plan lead to increased flexibility for fisheries in the Baltic?

To some extent it did provide more flexibility, but it remained questionable whether this was due to EAFM or the management system itself, e.g. transfers between stocks, different allocations per Member States etc. The plan also increased complexity. The Baltic was a relatively simple place to start the process due to the limited number of stocks. However, the amount of stakeholders in the Baltic is enormous and there are tensions between different stakeholder groups.

- How does the multiannual multi species management plan works in the Baltic? Is each species managed individually within one plan?

Traditionally, ICES provided single species advice, but recently started to move forward towards multi species management. The problem with this kind of advice is that it enters a “grey zone” where some species are prioritized over others. The trade-offs required under an EAFM could lead to science that is politicized.

- Even without EAFM a lot of the work would have been undertaken anyway, because everyone knows and agrees that things like spawning grounds and climate change are important. EAFM is just a framework, a name that we give to issues that have always been important for fisheries. Applying EAFM in practice might help clarify what it actually means.
 - Some US representatives are skeptical about ecosystem models in the US that include more than 50 species. It was also pointed out that under EAFM yield maximization does no longer receive sufficient attention. Instead the main focus is now on predator-prey logic.
 - EAFM requires a greater need for more flexibility when managing the stocks. Without flexible management, EAFM is unachievable.
 - ICES now advises on MSY ranges which give politicians some more flexibility when deciding on the precise settings of a multiannual multi species plan to balance things out a bit more.
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Industry survey of Western herring, Steven Mackinson, Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association

Questions and comments:

People wanted to know how the amount of the monitoring TAC was determined. US fishermen were interested in this as they foresee the need for such quota in their chub mackerel fishery. The way industry surveys are conducted in Europe was found very interesting and encouraging.

- The size of the monitoring TAC is to be linked to the number of samples needed. This was calculated by ICES. Most of the quota is given to the boats participating in the survey as a form of payment.
- The most important aspect of this work is that the fishermen's' efforts and knowledge are incorporated into the scientific advice.

Genome sequencing and its practical application for fisheries management, Dorte Bekkevold, DUT Aqua

Questions and comments:

Having devices the size of a smart phone to analyze DNA in the future sparked a lot of interest. The opportunities this can create are immense and could lead to even more scientific contributions from the industry.

The biology, assessment and recent dynamics of Northeast Atlantic mackerel, Thomas Brunel, Wageningen Marine Research, Netherlands

Questions and comments:

US stakeholders were impressed by the large scale of the scientific surveys conducted for this stock. The use of sonar on industry vessels was discussed as a potential way to bring new data to the assessment, but does not seem fit for purpose yet.

Gear trials in Skagerrak- A new pelagic grid, Hans Nilsson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Questions and comments:



Developing a flexible grid in a collaborative effort between fishermen and scientists was perceived as a valuable way to build trust and to solve an urgent bycatch issue. People were impressed at how successful the grid was in reducing bycatch while not much of the target species was lost.

