

# MIACO 2018 REPORT

ICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ICES CM 2018/ACOM:04

## Report of the Annual Meeting between ICES, Advisory Councils and other Observers (MIACO 2018)

18–19 January 2018

Copenhagen, Denmark



**ICES**  
**CIEM**

International Council for  
the Exploration of the Sea

Conseil International pour  
l'Exploration de la Mer

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## **1 Opening of the meeting**

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The Advisory Committee Chair, Eskild Kirkegaard, opened the MIACO 2018 by welcoming participants to Copenhagen. He wished the meeting to be frank and open, with a good dialogue.

Representatives for the Baltic Sea, Long Distance, North Sea, North Western Waters, Pelagic and the newly formed Market Advisory Councils, as well as from the EUs DG-MARE and twelve different NGOs and Fishermen's Associations were in attendance. One observer attended. See list of participants in Annex 1.

The General Secretary of ICES, Anne Christine Brusendorff, also warmly welcomed the participants.

## **2 Adoption of Agenda**

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The agenda was adopted without any suggested changes.

### 3 ICES advisory process 2017 – Review

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An overview of the advice process and the advice provided in 2017 is given in Document 03. ACOM chair, (Eskild Kirkegaard) provided a short overview of the advisory processes in 2017 as outlined in the document; main points being an assessment of the resources needed in the ICES community to provide advice during 2017 in terms of processes and expert time/meetings as well as performance analyses of the steps included in the advice processes (data, expert groups, ADGs, presentation of advice and Special Requests).

Meeting participants were invited to report on their experience of working with ICES during 2017, present their research and advisory needs, and discuss their experience of the ICES participation in ACs and other observers meetings in 2017. Discussions were done in regional groups, each starting with a tour-de-table to state issues experienced, good/bad and refreshing ideas. The following sections provide the main points covered by region.

#### 3.1 Atlantic subgroup

There was a generally positive feedback on the interaction with ICES where stakeholders were appreciative of the presentations made of advice in various fora. During discussions of upcoming advisory challenges, the landings obligation and implementation of this was debated. Currently it seems to be somewhat unclear what the exact implications will be for the fishery and thus this is something that all stakeholders are following closely. At the same level of interest was Brexit and what potentially will be implied changes to the current management system.

While the stakeholders were positive in relation to the ICES training courses and the output from participating in these, they expressed concern that often resource issues, and not knowledge/education capacity, often was the obstacle hindering as high degree of involvement in ICES WGs and ADGs as wished.

The benchmark process was discussed; frequently stakeholders felt unaware of how to properly prepare for benchmarks and were advocating for a clear guidance of which questions/issues that would be brought up during a particular benchmark and also how to both contribute and prepare for these issues. Benchmarks dealing with the pelagic stocks tend to be more frequently attended by industry stakeholders than demersal stocks; this is most likely due to the higher amount of smaller stocks in the latter category, demanding more time from the individual stakeholders and thus minimizing the time available to attend these.

The Pelagic AC raised that they were looking for assistance from ICES to develop an appropriate MP for the western horse mackerel stock, i.e. would like input in the development stage before sending it through EC to get approval (and perhaps ICES evaluation). In general, the Pelagic AC would like an option to provide input to the Assessment Working Groups rather than the current process, where observer inputs are not enabled until during the Advice Drafting Group, where all explorative work and assessment runs have been completed.

#### 3.2 Baltic subgroup

The Baltic AC opened the discussion by stating that *Assessment and advice should be more independent*. Stock assessments have improved over time and ICES should focus on the underlying science, while advice may need to be more flexible in order to meet the

needs of Clients and ultimately stakeholders and society. ICES advice answers usually a specific question; i.e. what is the catch to be taken if we want to fish at  $F_{MSY}$ , however other options than that are possible and should be presented. It was pointed out by the ACOM Vice Chair and Oceana representative that the advice need is specified in the CFP which asks to bring as many stocks as possible to  $F_{MSY}$  by 2020.

Stakeholder involvement in *benchmarks* was also discussed in the Baltic group and it was generally seen as positive, although it is difficult to follow all the assessment models sometimes within benchmark meetings and ADGs.

In terms of credibility, it was raised that it can be problematic to *trust the advice* for a stock when ICES advice includes high differences in stock status and biomass estimates from year to year. This was acknowledged and a reference was made to the discussion in MIACO about the “quality assurance” process in ICES. A question regarding the review process of assessment working groups was brought up and it was specified during discussions that reviewers are included in benchmark processes where the assessment method is agreed. If changes to the agreed method are done during Expert Groups, an additional review is needed. In cases where a single expert is capable of running the assessment and only few experts are able to understand it, like for *Baltic salmon*, it would be appreciated if this expert – or representatives from ICES understanding the assessment – would be able to join a stakeholder meeting (e.g. a Baltic AC meeting) and explain the model and assessment. This could potentially be added to the presentation of advice made by the ACOM Vice Chair during summer; this was noted by the ACOM Vice Chair.

Related to *reference points* a question was posted whether these can be changed outside the benchmark process. The impression was that there seem to be exceptions in the system where reference points have been changed during assessment WGs. It was underlined that all new reference points need to be reviewed, thus it is not ideal to do this during a WG unless a problem is spotted and previous reference points are no longer trusted. Reference points are triggering management actions which makes it important for observers to understand those.

### 3.3 North Sea subgroup

A general appreciation of *the advice presentations* made to the ACs was expressed; in terms of providing the necessary preparation time for the ACs, it was suggested that the timing of these presentations were made so the AC had at least a week for preparation. The format where the advice was presented early in the meeting, allowing for returning to potential clarification issues in the afternoon was concluded very useful.

The annual *Advice reopening* was discussed and stakeholders found it unnecessary and would prefer one advice delivered in autumn rather than a ‘provisional advice’ in June. Although the procedure is stated in reviewed Technical Guidelines, changing advice based on one survey result was not found not ideal. This method does prevent bias, however, and for the reopening, there should be a significant difference in recruitment.

The *key issues* raised in relation to ICES Advice sheets were the definition of  $MSY$ , forecasting for short-lived species and explanation of assumptions and potential changes in advice basis. Regarding the *definition of  $MSY$*  it was advocated that a better explanation of the  $MSY$  used should be available in the advice sheets. In some cases it is unclear what sort of  $F_{MSY}$  is being used, e.g. for short-lived species. There was a sense that  $MSY$  often change for a stock and a worry that many stocks may never reach this point. In terms of *forecasting procedures*, it was stated by stakeholders that they would appreciate an initiative from ICES in collaboration with stakeholders on forecasting methods for



short-lived species where forecasts 3–5 year ahead should be explored. It was the hope that this could facilitate a higher degree of predictability of fishing opportunities.

The stakeholders appreciated that ICES is improving the readability of the advice sheets, and suggested that a *clear explanation* in the advice of updated reference points and why these are different from previous reference points, would be very useful. When important *assumptions* are made that will impact on the advice, it would be useful to have this mentioned early on in the advice sheet. The addition of the % change of advice relative to last year's advice was found very useful, and an additional option showing how far away from the management plan targets (in time) the stock is if managed *status quo* was suggested to be useful.

In terms of communicating updates/changes to published advice, it would be highly appreciated if such events were communicated to observers as well. It was suggested that such information could be made by email, in which the actual change is specified. It was suggested from ICES that such information could be posted on the discussed Observers Forum (see Section 7).

### 3.4 Plenary discussion

Across all regions an improved cooperation with ICES was evident and the transparency and reasoning behind assessment issues was mentioned as being in good progress although not quite there yet. In particular benchmark results and consequences for the impression of the stock and reference points were raised as issues which could be improved in terms of clarity. In general there were positive comments on integration, clarity and quality of ICES advice. In terms of future advice requests, it was suggested that ICES should have a higher degree of involvement when AC requests for advice are being formulated.

#### 3.4.1 Conclusions

- Data presented by ICES is well received and of good quality.
- Advisory Councils and observers acknowledge an improved communication with ICES.
- ICES is addressing issues on communication and understanding of the advice.

#### 3.4.2 Action points

Further development on communication and understanding of advice was concluded needed. ICES referred to a currently ongoing process under a special request from the EC on visual representation of advice.

## 4 ICES advisory process

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### 4.1 Quality assurance of advice

Errors in ICES advice were discussed at the 2017 MIACO meeting. Observers understood that mistakes can happen; however, strongly encouraged ICES to inform stakeholders, when mistakes were identified and anticipated corrections to the advice were foreseen. A wish to keep the original advice available for comparison was expressed and this has been resolved by keeping the first version of the advice, watermarked with 'Replaced'. ICES presented initiatives taken within ICES to quality assure ICES advisory products and invited MIACO to comment on the initiatives taken by ICES and to discuss possible needs for further initiatives including how to ensure that the required resources are available.

#### 4.1.1 Presentation

ICES presented initiatives taken within ICES to quality assure advisory products and observers were invited to comment on these initiatives and to discuss possible needs for further initiatives including how to ensure that the required resources are available.

ICES advice criteria are that the advice is peer reviewed, transparent, unbiased, relevant, and timely. As the underlying data for stock assessments is a key cornerstone of quality assured advice, ICES is continuously establishing International standards for data collection, quality assurance of these data and the processes leading to input data to stock assessments. The aim is to hold all input data in ICES databases in order to facilitate such quality assurance processes and, in cases where this is non-achievable, to outline a systematic process for provision of feedback to collectors of data.

Initiatives like the Transparent Assessment Framework, a revised benchmark system, focused training courses and method development groups are all underpinning the development of fortifying the quality assurance and control process of ICES advice products and processes.

#### 4.1.2 Observer feedback

Observers appreciated the initiatives in ICES taken to outline clear conditions for how the data should be delivered and in what format. The databases and potentially TAF can be applied to identify critical control points for data quality, which will increase the credibility of the outputs from ICES.

The peer-review system was challenged by Observers by questioning how a peer-review can be performed when only a handful of experts actually have the skill set and knowledge to understand applied models/assumptions/outputs. Training of skilled stock assessment modellers with sound biological background was thus deemed highly necessary and this should be prioritized by National Institutes and encouraged by Observers and Clients. ICES was encouraged to make an attractive training programme and reference was made to the US and NOAA, which identified having capable experts as being a key area ten years ago and now there are many good scientists in American universities. It was discussed how additional resources could be allocated to assessment modelling if this is a weak point, and one point made was if it was necessary to take a step back and use models that everyone understands as development does not necessarily mean complication.

ICES was characterized as being unique in terms of having an arm's length principle and the apparent line between the scientific assessment and the political advice. It was

however raised that it would benefit the operational side of advice, if the advice was more of a process than an answer to a question. A reference was made to the process in the US where science is providing results, then there is discussion with the stakeholders, policy-makers, scientists, etc. leading to a second step, the advice drafting. It was discussed if the revised benchmark system in ICES could provide a similar process although not directly feeding into the annual advice, but providing the fundament for this.

#### **4.1.3 Conclusions**

- A lot of work being done on assuring the quality of data from the bottom up: international standards, ICES held databases of all assessment data, data-processing initiatives, TAF, training, benchmarks. Recognition of the importance of integrating science and advice, as corroborated by new workshop WKSCIENCE2ADVICE.
- ICES was appreciated for recognizing current flaws in the system and working to address them. There is concern within the community over the degree of complexity inherent in assessment models, and lack of transparency and reproducibility: ICES working to address this. Training in Europe is not on a par with that in America – lack of experience, knowledgeable assessment scientists/modellers.

#### **4.1.4 Action points**

Critical control points in the assessment process need to be identified and made clear. Guidelines on how this is being done should be provided as published Technical Guidelines.

Training of new scientists in fisheries modelling needs to be a priority and ICES should convey this to Member Countries via ICES Council.

### **4.2 Involvement of stakeholders in the advisory process**

ICES advisory process involves five types of groups/meetings with different rules for stakeholder involvements:

- Working group meetings. Meetings are open to experts nominated by ICES Member Countries (Delegates). Representatives of ICES clients can attend as observers;
- Workshops. Open meetings with no restrictions on who can participate;
- Review groups. Participation by invitation from ICES;
- Advice drafting groups. Open to members nominated by ACOM members and experts invited by ICES. Stakeholders can attend as observers;
- ACOM approval web conferences. Open to ACOM members or alternates and experts invited by ICES. Stakeholders can attend as observers.

ICES Council has established a Working Group on ICES Code of Conduct to review and evaluate ICES procedures related to experts in the advisory process, code of conduct, and conflict of interest.

Observers were invited to express their views on stakeholders' involvement in ICES advisory process and the discussions were again held in regional subgroups focusing

on the whether this present set-up was seen adequate by Observers, or whether there are suggestions for changes.

#### 4.2.1 Observer feedback

In general there was a positive feedback from observers; the advisory process and transparency hereof was appreciated and the main points for improvement was related to *clarity of rules* for participation as well as *communication* of the annual work plan and opportunities for participation. Those who had attended meetings generally had positive experiences and ICES also generally has had positive experience with observers.

In terms of *clarity of rules* for participation, it was underlined that the benchmark process and the openness of this need to be much clearer communicated. It was expressed that the role of stakeholders appeared to be misunderstood in the current system; it should be clearer that observers are full members of the meeting and expected to participate actively and take ownership of the process. An improvement of this could potentially be to announce/advertise on the ICES website when benchmarks are being scheduled specifying expertise needed for the benchmarks.

In relation to the Advice Drafting Groups, the impression was that there were no clear specific rules for observers in these meetings and it seemed to depend on the specific ADG and chair. In some ADGs observers experienced to contribute, e.g. making sure text is clearly understood whereas in other ADGs not much interaction was perceived. All observers would prefer it if they were allowed some degree of interaction while keeping the observing position. In relation to this, the section in the advice sheet 'Information from stakeholders' was discussed again as some disagreement between ICES and ACs was evident. ICES specified that the intention of this section is to list if any information (data) has been used to inform the assessment and thus the advice basis. The ACs underlined that they need to be informed if text in this section is amended before publication.

In terms of *communication* of the annual work plan and additions made during the year, a clarity of the terminology of the ICES groups was asked to be considered; when observers are updating themselves on the schedule of meetings it should be clear which meetings are open, and which are restricted (colour code was suggested as an option). The distributed letters outlining the timing of the work plan on an annual basis (groups, benchmarks, advice release dates) was highly appreciated and found to be very important.

The day-to-day communication with ICES was generally viewed as being fine; it should however be underlined that information about advice-issues and potential changes should follow the outlined line of communication in order to avoid ACs being misinformed by participants in the ADGs and other groups. ICES acknowledged that the code of conduct for experts could be better communicated to experts.

#### 4.2.2 Conclusion

Communication is key – Setting up a Stakeholder Forum was welcomed by observers and the potential use and content of such a Forum was decided to be discussed between the ICES Secretariat and the AC Secretariats.

Information on what the rules for participation are and clarity around these is needed. Suggestion was to have guidelines available on the SharePoint and share these upfront in beginning of meetings. In terms of communicating the meeting schedule it should be very clear which meetings that are open and what expertise/knowledge participants

could benefit from bringing with them. At times, the meetings are so technical that observers may not be comfortable participating actively. In relation to the revised benchmark process, the scoping meetings are highly welcomed and the set-up of these should be developed in collaboration with observers, clients and experts.

#### 4.3 Potential role and contribution of stakeholders to collection, supply and analysis of scientific data into the ICES Advisory Process

The Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) has requested an open discussion on the potential role of ACs in data collection and analysis with off-set in a letter from the LDAC to the European Commission on a proposal for request to ICES on improving knowledge and (catch and discards) data of deep-water stocks in NEAFC RA as well as the European Commission's reply.

The idea behind the initiative is that larger vessels potentially can contribute with a lot of data to stock assessments provided a preceding process can determine which data that are required (on a stock by stock basis) and how potential data sources are suitable for the use in stock assessments. The data collection and role of these larger commercial vessels need to be tested through pilot studies performed in collaboration between National institutes, ICES expert groups and Industry. This entire process could be initiated through the benchmark system. Both ICES and observers welcomed this initiative which adds to the already established contribution of data from industry through where data are ultimately delivered by the countries' science institutes.

Observers looked to ICES for the formulation of guidelines for data collection on Industry vessels and through the discussions it was made clear, that a prerequisite for an industry based data collection is that the reasons/objectives for collecting need to be clear, thus both industry and end-users (e.g. National institutes or ICES) need to clarify a clear feedback on how the data will be used and benefits of the survey. There was a broad agreement that observers and experts need to collaborate to make sure data are fit for purpose and are readily useable for stock assessments, in particular when building new time-series of data. Feedback is important in any systems used. Critical for engagement with industry, i.e. if data are provided, feedback on its use (or not) should be made.

LDAC expressed particular interest in deep-sea data collection and it was suggested that **WGDEEP should contact them directly when any benchmark plans are made**; ICES Secretariat will facilitate this contact. WGDEEP will need a clear definition in the Issue list for the benchmark outlining which information or sampling which is already available and where potential new sampling could be useful (i.e. gaps in data coverage).

NWWAC requested a specific meeting from ACs to be held over the data provision.

## 5 ICES advisory frameworks

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### 5.1 Advice on fishing opportunities

#### 5.1.1 ICES MSY approach for category 1 and 2 stocks

ICES MSY approach was discussed at several Advisory Councils meetings in 2017 and at the October meeting of NEAFC's Permanent Committee on Management and Science (PECMAS). Criticism was raised that the approach is not in accordance with international agreements and that the ICES MSY approach results in a conservative advice on fishing opportunities.

The ACOM Chair gave a presentation of the approach and invited MIACO to discuss the approach including the risk criteria applied by ICES in the approach.

There was general agreement that the approach ICES uses to give MSY-compliant advice for category 1 and 2 stocks is transparent. However, there was some concern that this may not be clear to all managers and stakeholders or outsiders to the process, in particular regarding the precautionary measures built in to the approach.

In particular there was concern that not all managers and stakeholders may realise that the choice of a 5% 'risk' (i.e.  $P(SSB < B_{lim})$ ) is their decision, and could be changed (the ACOM chair indicated that the managers had been informed about this at the MIRIA meeting). It was also unclear in what venue such issues could be discussed with managers, and there was interest in advice on how to facilitate such discussion. It was noted that it may be tricky getting MSC certification if a higher precautionary risk was accepted (e.g. 10%). In such cases, it would require managers to clearly support the change.

Some feel that the scope of advice, being in response to specific questions from clients, may be inadequate. ICES advice is an independent science answer to a specific question, and there are two sides involved. More room for interpretation of what is scientific and precautionary would be appreciated, rather than one figure in answer to a specific question.

Some concern was raised that  $F_{MSY}$  management may not be appropriate in the short term, since it evaluated to be appropriate 'on average', but in reality it will react to noise/changes in the short term. Recruitment estimation is more important in the short term.

##### 5.1.1.1 Conclusions

ICES MSY approach for category 1 and 2 stocks is considered transparent and appropriate. However, there was some concern that managers too easily default to the 5% risk level chosen by ICES as a standard.

##### 5.1.1.2 Action points

None.

#### 5.1.2 ICES MSY approach for category 3 and 4 stocks

ICES presented the initiatives to develop an MSY approach for category 3 and 4 stocks. The aim is develop an MSY advisory framework for stocks in categories 3 and 4, so stocks for which abundance indices provide trends and stocks for which only catch

data are available can be provisioned advice for according to MSY as well. The necessary data are in general available for many of such stocks; some biological data (growth, maturity, natural mortality...) and length–frequency distributions from catches or surveys, however the amount and quality of data are stock-dependent.

ICES held a scoping workshop (WKMSYCat34 in March 2017) to develop a roadmap for the development of a framework to provide MSY-based advice for these stocks. The outcome was an identification of criteria for stocks that could potentially be moved to Category 1 from Category 3 and 4, which would enable an MSY based advice. The workshop also identified potential MSY advice rules to be tested for stocks in categories 3 and 4, using the recently developed MSY proxy reference points. These were evaluated in a workshop in autumn (WKLIFEVII, 2–6 October 2017). The workshop concluded that the rules need additional tuning to achieve a satisfactory performance.

Two strands of work in 2018 through EU funding. Objective is to use rules in 2019 assessments for 2020 advice. More testing is needed, will take place at WKLIFE.

#### **5.1.2.1 Discussion**

The needed information for raising a stock to category 1 was discussed; obviously more knowledge is available and included in the assessment and this mean a better basis to provide advice. This may mean that the advice goes down, which has to be accepted.

It was questioned why data are collected on some stocks and not on others; the reasons for this are many. Some stocks are not fished, low in abundance, not under the landing obligation, rare deep-water species and all these reasons could result in a lack of data and knowledge. Tradition and history in terms of which stocks that have been asked advice for also plays a role.

There was a general appreciation that ICES has tried to adapt the way advice is given, trying to maintain the relevance of the advice. Additionally it was acknowledged that this type of development of advisory framework is facilitating an implementation of the CFP.

#### **5.1.2.2 Conclusions**

Current use of proxy reference points is going well, new rules are being developed at WKLIFE with the aim of providing advice in line with MSY, as for category 1 and 2 stocks. This work helps support current initiatives and is informative. Interest as to where this work will end up in 2019.

#### **5.1.2.3 Action points**

None.

### **5.1.3 Frequency of assessments**

The possibilities of reducing the frequency of assessments for category 1 and 2 stocks characterised either by having a zero catch advice or by being in good states with fishing at levels consistent with MSY and relative low catch of the recruiting year class was discussed at the 2017 MIRIA and MIACO meetings. Since then the issue has been discussed at bilateral meetings with clients, however no clear conclusions have been reached. ICES is still keen on moving forward on this with the aim of getting a better balance between workload and available resources.

#### 5.1.3.1 Conclusions

The ACs confirmed they were prepared to continue the discussion bilaterally with ICES.

#### 5.1.4 Reopening of advice

When ICES moved most of the stock assessment work to the first half of the year to be able to provide the advice on fishing opportunities before July as requested by the clients, ICES developed protocol for reopening of advice for a number of North Sea stocks when new information from fisheries-independent surveys become available after the advice has been issued.

MIRIA and MIACO discussed at the 2017 meetings a proposal from ICES for changing the timeline for release of advice for stocks currently addressed in the reopening process. It was agreed at the MIRIA meeting that ICES should await feedback from the EU and Norway before implementing any changes to the advice process. EU indicated that for 2018 advice for the North Sea stocks would still be needed before July.

ICES would still prefer to avoid giving advice for the same stock twice in a year and invite the Clients to consider changing the current process. The current systematic process for the North Sea stocks, where an advice is requested in June despite the survey indices not being available, makes a reopening necessary. There are several downfalls with this current process; the first advice appear miscredited by the reopening, and it appears biased that ICES only re-issue/reopen a stock, when indices are going up, and thus advice is increased; the reopening should go in both directions.

Experience shows that the important species in the North Sea are always updated in October, thus the advice from June is not really applied/used by some Clients. The suggestion is to revert to the previous timing for the North Sea advice, which was given in October. Some Clients will not accept advice that does not include all available indices, so for shared stocks a late advice provided only once, is suggested. However, the Commission need the June advice for internal preparation processes for negotiations, but is prepared for a bilateral discussion of the content/basis of the June advice.

ICES suggests to provide advice only once a year; there is awareness of the need for advice in June for some Clients, thus the type of advice needed at that point in time, where not all data on the respective stocks have been collated, need to be discussed in bilateral meetings.

#### 5.1.5 Landing obligation/discard ban

ICES provided a presentation on how the landing obligation and discard bans are addressed in ICES advice on fishing opportunities including how information on discards are obtained and the classification of catches as wanted or unwanted.

In terms of data collection and reporting from National data collectors, a transition phase is expected, and it will take at least a year before all parts are fully developed in the data collection framework which the apparent difference between the ICES DATRAS figures and the STECF database potentially is a consequence of.

Clarity is needed as to how data are being collected and what is needed in terms of monitoring and reporting by the fishing industry of discards. It is important to use the scientific estimates of catch and discards. In terms of access to vessels for observers, issues are solved within some regions, e.g. the Baltic, where there is a legal



basis to have scientific observers in vessels and that should be encouraged. It is important to agree on how to measure and use the data, because the responsibility for collecting the data is from member countries so we can get them. ICES needs support for this and MIACO was invited to provide inputs to the discussion on monitoring of discards under the landing obligation. It would be very useful to collect and use VMS data from observers, and it should be encouraged to have observers on board vessels.

There are several things that still need to be clarified, e.g. where the Below Minimum Size (BMS) catches are going to be included, for this ICES needs to develop the terminology and ensure that all Expert Groups are reporting and applying BMS data in a consistent manner. The format of presentation of data should be consistent, even when certain data are not available (e.g. represented as NA).

An important part of the discussion of BMS and how to provide operational advice under the landing obligation, is that discard rates may vary for a stock depending on the métier: e.g. discards of horse mackerel in the North Sea are high in the demersal fishery, but very limited for the pelagic fleets. This complicates the estimation of top-ups given by the managers, as these may not be applied to the fleets needing these. This clearly is a management issue, however, ICES advice needs to be fit for management purpose, so ICES could potentially consider presenting discards and BMS by métier.

#### **5.1.5.1 Discussion**

The survival exemptions were discussed, in particular the magnitude of these. In terms of advice, ICES will observe the development in discarding and use the recent year's data for the forecasts; there is no plan to predict the percentage of discards as this is highly variable and not feasible to model with certainty. For some stocks, e.g. Irish Sea plaice and Baltic salmon, survival studies exist which can be applied, provided that the survival data are representative of the fishery. There has been increased research due to landing obligation and discard bans, and experts are updated on these. In cases where studies are contradictory/reporting different survival rates, the validity and basis of the individual studies must be checked in order to apply the best possible scientific basis for estimation of discards survival. The Working Group on Methods for Estimating Discard Survival (WGMEDS) critically review current estimates of discard survival. WGMEDS informs the stock assessment groups.

A concern was expressed that the discard in the catch scenario table could lead to a 'false' TAC increase need in cases where discards are driven by sales of a specific quota. ICES, however, is using the proportion of discards-at-age over the latest three years for any forecast, and as such not a fixed ratio based on the catch advice. There are cases (e.g. Celtic sea haddock) where discards have been above minimum conservation rate and this is taken into account where possible. It would be highly useful if the fishing industry could provide solid records of discards, e.g. by systematically recording these. For advice, ICES is using scientifically estimated discards rather than the reported discards currently.

#### **5.1.5.1.1 Conclusions**

It was apparent that ICES must be very clear in communicating how the discard percentage and survival rate estimation is done. In terms of data, there were suggestions of making greater use of VMS data, given the somewhat limited observer coverage on

discards. It was also advocated that the tables from advice sheets should be comparable concerning discards for all stocks.

## 5.2 Management plans

The list of management plans known to the ICES Secretariat, was presented. Stakeholders were asked to comment on the list, alerting ICES if there are management plans for stocks, which are not mentioned in the list. Management plans which have been peer-reviewed, found precautionary, and agreed by all parties managing the stock, will be used as basis for ICES advice. Should plans exist which do not fulfill the demands, these can be used as basis for catch scenarios.

Management plan formulation is a complex process; the stakeholders asked ICES to actively involve ACs and other stakeholders in the process, while keeping the arms-length principle. The process of setting HCRs and the technical aspects, including evaluation of several scenarios and then basing the development of the basis of a management plan through designated workshops, could facilitate wider understanding of the resulting management plans. Workshops are open to all, thus collaboration is possible and the best way is to get interaction with stakeholders on management decisions, through scoping exercises and benchmarks. ICES is planning a Workshop to review recent developments in Management Strategy Evaluation and address the short-term issue raised by Norway, EU and the Faroe Islands. This Workshop will take place in early 2019.

ACs should keep themselves updated on upcoming benchmarks and workshops related to inputs to management plans (HCRs, reference points, etc.). ICES will facilitate the flagging of such events.

## 5.3 Frameworks for ecosystem advice

ACOM has developed a comprehensive framework for assessing the state of fish stocks and their exploitation and for providing advice on fishing opportunities. ICES does not have a similar framework for providing ecosystem advice, and to ensure that ICES ecosystem advice is consistent with international agreed objectives and developed in a transparent process, ICES is currently developing a set of frameworks for ecosystem advice. As part of this work ICES is planning a dialogue meeting for late 2018 or early 2019.

According to some Observers, fisheries management experts are not always informed about the MSFD and e.g. the status of GES on a regional basis. The Ecosystem Overviews were seen by some observers to be a step towards increasing the awareness of the MSFD in fisheries management.

## 6 Advisory deliverables

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### 6.1 Single-stock advice

The current format of the single-stock advice sheets was introduced in 2015. ICES has initiated work to create an interactive web-based platform for presenting advice.

The section “Information from stakeholders” has created some discussion in terms of what to include and who has the editorial rights over the section.

In 2018, ICES will include a column in the catch option table showing the change in the predicted catch compared to the advice for 2017.

The ACOM Chair presented the changes and updates to the advice sheet for the single-stock advice:

- For stocks where  $F_{MSY}$  ranges are calculated and presented in the advice, clients have requested a sentence to be added, stating that **ICES considers the whole range precautionary**.
- Where ICES used to use the words “catch options”, we will now use “**catch scenarios**” instead. This is to distinguish clearly between what ICES advises, and between other scenarios (which are NOT what ICES advises decision-makers to follow).
- For stocks where  $F_{MSY}$  ranges are calculated, **the 0.01 increments will no longer be shown** in the “catch scenarios” table.
- A new column will be added to the “catch scenarios” table: **% advice change**. This column will show the percentage change in advice between the current year and the previous time advice was provided for a given stock. This is something observers in particular have asked for. Any change in the advice, which is not accompanied by a change in the perception of the stock, will be clearly explained in the advice.

#### 6.1.1 Review of the current format of advice and discussion by MIACO on suggested possible changes

- Changes in the names of stocks and the stock codes are confusing. The building of databases has required a consistent and logical way of naming the stocks). The naming follows a “formula” and no new changes in stock names are expected.
- The addition of the “% advice change” column was positively received by the MIACO.
- It was mentioned that revisions and updates of advice should be flagged on the website somehow, especially significant changes to the advice. The word “replaced” in the file name of any advice that has undergone a correction or update is ensuring that the *latest* advice is easy to find on the ICES website.
- There should be interaction with stakeholders to determine what information should be included in databases of advice and results (web-based platform; the VISA request). E.g. all catch scenarios, date of advice, updates, etc.
- Length–frequency of discarded fish would be useful information. In the advice document, not just the WG report.

- Catch by fleet is currently part of the advice sheet, however, discards by fleet is not provided. MIACO expressed a wish for such an inclusion in future advice sheets where data can allow such a distinction of discards.

## 6.2 Fisheries and Ecosystem overviews

Fisheries Overviews (FO) have been published for the Baltic Sea and the Greater North Sea ecoregions. ACOM agreed in November 2016 to aim at releasing four overviews (Baltic Sea, Celtic Seas, North Sea and Norwegian and Barents Seas).

ICES has until September 2017 published six ecosystem overviews (Barents Sea, Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast, Celtic Seas, Greater North Sea, Icelandic waters, Norwegian Sea).

The resources allocated to the overviews by ICES Member Countries have, with a few exceptions, been relatively limited and the production of the overviews has taken a substantially longer time than anticipated. ICES is now aiming at publishing in 2018 FOs for the Norwegian and Barents Seas and the Celtic Seas and Ecosystem Overviews (EO) for the Baltic Sea and the Azores.

MIACO reviewed the overviews and commented on possible improvements.

### 6.2.1 Review of Fisheries overviews and discussion on possible improvements

MIACO had a series of points for consideration by ACOM regarding the EO and FO. The main points for the FOs were the following:

- Considered useful for Ecosystem based management and the ACs would like to be informed about development discussions/WKs.
- The word "extraction" is not liked when referring to fisheries. Prefer "**Removal of natural resources**".
- LDAC would appreciate a **NE Atlantic fisheries overview**.
  - Volunteer from Norway should be leading the process, so hopefully it will be done within two years; and LDAC would be interested in participating/providing inputs.
- Discard data and what these imply must be further specified in the FO; i.e. does these include Discards, BMS, other? This must be explicit.
- Aquaculture FO was discussed; there are some treatments in aquaculture may have a larger impact on fisheries than what is currently known (e.g. over medication, sea lice treatment impact on crustaceans).
  - Difficulty in aquaculture is the scale of the overviews. Aquaculture often more localised effects.
  - ICES has also advised on aquaculture impacts, and this will be cited in the document.

### 6.2.2 Conclusions

FO are considered useful, however with the risk of simplifying the Fisheries interactions and related management issues. The addition of mixed fisheries considerations were very welcomed. The underlying data for the FO should be easily accessible.

### **6.2.3 Review of Ecosystem overviews and discussion on possible improvements**

The EOs were discussed by MIACO, predominantly focusing on the intended use of these for management and the wider community. The main points were the following:

- The EO diagrams and the choice of colours was challenged; the red should be avoided as this per default signals danger.
- The choice of pressures seem to vary between regions based on expert choice of the most important pressures dependent on the scale. This is why eutrophication is part of some EOs and not others. Each of the ecoregions will have a WK to create and update the pressures and stakeholders are invited to participate in these WKs.
- Scale of the EOs was questioned. The EOs are at regional level; although they do include a subregional description, the priority pressures are at the regional ICES/MSFD scale.

### **6.2.4 Conclusions**

The presentation and more importantly the underlying choices of pressures and their evaluation need to be very clear in the EOs. Pressures need to be explained, and in particular why each pressure is chosen for each ecoregion and clearly outline how the work to compile the EO is done. It should be clear from ICES that the EO is not advice on separate issues, but rather a compilation of the most important pressures in each ecoregion.

## **7 ICES Advisory Workplan 2018**

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“Where to find the 2018 advisory process” (Doc 07) was presented. A Stakeholder/Observer Forum SharePoint site will be created: “Info regarding 2018 ICES Advisory Process.” The site will announce changes to the ICES calendar, upcoming Workshops and other information from ICES to ACs and other Observers.

There will be a competition with a prize for the best name for the site. The winner will be announced at MIACO 2019.

## **8 AOB**

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The chair thanked the participants for their active involvement, and asked for feedback for MIACO 2019. Several ACs commented that the MIACO 2018 had been the best for several years, as well as expressing thanks for the pre-MIACO meeting (which, the feeling was, should have its own name).

The PelAC expressed a wish for possible action points to come as quickly as possible for follow-up. ICES Secretariat was not in a position to honour this request for 2018; however, the Stakeholder/Observer Forum SharePoint site will be used as a fast-feedback platform for future meeting minutes.

The meeting ended at 12:55.

## Annex 1: List of participants

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## **Annex 2: List of Action Points**

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- Further development on communication and understanding of advice was concluded needed. ICES referred to a currently ongoing process under a special request from the EC on visual representation of advice.
- Critical control points in the assessment process need to be identified and made clear. Guidelines on how this is being done should be provided as published Technical Guidelines.
- Training of new scientists in fisheries modelling needs to be a priority and ICES should convey this to Member Countries via ICES Council.