

Benchmarks

The meeting will be updated on the progress of the Benchmark steering group, including information on the outcome of the Baltic cod seminar on 1–3 October.

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1 The Benchmark Steering Group

The Benchmark Steering Group (BSG) is a new steering group, founded in the frame of the new ICES Strategic Plan. It differs from other Steering Groups (SG) in having no specific multiannual Expert Groups under its umbrella, but steering the transfer of science into assessment and advice through increased communication and targeted workshops. All existing Benchmark related workshops will fall under its auspices. Founded in 2014, the BSG Terms of Reference were approved by ACOM and SCICOM in June 2014. Since then, the co-chairs have organized the membership of the BSG. This consists of some ACOM and SCICOM members and other relevant experts with interest in the benchmarking process and which chair or participate in ICES expert groups that are or should be closely associated with the benchmark process; a balance of EU and non-EU members has also been sought. The chairs of all other SGs are ex-officio members of the BSG.

2 Activities in 2014

1.1 Workshop on Scoping for Integrated Baltic Cod Assessment (WKSIBCA)

The first workshop under the BSG was the Workshop on Scoping for Integrated Baltic Cod Assessment (WKSIBCA), which took place 1 to 3 October 2014 in Gdynia, Poland. The main aim of this workshop was to find ways forward for the Baltic cod assessment and advice. In addition to examining progress on resolving issues identified in connection with the failed assessment this year, WKSIBCA also examine the existing ecological knowledge and find ways of incorporating relevant aspects of this knowledge into the assessment and/or advice.

The workshop was very successful with more than 40 participants. The workshop focused on four issues: 1) age and stock ID 2) Mortality and growth 3) recruitment and 4) Process of integrated assessment. For each issue the workshop identified the main challenges, made suggestions on how to solve the challenges, identified who is going to do the work, and developed a timeline for the process.

Based on the workshop a plan will be developed for the work that can realistically be done before the Baltic cod stock assessment benchmark workshop scheduled for March 2015.

1.2 ACOM/SCICOM Workshop on Regional Seas Commissions and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Scoping (WKRISCO)

The second announced Workshop is the ACOM/SCICOM Workshop on Regional Seas Commissions and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Scoping (WKRISCO) on 17–20 November 2014, Copenhagen, Denmark. The Workshop will have two main objectives; first to summarise progress made and methods used across the ICES integrated ecosystem assessment (IEA) groups and second to scope with OSPAR and HELCOM the science needs for upcoming regional assessments (QSR and HOLAS).