

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ACOM)

10–12 March 2020

ICES Headquarters, Copenhagen, Denmark



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

H.C. Andersens Boulevard 44-46
DK-1553 Copenhagen V
Denmark
Telephone (+45) 33 38 67 00
Telefax (+45) 33 93 42 15
www.ices.dk
info@ices.dk

Recommended format for purpose of citation:

ICES. 2020. Minutes of the meeting of the ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM), Copenhagen, Denmark, 10–12 March 2020. 58 pp. <http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.7452>

The material in this report may be reused for non-commercial purposes using the recommended citation. ICES may only grant usage rights of information, data, images, graphs, etc. of which it has ownership. For other third-party material cited in this report, you must contact the original copyright holder for permission. For citation of datasets or use of data to be included in other databases, please refer to the latest ICES data policy on ICES website. All extracts must be acknowledged. For other reproduction requests please contact the General Secretary.

Contents

1	Welcome	5
2	Reflections on 2019 advice activities and process	5
2.1	Chair's report to ACOM.....	5
2.2	Vice Chairs' reports to ACOM	6
2.3	Head of Advisory Support report.....	7
2.4	ACOM members review	7
2.5	SCICOM	8
3	Advisory plan: progress on delivery and planning.....	8
4	Developmental work	11
4.1	Quality control/assurance of data and advice	11
4.2	Bycatch roadmap	13
4.3	Ecosystem framework and dialogue meeting.....	14
4.4	Precautionary reference points in the ICES fisheries advice framework.....	15
4.5	Resourcing and workload across the network and within ICES.....	16
4.6	Benchmarks	17
4.7	Identifying needs	21
4.8	Update on Workshop on the Realigning of the Ecosystem Observation Steering Group (WKREO) <i>A presentation of the report of the workshop.</i>	22
5	Operational challenges.....	23
5.1	Standing request for 0 TAC advice, expertise, resources and approach	23
5.2	Discards and survivability (wanted/unwanted)	24
5.3	MSY advice- North Sea herring	25
5.4	Reporting back from benchmarks and workshops	25
5.5	Reporting back from ADGs.....	27
5.6	TAF implementation	27
5.7	Ecoregions document	27
5.8	Data limited approaches.....	28
5.9	Consistent approach to changing productivity in fisheries advice	29
5.10	Introduction to the advice/advice basis	30
5.11	Stakeholder engagement.....	30
5.12	Lessons from mackerel	31
5.13	Recommendations from expert groups.....	31
6	Additional issues on delivery of advice	31
6.1	Advice view	31
6.2	Fisheries Overviews	32
6.3	Delivery of advice online.....	33
6.4	Progress on and commitments to overviews and viewpoints	33
7	Roundtable reflections on ACOM 2020.....	35
8	Contingency COVID 19	35
8.1	Physical meetings.....	35
8.2	Special Requests	36
8.3	Recurrent requests	37
8.4	Advice sheets	37
9	Closing	39
10	List of decisions and actions	40
	Decisions.....	40
	Actions 41	
	Annex 1 List of participants.....	42
	Annex 2 Agenda	44
	Annex 3. Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of ACOM on 28 th April 2020 to re-evaluate ACOM response to the Covid-19 pandemic disruption.	50

Annex 4. Prioritisation of Generic ToRs for Regional and Species Working Groups..... 55

1 Welcome.

ACOM was welcomed and business began with the code of conduct, review of action points from consultations and review of membership.

The meeting was opened by the ACOM Chair Mark Dickey-Collas who gave a warm welcome to all participants (Annex 1). The meeting was attended by 19 member countries, the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the ACOM Leadership, Chair of the Fisheries Resources Steering Group (FRSG), the Chair of Science Committee and representatives from the ICES Secretariat. Apologies were received from Canada. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the representatives from the Faroe Islands, Ireland, Sweden and US attended the meeting via WebEx. ACOM was invited to review and update the ACOM membership list. Changes should be reported to the Secretariat.

The Chair informed that long term member of ACOM Yury Efimov, Russia, had retired and that also Joanne Morgan, Canada, would retire in 2020. Greetings and best wishes were passed on to both.

A special welcome was given to new ACOM members Niels Hintzen, the Netherlands, and Yury Kovalev, Russia, and ACOM alternate Marcos Llope who all attended an ACOM meeting for the first time.

The ICES Code of Conduct was presented and considered by the meeting.

The list of action points from the ACOM consultations in September 2019 were reviewed, overall only 4–5 points had not yet been dealt with. The Chair thanked members for having worked hard since the September meeting, outstanding issues would be dealt with under the different agenda items for this meeting.

The Chair presented the structure of the meeting and the agenda that had been agreed prior to the meeting on the ACOM Forum and participants were asked to let the Chair know if information on additional specific topics was needed.

Due to the COVID-19 disruption, the agenda was rescheduled during the meeting and also shortened by one day. Some agenda items were postponed and time was spent on outlining actions for the entire spring advice under COVID19 restrictions (Section 8).

<i>Decision: 1.1 ACOM confirmed that there were no conflicts of interest.</i>

2 Reflections on 2019 advice activities and process

2.1 Chair's report to ACOM

ACOM was invited to comment on the report from the ACOM chair.

The report highlighted the main advice activities in 2019. In terms of advice provision, the majority of the Category 1-2 advice are provided following the ICES MSY framework or a management plan. For Category 3, only one has a management plan and the focus in 2020 must be working towards a provision of MSY based advice for stocks in Category 3. WKLIFE is focusing on

this, potential benchmarks could occur and the ICES community should be encouraged to take part of such developments.

The Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews have expanded in coverage and there is good progress in particular for the Ecosystem Overviews.

QA/QC processes will have a lot of attention during 2020, ICES is already world leading in terms of such safeguards and will become even better with the web-services, governance groups, etc. already established or in the pipeline. Web services has been developed for guidelines, protocols and data access portals have been further developed. TAF will provide scripts through GitHub and portals will be developed to facilitate extractable results, advice, etc. Stakeholders and Requesters are demanding a focus on QA and the accreditation process will be the vessel for such development.

2.2 Vice Chairs' reports to ACOM

ACOM was invited to comment on the report from the ACOM vice-chairs

Ghislain Chouinard overall report was satisfactory and acknowledged the work from ICES Secretariat.

- System for attendance at ADG appears to be working well.
- There is scope for improvement in audits during working groups given the number and types of issues detected during ADGs.
- Comments from ACOM on draft advice are generally good; it is equally important to signify having read the advice when no comments are made.

Colm Lordan reported on quality assurance, mixfish and rebuild.

- Quality assurance: MIRIA and MIACO acknowledged the ICES progress on quality assurance. However, there are still many issues pending and a number of benchmark processes had quality issues and errors were detected before and after. There is a need for a "fit for purpose" benchmark process with proper resources and plan.
- Mixfish: The group struggled with resources but received a very clear signal from policy makers and managers that they want this type of advice. There is a strategic long-term plan with mixed fisheries advice especially on the economic and spatial analysis.
- Rebuild: The message conveyed has 3 elements: the level of rebuild, risk and timeframe acceptable. There has been criticism on precautionary approach reference points and precautionary approach over MSY advice. ICES will need to come back to that. One possibility would be to hold a workshop to rethink the advisory framework, definition of MSY Btrigger; it is often too late to rebuild when it is close to Blim.

Henn Ojaveer thanked the Secretariat and ACOM for a good year. He focused on 3 major points: Overviews, roadmap for bycatch advice and viewpoints.

- Ecosystem (EO), Fisheries (FO) and Aquaculture overviews (AO): There has been great progress and communication with science groups and steering group chairs. The list is as follows:
 - Technical guidelines for EOs will be finalized soon
 - FOs for all ecoregions except for the Arctic Ocean will be published by the end of this year
 - AOs have now a more concrete plan, thanks to Norwegian ACOM member, with the first overview to be published for the Norwegian Sea ecoregion.

- Roadmap for bycatch: This topic will be presented later. There have been extensive internal and external consultations on developing a roadmap for bycatch advice at ICES.
- Viewpoints: ACOM has indicated earlier that is not entirely satisfied with the development of viewpoints. As a result of continued extensive discussions with HAPISG chair and several expert groups, there are 3 new viewpoints in the pipeline.

Eugene Nixon presented the reflections from his first year as learning and exciting year. He was involved in environment advice of broad range: from wet renewables to impact on the seabed.

He highlighted the uniqueness of ICES advice is the amazing commitment by experts. As such, is a very valuable resource to exploit and nurture although it is currently being very pressed.

2.3 Head of Advisory Support report

ACOM was invited to comment on the report from the head of advice support.

The 2019 annual cycle had been similar to previous years but at the same time different. The workload had been high with special request have becoming more complex and with shorter deadlines. This leads long discussions with requesters. In addition last year some experts were not able to deliver and request had to be rejected. Also quality assurance was a demanding task.

Head of Advisory Support reminded ACOM that they are ICES and ACOM ambassadors, but she also stated that working with ACOM had become easier, it had become much easier to get responses and that this was highly appreciated.

The ambassadorship in national institutes continues to be important, for some ICES is still seen as the Secretariat. Would ACOM be able to facilitate a stronger feel of a community at the national level by introducing themselves and discussing ACOM work in their institutes with the experts?

To ease the workload of ACOM members and bring in more expertise to ACOM, the ACOM members were suggested to consider recruiting (more) alternates.

2.4 ACOM members review

ACOM members were individually invited to review and comment on the advisory activities and process and the performance of ACOM.

Several themes emerged:

- Benchmark processes are improving, a clear benefit is seen when stocks are well resourced, but data remains a huge issue regardless of all of the work done to date on quality assurance.
- Communicating large swings in the ICES advice is a real challenge (e.g. Eastern Baltic cod). The advice is more and more difficult to present and understand due to a lack of consistency between years and is more complicated. We are spending too much time in ADGs wordsmithing long and complex advice documents. Let's simplify.
- National institutes continue to struggle to resource (i.e. staff and fund) ICES work; these difficulties vary by country, but overall institutes continue to struggle and some asked for help in articulating why ICES work is important to resource, while others asked that the Secretariat cc' ACOM Members when they communicate with ICES scientists. The new procedures for staffing special requests and ADGs has improved

national participation. To further this, ICES should look at improved funding mechanisms for ecosystem groups, as this is a limiting factor for many, and stronger requester involvement in the overviews.

- Moving beyond single-stock advice. The MIXFISH advice has had many issues and these need to be resolved going forward. In one respect, the struggle(s) with MIXFISH may be beneficial as it provides focus on this advice by requesters and the ICES community; this type of advice should be our main advice product. Improved methods are needed for category 5 and 6 stocks.
- Data challenges are diverse, from preparing for benchmarks to driving the DCF in order to improve our assessments. ICES needs to address the survivability information and the landings obligation in Nephrops assessments and advice. ICES needs a very good look at what data are available, used/not used, with more support from the Secretariat.
- Stakeholder and observer involvement has improved, but sometimes their role is getting a bit confused between ADGs and workshops (e.g. ADGsandeel and the sardine process). We should improve the description of the role of observers.

Twenty years ago fisheries science was focused on the very high F which was well above sustainable levels and the rest did not matter. Today, where significant reductions in F have been achieved, ICES and requesters are working on management plans and we are seeing and communicating changes that we did not care about before and we need to improve the delivery of our advice

2.5 SCICOM

ACOM was invited to comment on the report of SCICOM activities of relevance to ACOM.

The SCICOM Chair provided a report of SCICOM activities of relevance to ACOM. On the issue of renew the SG chairs it was pointed out that not many people have shown interest in filling the role in part because there is a lack of understanding on the actual SG role and what would be required.

Another issue in relation to the viewpoints and aquaculture related working groups is that they will be more involved in the Advisory process in the future.

3 Advisory plan: progress on delivery and planning

ACOM was invited to comment and further endorse the coverage, planning and delivery of tasks for the advisory plan priority areas, and update on current progress. Plan action for gaps.(Doc 3).

Four priority areas (Assuring quality, Incorporate innovation, Sharing evidence, Evolving advice) were considered.

The objectives of the advisory plan are:

1. Enhance credibility and transparency of advice, following FAIR and TAF principles
2. Move towards ecosystem advice and better utilise the science and data available in ICES
3. Share and communicate advice better to meet the stakeholders/ requestors needs

The subgroups reported back to ACOM and the timelines and responsibilities for the task were adapted as described below.

Assuring quality

Assure that quality encompasses the entire process from data collection to the publication of objective and independent advice.

Tasks and delivery of those tasks:

1. As part of the quality assurance framework (QAF), map out process flows and critical control points and feedback loops in the advisory system and begin to address identified critical control points
2. Seek international quality accreditation for ICES advisory system
3. Develop a comprehensive quality management system for advice including implementing Regional Database and Estimation System (RDBES), TAF, etc.
4. Where possible ensure that all advice products are based on data that adhere to the FAIR principles
5. Application and ongoing development of the benchmark system to ensure the advice is fit for the evolving advisory demands

	Responsible	Timeline
1.1	ACOM/ secretariat/WGQUALITY	Need to link to benchmarks and other processes
1.2	ACOM/ secretariat	Data end 2020, Advice end 2023
1.3	secretariat	End 2022
1.4	ACOM/SCICOM	End 2021 (80% of advice) all advice by 2023
1.5	ACOM	ongoing

Incorporating innovation

Incorporate new knowledge into the advisory process to contribute effectively to the creation of advice on meeting conservation, management and sustainability goals.

Tasks and delivery of those tasks:

1. Scan and evaluate new knowledge, from inside and outside ICES community, to assess if it can support state-of-the-art advice on meeting conservation, management, and sustainability goals
2. Review and report on best practices in other agencies and management systems to inform future development of advice
3. Support translation of mature science into Viewpoints or Ecosystem Overviews
4. Engage stakeholders and advice recipients to develop current and future advice products
5. Engage funding agencies to develop/recommend approaches to project calls and design that increase uptake of science into advice

	Responsible	Timeline
2.1	ACOM/SCICOM	Ongoing, with annual reporting in Sept. for info; decisions for actions to be taken in March
2.2	ACOM	End 2021; revisited periodically (every N th ?) year
2.3	ACOM/SCICOM	Ongoing; with annual reporting in Sept. for info; decisions for actions to be taken in March

	Responsible	Timeline
2.4	ACOM	Ongoing – MIRIA, MIACO, Workshops
2.5	SCICOM/Council	Ongoing; with annual reporting in Sept. for info; decisions for actions to be taken in March

Sharing evidence

Effectively share evidence and advice with requesters and society, and develop a responsive dialogue with partners to maintain relevance.

Tasks and delivery of those tasks:

1. Improve and ensure branding of all ICES advice products
2. Design and develop a user friendly and dynamic web platform for ICES advice in dialogue with requesters
3. Develop web-based advice that includes several levels/layers (incl. popular advice, forecast options, full advice) and also enables presentation of advice in an effective and consistent format
4. Work with the fishing industry to develop a mechanism to bring commercially derived sample data into the RDBES
5. Improve the mechanism for sharing alternative perceptions of the state of stocks and fisheries
6. Simplify the opening advice lines, but connect to the underlying basis and data in an interactive way
7. Ensure that ICES advisory highlights are made available to society in a user-friendly way
8. Ensure corrections in advice and updates in the advisory products will be transparent and easily tracked by the requesters
9. Improve the advice profile in ICES document archive, encourage the creation of an ICES online library for all documents

	Responsible	Timeline
4.1	ACOM/ secretariat	End 2020 and communicated to ACOM for support
4.2	ACOM/ secretariat/ external projects	End 2021 with decision making by ACOM
4.3	ACOM/ secretariat/ external projects	End 2021 with decision making by ACOM
4.4	ACOM working with workshops	End 2022
4.5	ACOM	End 2023
4.6	ACOM	End 2020
4.7	ACOM/ secretariat	End 2020 – format agreed but should be ongoing
4.8	ACOM/ secretariat	Ongoing – need conversation about “replaced” preferred “outdated”.
4.9	SCICOM/secretariat	End 2021

Evolving advice

Evolve the advice to remain relevant to policy developments and management challenges while horizon scanning likely future evidence needs.

Tasks and delivery of those tasks:

1. Map with requesters their current and potential future policy initiatives and management objectives; document their potential impact on the provision of advice
2. Develop an ecosystem advice framework
3. Identify and develop new requesters for ICES advice e.g. marine energy and spatial planning
4. Develop a stronger base in scoping and stakeholder engagement
5. Investigate mechanisms and examples of assuring independence of advice in systems with increasing stakeholder participation, and more consultations and iterations with requesters
6. Identify associated data and information needs related to policy developments, the concept of risk and thresholds for ecosystem health

	Responsible	Timeline
5.1	ACOM	Ongoing
5.2	ACOM	End 2020
5.3	ACOM	Ongoing
5.4	ACOM/ SCICOM	Ongoing –end 2021
5.5	ACOM/ SCICOM	Ongoing – end 2021
5.6	ACOM/ SCICOM	Ongoing – with IEA & CEA expert groups

Decision: 3.1 ACOM maintained support and made minor changes to the tasks in the advisory plan.

Action: 3.1 ACOM leadership and secretariat to work further on the tasks.

4 Developmental work

4.1 Quality control/assurance of data and advice

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate after the presentation of progress for accreditation of quality assurance for data and estimation methods in ICES will be reported to ACOM. Also on the discussions at MIRIA & MIACO for a workshop on quality assurance of advice. The proposal to form WGQUALITY and SCICOM discussions on data and DIG will also be highlighted. (Doc 04a).

ACOM leadership presented a power point on Quality assurance of Data and Advice. The main points were:

- Advice plan - Assuring quality
- Recent Developments
- Progress on quality control of data
- Progress on TAF
- Quality issues in 2019

- WGQUALITY
- WKFORBIAS outcomes

The presentation was well received and discussed by ACOM.

One of the questions asked related with what are the international frameworks and standards behind ICES proposals.

In reply, it was pointed that many of the international certifications follow similar approaches and ICES is the first of its kind to try to implement certification to its products. The ICES Data Centre has chosen the Core Trust Seal following some National Institutes that have been using successfully this certification. However, on the advice side, no decision has been made and multiple options are being looked at and as an example, PGDATA suggested the Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System as potential route.

All products coming out of ICES are expected to be of high standard and where QA should be applied to all its products. As part of this process to optimise and improve the quality of its products ICES has, identifying where errors tend to occur and measures are put in place to minimise its occurrence.

It was recognised that TAF plays an important role in this process and one of its strengths is that it forces all assessments to map the data flows within the system, which helps identify critical points. Likewise, at benchmarks everything is checked and control points are identified. Another good example of implemented QA is the VMS data call. Different stages are checked for consistency and quality using scripts, which make possible to check the quality of this enormous data set.

Another point of discussion was the tools used to raise catch data Intercatch, RDB and RDBES. Currently, ICES uses Intercatch and member countries upload pre-raised data. ICES has limited knowledge on what happens at this stage but once the RDB and RDBES are setup, catch raising procedures will be done within the system increasing transparency and reproducibility.

The start of the accreditation should take place by the end of 2020 and the completion time is expected to be by 2023. However, some ACOM members raised concerns regarding the deployment of the RDBES, and its timeline as there is a tendency to slip deadlines. It was stated that, efforts should be made to ensure this does not happen to the deployment of the RDBES as it is seen as key for a successful accreditation. Moreover, the RDBES probably needs to be in place before the advice products can be accredited.

Some concerns were also raised regarding the target date for having the RDB up and running. It is expected all member states to be uploading their data into the RDB in 2022. However, although this is technically possible politically it is difficult for some countries to share data.

Finally, the new proposed WGQUALITY future role will be further discussed but it is seen as a key element of the quality assurance and quality control future at ICES. Being this a key EG it was proposed that steering groups chairs should be involved somehow in the discussions and participation in the EG.

Decision: No decisions necessary, other than further support for the process.

Action: No new actions arising.

4.2 Bycatch roadmap

ACOM was invited to comment and asked to approve the roadmap. The draft bycatch roadmap was presented to ACOM. The roadmap describes research and advisory needs for assessing the impacts of bycatch by fisheries on non-target populations of sea mammals, birds and fish. Regional seas conventions and the EU require more robust evidence from ICES. If accepted by ACOM, it will be further circulated to advice requesters and stakeholders. (Doc 04b).

ACOM leadership explained why ICES have started the roadmap and described the background, objectives, discussions on the next steps, legislative instruments requiring bycatch data and the experts groups involved in bycatch roadmap. The roadmap was drafted by ACOM leadership with the help and input from the Secretariat. It was circulated to the relevant expert groups and was presented at MIRIA, MIACO and WGCHAIRS meetings to get input from requesters of advice, stakeholders and experts. Lastly, a second round of feedback was received from WGBYC and WGMME.

The goal of the roadmap is to include incidental bycatch in the fisheries overviews by 2022.

The list of objectives is as follows:

- Cooperate with international organizations, including: ASCOBAMS, ACOBAMS, GFCM, OSPAR and HELCOM.
- Establish the ICES bycatch fish species list by 2021
- Operationalize the bycatch advice through special request(s).
- Collect information, identify new data sources and propose options for improving data availability

There are a number of strategic developments associated to the roadmap for ICES advice on bycatch:

- Development of new indicators and estimation methods of bycatch (include WGECO).
- Methodological work to set thresholds values for bycatch.
- New metrics to measure fishing effort for different fisheries.
- Assess cumulative effects of human activities (include WGCEAM).
- Investigate if an improved resolution will improve the advice (include WGSFD).
- Additional and specific issues: what are the circumstances of the bycatch?

ACOM responded that the document is impressive: very ambitious and complete. However, the timeline for the main goal seems ambitious. It was noted that consultations with RCGS were missing in the process and were seen as important, especially in the upcoming technical meetings where WGBYC attends.

A number of comments were received for the strategic developments:

- ICES list of bycatch species by 2021 should be aligned to end users consultations between DCF.
- -Examples from potential new data sources are needed. The vice-chair responded that it includes research projects, new developments, non-routine data(for example, data from NGOs and other types of data for evidence provision).

Others in ACOM were happy to see progress on an area that is beyond ICES traditional expertise and asked whether an assessment for whales or other bycatch should be included. It was noted that birds were included in the roadmap and discussion followed about the role of JWGBIRD.

The links to Mixfish and the challenge to what ICES means by bycatch advice were noted.

Decision: 4.2.1 ACOM approved the roadmap and continuing process as described in Doc 04b.

Action: 4.2.1 continue process described in Doc 04b.

Note: The bycatch roadmap was published in May 2020 as an advice product: https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2020/2020/Roadmap_ICES_Bycatch_Advice.pdf

4.3 Ecosystem framework and dialogue meeting

ACOM was invited to comment and asked to support further development of the framework and planning for the dialogue meeting. ACOM was presented with the progress made by the ACOM subgroup on both the ecosystem framework and the structure and dates for the dialogue meeting will be reported to ACOM (Doc 04c).

Questions were raised about the clarity of the scoping and focus of Doc 04c. It was suggested it might benefit from further revision. The main issue for ACOM is how to engage with the formulation of ecosystem advice: this pillar of advice was developed through communication between ACOM-Secretariat-Advice requesters. ACOM needs to consider where and how to include the network in this process between ACOM-Secretariat-Advice requesters. Further discussions followed about the nature of the work of the subgroup and the structure required for the ecosystem framework.

It was suggested that the presentation seemed broader than the subgroup terms of reference, and the important point is to have an operational Ecosystem Framework to help address a wide range of requests, not a response that depends on each request. The framework should provide a method to approach each request in an integrated way. Another ACOM member had the impression that the method and framework need to be developed towards the goal of providing quantitative advice. Annex 3 of the Ecosystem Framework document (Doc 04c) provides guidance and methods on how to set up a framework; the disagreement is how much of the process is described there.

The fisheries MSY advice framework was developed and then the guidelines were released. Similarly, the Ecosystem Framework should be developed and then the internal guidelines created.

The issue was further discussed by a small group away from plenary and a proposal brought back to ACOM (Figure 4.3.1). This focused on integrating some key components of the initial proposal into the introduction of advice, and ensuring that a description of process for both fisheries and ecosystem recurrent advice and special requests be summarised in the Introduction of Advice.

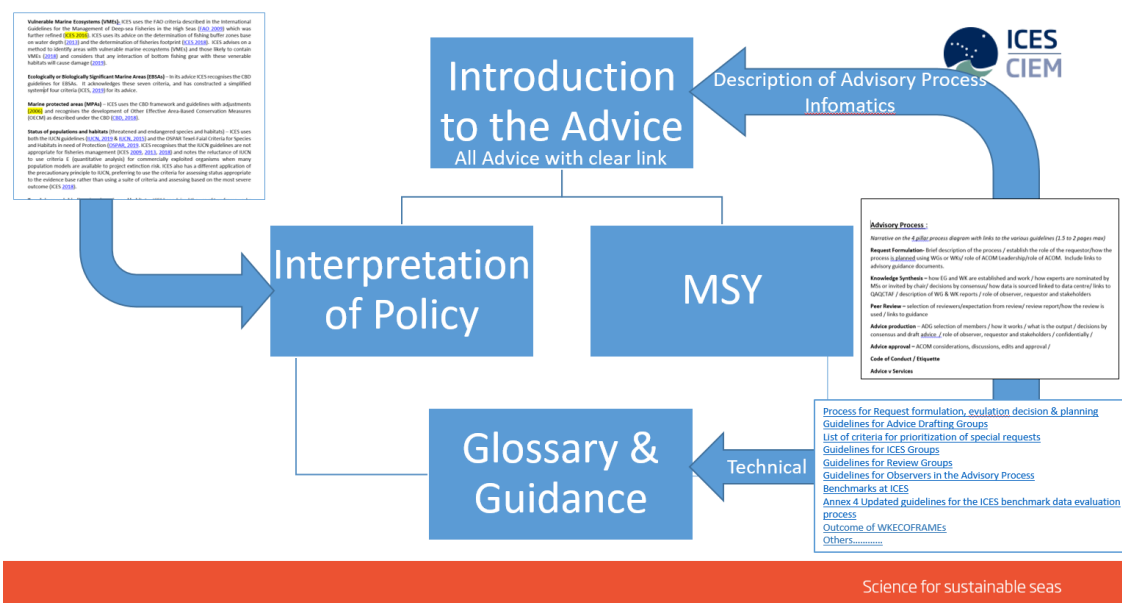


Figure 4.3.1. Agreed approach to the ecosystem framework.

Decision: 4.3.1 ACOM leadership to further develop the ecosystem framework within the overall structure of the Advice basis (chapter 1.2 of ICES advice <https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2019/2019/Introduction%20to%20advice%202019.pdf>) and report by September 2020 to ACOM.

Action: 4.3.1. ACOM leadership to work further with the subgroup to develop the framework (the core components) to sit in the introduction to the advice.

4.4 Precautionary reference points in the ICES fisheries advice framework

ACOM was invited to comment and approve the subgroups recommendations on the progress and recommendations made by the ACOM subgroup on precautionary reference points (Doc 04d).

The subgroup outlined the current basis for F_{pa} , a proposal to define the stock and recruit types being used in the introduction to advice. Also an idea for a more practical guide to reference point calculation for experts, the proposed workshop on reference points and advice framework, and a proposal for edits to the current guidance.

The group had reviewed the derivation of F_{pa} across categories (1–6) and established that there was not great consistency or an evidence base to define the uncertainty associated with F_{pa} . Conceptually F_{pa} would have the same definition as $F_{p0.5}$, and concluded that $F_{p0.5}$ (with the ICES advice rule) should be rebranded as F_{pa} . However, this would mean that there was now an inconsistency with F_{lim} (as this is defined without the advice rule) and $F_{p0.5}$ may be based on a different Stock-recruit function than F_{pa} is currently.

The subgroup concluded that we need to await the outcome of WKGMSE3 when considering a hierarchy in the way reference points are derived. A better estimate of advice error that includes both potential bias, lags and uncertainty is needed. In practice it is difficult to estimate advice error accurately during a benchmark.

The current guidelines were then reviewed and not including F_{cap} in the reference points table was discussed, given that it is not really a reference point. It was also concluded that the F_{msy} ranges should not be included in this table as they are related to management plans. It was decided that a practical implementation of the guidelines model would be beneficial.

It was agreed that in the future ACOM would ask expert groups to record S-R type – to give examples and make more quantitative guidelines. For stocks with no clear S-R type more work is needed to explore whether reference points based on a fraction of B_0 or B_{MSY} would be more appropriate.

Rebrand Fp.05 as Fpa

Some of the ACOM members felt that they had already spent a long time describing to people what F_{pa} is, so to change the definition would be problematic. It was felt that there would be misunderstandings and additional work without achieving anything and hurting the credibility of ICES. ACOM leadership agreed to speak offline and explain the rationale to those who were concerned.

ACOM said they could agree to the change, as it was important to make the framework simpler.

Others wanted to know if there had been time spent asking groups how many stocks were going to need to go through work to get rid of the inconsistencies involved with this change. There were also worries that stakeholders/industry would ask how we calculate reference points, and that it was becoming very complex, and technically we can be transparent, but we are moving in the wrong direction regarding how many people can understand it. ACOM leadership replied that the problem currently is that we have layered the PA approach on time of the MSY approach. Regarding the impact assessment on stocks, he said that it was difficult to do this because we don't properly capture the $F_{p0.5}$ anywhere currently. It was discussed whether there was a hybrid approach that could be used this year and then adjusted in the guidelines as we go forward.

A workshop on reference points to be organised once WKREBUILD report is finalised and the Workshop on reference points in a changing environment (WKRChange) will occur in Quarter 3 2020.

Decision: 4.4.1 Rebrand Fp.05 as Fpa. For stocks where Fp05 cannot be estimated the current Fpa method can be used.

Action: 4.4.1 ACOM Leadership to post the new guidance to the forum for comments by end of April.

4.5 Resourcing and workload across the network and within ICES

ACOM was invited to comment on Council efforts to resolve the expertise and workload crisis across the expert group network.

There are several initiatives aimed at resolving the resourcing issues by expanding the network of available experts. The ICES Council is working to develop a training program to develop quantitative skills in North America; WKED will meet the week of June 15, 2020, with participants and educators expected from approximately 15 institutions. ICES Bureau, and EFARO, is working to get European members to funnel EMFF funding to support this effort. ICES highlights this issue to DGMARE, NEAFC and Norway in every bilateral meeting. ACOM members

were asked to share other ICES-relevant initiatives with the ACOM chair via email. Comments focused not on increasing the number of experts, this was largely seen as beside the point, but rather focused on using ICES experts in meaningful and relevant ways than we are today (e.g. we are wasting expert time with word-smithing, writing long reports, long meetings). We need to work to make ICES more attractive to young scientists.

Additional comments are summarized here.

- To make expert groups more appealing to scientists and to reduce workload at the ADG, it was suggested to team ICES Professional Officers with stock assessors to draft main body of text (not tables and figures). This can act as a type of training in how to draft advice.
- Limit the number of additional ToRs and time spent beyond the core tasks. As more data and results available are online, many of the additional questions can be obtained from those sources (efficiently). These additional ToRs distract from the core work. Let the core business, be the core business.
- Stop the reopening of the advice. Stocks subject to reopening should be moved completely to the autumn to reduce workload. Nephrops should be collected into a single Nephrops WG.
- Carefully consider the calendar and work plan. Back to back meetings of the WGNSSK and WGCSE is not sustainable as there is too little time after the WGCSE to finalize the report, to audit the stocks properly, and to adjust the advice sheet before the ADGCS.
- Data problems should be expected. When data problems are encountered, experts should have more freedom to make decisions.
- ICES is evolving more and more to digital ways for retrieving information, drafting the advice in the current way need to be questioned. Drafting advice in the EGs is largely a waste of time. We should consider a focus on content rather than long, word-smithed texts in plenary. Consider that for some stocks, only the advice statement, graphs, tables and catch options are needed. 'Sensitive' stocks can have an extensive ADG.
- Training opportunities are needed, preferably not in the assessment season.

Action: 4.5.1 ACOM to highlight the expertise needs and resource shortages during all relevant opportunities.

4.6 Benchmarks

Progress and recommendations made by the ACOM subgroup on benchmarks was presented. ACOM was asked to comment and approve the subgroups recommendations (Doc 04f).

The ACOM Benchmark Sub Group's report was presented to ACOM. This report proposed to use the Benchmark Steering Group's 2016 ASC proposal that has yet to be implemented as the basis of this new 2020 proposal to ACOM. ACOM considerations ran over a number of days, using breakout groups and plenary discussion. In general, the contents of the Sub Group's report was endorsed by ACOM with the exception of having an ACOM member identified to shadow each benchmark as this was not considered to be useful.

ACOM agreed that the concept of a benchmark in ICES was based on a set of **principles**, and the process should include various **elements**. These principles are to be supported by a best practice and guidelines document. In other words, a benchmark in ICES is a process that adheres to a set of principles and contains certain elements. It is not a pre-prescribed process in itself.

ACOM March 2020 decision on Benchmarks

The Principles of an ICES Benchmark

1. Adequate peer review is a cornerstone of ICES advice.
2. ICES is using a flexible benchmark system tailored to the current advice requests and based on the strong elements of the former 2016 benchmark proposal and the current benchmark process.
3. The scope of ICES benchmarks is to review data and methods in support of the production of all types of ICES recurrent advice where the approaches can be expected to be valid for some period of time.
4. Benchmarks are to be conducted at the scale that is most appropriate given the issues to address. Benchmarks conducted at the regional scale are desirable but not always possible.
5. Appropriate oversight and a sense of ownership is applied to integrate benchmarks in the ICES advisory system.
6. Benchmarks are prioritized to ensure peer review efforts are best placed.

Elements of a benchmark system

1. Identification, prioritization and approval of benchmarks as per the approach followed since 2019.
2. Benchmark process that includes scoping (with identification of resources and deadlines), data evaluation workshops, progress meetings and a final benchmark workshop tailored to the issues to be addressed by the process.
3. Increased oversight and support for benchmarks achieved through a Benchmark Oversight Group (BOG, see terms of reference below)
4. Review of benchmark processes.
5. Formal endorsement or identification of remedial measures by ACOM for completed benchmark processes.

The best practice and guidance documents should include:

- Identification of benchmark needs
 - Expert groups identify and monitor issues related to data and analyses, identify potential solutions and propose benchmarks.
 - ACOM can also identify benchmarks that should be conducted.
- Prioritization process and schedule
 - Prioritization scheme to be used to inform decision on benchmarks to be conducted in the coming year.
 - The process is also used to provide tentative list of benchmarks for the following year.
- Frequency and timelines of benchmark processes
 - Frequency is determined by scientific need and the possibility to improve analyses taking into account the capacity and readiness.
 - Timelines are flexible and should be longer for complex issues.
- Appropriate benchmark processes are to be used as follows:
 - Benchmark: a complete review of data, methods and approaches with adequate scoping to establish or update analyses that provide the basis for advice.
 - Inter-benchmark: a partial review to fix an assessment or analysis issue in order to be able to provide advice.
 - Review: a check on minor issues that are mostly technical in nature.

- Adequate oversight and ownership through:
 - A Benchmark Oversight Group (BOG, see ToRs below) with role to:
 - i. develop solutions to address generic issues with benchmarks.
 - ii. review completed benchmarks and recommend remedial actions as necessary.
 - iii. prepare proposal of the list of benchmarks to be conducted for approval by ACOM.
- Communication
 - Regular internal and external communication is an important contributor to benchmark success.
- Approval and endorsement of benchmark results
 - ACOM reviews, then endorses / identifies issues to be resolved from benchmarks.
 - The review is conducted rapidly following benchmarks using summaries prepared by ICES professional officers.
- Flexibility vs 'recipe'
 - Assessment procedures between benchmarks should follow the process agreed during the benchmark.
 - Any flexibility in procedures should be identified during the benchmarks.
- Process to be followed in case of benchmark failures
 - Delays in the provision of data for benchmark are examined by ACOM and could result in the postponement or cancellation of a benchmark process.
 - If possible, the existing basis for advice is maintained until the issues can be re-examined and resolved.
 - If it is not possible to keep the existing basis, advice may be provided using simpler approaches (e.g. downgrade assessment category) or the advice may be postponed.
 - In all cases of benchmark failures, ACOM is to determine next steps including extending the benchmark process or terminating it.

Terms of reference for the Benchmark Oversight Group (BOG) be established in ACOM to focus on benchmark issues. The purpose of the group will be to:

- a) explore and propose solutions to address generic issues with benchmarks.
- b) conduct an annual review of benchmarks conducted and recommend any remedial actions to address unresolved issues, inconclusive or incomplete benchmarks to ACOM.
- c) using the prioritization process, recommend the list of benchmarks to be conducted in year+1 and year+2 to ACOM.

The BOG should be composed of the FRSG chair, a member of the ACOM Leadership, at least one ACOM member (preferably 2), a SCICOM member and a Professional Officer from the ICES Secretariat. The BOG should report to ACOM at the annual ACOM meeting, at the consultations held during the Annual Science Conference and as necessary through the ACOM Forum with the purpose to propose actions for approval by ACOM and discuss benchmark issues that need further exploration and consideration.

ACOM also provided further insight to the BOG by answering the following questions:

1. *What would be good practices that expert group could use to monitor analytical issues and prepare adequately for benchmarks to increase the chances of success?*
ACOM suggested making space in the Expert Groups for these discussions and analyses, development of work plans and realistic issues lists, and submitting working

- documents via the Expert Groups for “approval” prior to moving forward on a benchmark.
2. *How would you structure the scoping of a benchmark to ensure that it is comprehensive and issues are properly prioritized?*¹
ACOM suggested using the issue lists, comments in the ADG minutes, and WGISDA to identify benchmark needs.
 3. *In a benchmark for a stock under a management plan, how can the MSE to determine if the plan is still precautionary be included in the benchmark process ?*
ACOM suggested the setting up an external MSE meeting that is connected to and planned with the benchmark process so there is sufficient time to conduct this work. Stocks needing benchmarks and MSEs could also be grouped together for ease of planning.
 4. *In a benchmark process, what should be the responsibilities of the chairs, the reviewers, the ICES professional assigned to the benchmark and the experts?*
Feedback included that ACOM was happy with the role that ICES support take in benchmarks, and externals experts should remain at a distance, review and suggest changes to help resolve issues. To resolve the often confusing roles of the external and ICES chair, it was suggested that the role of the ICES chair could be to organize and plan, ensure that the ToRs are addressed, schedule extra meetings as required, check in with reviewers to make sure they are on track.
 5. *How could the need for adequate benchmark resources (assessor time, data processing, etc.) in national labs be more effectively communicated?*
ACOM commented that timing is key as the labs need time to fund people and work, and the resourcing should be transparent.
 6. *What information should reviewers receive in advance of benchmarks so that they can be better prepared?*
ACOM suggested that the provision of useful working documents on a scheduled delivery (e.g. two weeks before meetings) to the chairs and externals for review in advance of any workshops (note that the chairs should make certain that everything in the report be discussed and agreed in plenary); and deadlines for all materials (data and assessments) should be set and kept by chairs to prepare the work for reviewers. **Reviewers should have all relevant material two weeks before the meeting and the chairs should have web conferences where the stocks are presented to the reviewers before meetings.** In short, involve reviewers from an early stage and have deadlines that are enforced.

Decisions:

4.6.1. ACOM agreed that an ICES benchmark is based on a set of principles and contains a number of elements.

4.6.2 A guidance document of best practice is to be written.

4.6.3 The ToRs for the benchmark oversight group were approved.

Action: 4.6.1 ACOM leadership to initiate the BOG and create a guidance document for ICES benchmarks.

¹ In subsequent discussions after the ACOM meeting, the Chair of the on Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Steering Group highlighted that the ICES regional IEA groups could aid this process.

4.7 Identifying needs

ACOM was invited to propose and approve procedures to deliver the tasks on the Advisory Plan priority area Identifying Needs (Doc 04g). This is the least developed priority area.

The priority area identifying needs plans that ICES should identify and communicate the expertise, monitoring, data, and process needs to maintain and develop the provision of relevant advice.

ICES receives data from providers, undertakes analysis, and provides evidence-based advice and services. To enhance the provision of advice, we need to ensure that the scientific community and advice requesters are aware of potential improvements, gaps, and emerging issues that should be addressed. Successful building of capacity requires an informed development approach. We will evaluate skills and expertise shortages, and the provision and use of data and knowledge. This evaluation will assist the data collectors (e.g. research coordination groups), experts, funding agencies, and advice requesters in their provision of resources for the production of advice.

ACOM was asked to address the following questions:

- 1) Is the task list complete? ACOM responded yes.
- 2) Are there overlapping tasks? ACOM said yes, see table below.
- 3) Who is responsible for the delivery of the tasks? See table below
- 4) Does ACOM need a new mechanism or action to deliver the task? Yes, better dialogue with SCICOM and the training group and a mechanism to review and respond to recommendations from the expert groups.
- 5) By what date should the task be delivered? Most tasks were considered ongoing.

ACOM deliberations on the tasks for identifying needs can be summarised in the table. Similar shading represents overlapping tasks:

	Task	Responsible	Timing/ completion	Comments
1.	Conduct an objective stock assessment prioritization and data-gap analysis	ACOM	Ongoing	Linked to SID issue list and BOG
2.	Collate a list of future research and data requirements from benchmarks, overviews and expert group reports in an existing database on an annual basis, across expert groups, steering groups, and SCICOM	ACOM/BOG/FRSG/HAPI	Ongoing, first version by March 2021	BOG and ACOM leadership play an important role here
3.	Continuously review training courses run by ICES with the potential to increase the programme for key areas	Training Group/FRSG	ongoing	Require a strong and active relationship between the training group and FRSG.
4.	Identify key under populated areas of expertise and clearly communicate the current needs in expert groups to institutes and conduct an independent review of the gaps in expertise related to the anticipated advisory needs	ACOM/Training Group/FRSG	ongoing	Require a strong and active relationship between the training group and FRSG.

5.	Identify potential programme of funding and training in disciplines that are relevant to the institutes and engage funding agencies and requesters of advice to highlight research to meet future advice needs	SCICOM/FRSG	Ongoing	
6.	Once the database on surveys, RDBES and the inclusion in stock assessments is concluded, communicate with the institutes and regional data groups about gaps and modifications that will augment the surveys and monitoring utility	ACOM/WGQUALITY/ EOSG/DSTSG	Ongoing	Requires better communication between ACOM and WGQUALITY. This message should be targeted at EU RCGs and to non-EU national labs
7.	Identify disciplines and institutions that could collaborate with ICES and improve and add context to ICES advice (e.g. socio-economics and marine planning)	SCICOM	Ongoing	Should be led by SCICOM and needs input from ACOM, via ACOM chair's participation in SCICOM.
8	Regularly review and as appropriate act on recommendations from expert groups	ACOM	Ongoing	Mechanism for more frequent and regular review of recommendations needs to be developed.
9	Identify needs in the advisory process to meet the requirements of the ecosystem advice framework	ACOM/SCICOM/ IEASG/HAPISG	Ongoing	Working mostly through ACOM vice-chair with responsibility for overviews

ACOM questioned what is meant by independent review and the methods for prioritisation. The table clearly highlights the need for ACOM and SCICOM to work closely on identifying needs. FRSG is a meaningful bridge in this dialogue. The training group also has a clear role to play and WGQUALITY.

Unfortunately due to the change in agenda caused by the planning for COVID-19 pandemic, the second session on this agenda item did not take place. So further operationalisation of the table did not take place.

Decision: 4.7.1 Agree to further develop the tasks for identifying needs and develop a mechanism to review recommendations from expert groups more frequently.

Action: 4.7.1 ACOM leadership to progress these tasks further.

4.8 Update on Workshop on the Realigning of the Ecosystem Observation Steering Group (WKREO) A presentation of the report of the workshop.

ACOM was invited to comment on the WKREO workshop (Doc 04h).

ACOM commented that no experts from Spain, Iceland, Norway or Russia attended WKREO and that might have skewed some of the outcomes due to the lack of geographically widespread participation. This is relevant as one of the key recommendations of WKREO is regionalisation and expertise from some regions was missing.

One key message from ACOM however, was that the recommendations from WKREO are significant and ACOM felt that SCICOM should give them serious consideration.

It was also acknowledged that the case for regionalisation is very strong but achieving that means that strong chairs are essential to make it work and a change to the current system. In addition, there are fears on how regionalization can fit into the current model for monitoring.

Decision: 4.8.1. ACOM thanked the WKREO chair and recommends the SCICOM consider the recommendations carefully. No decisions necessary.

5 Operational challenges

5.1 Standing request for 0 TAC advice, expertise, resources and approach

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on the request by DGMARE for standing special request for advice when ICES advises 0 TAC for a stock (e.g. consequences for catches of others stocks in mixed fisheries and scientific fisheries, Doc 05a).

ACOM leadership explained that the EU had asked ICES to provide technical services in recent years on unavoidable bycatch. The EU were proposing to have a standard request to ICES. The request asks that for stocks where ICES advises zero catch but the stocks are caught in a mixed fishery, ICES will provide catch options that are consistent with other stocks caught in that mixed fisheries. This is linked to WKREBUILD, where the workshop drafted guidelines and methods for the evaluation of rebuilding plans. It was outlined that this will be a major issue for stock assessment working groups in 2020 and the mixed fisheries working group. There is also already pressure from requesters to deliver the mixed fisheries advice earlier in the season. Also, not all the zero TAC stocks are covered by WGMIXFISH.

ACOM discussed many issues are advising zero catch for stocks. Some also thought it would be impossible to evaluate what the likely change in fishing pattern is or what unavoidable bycatch would be. There might be an option to put more resources into the mixed fisheries advice now with the scaled down single stock advice sheets, and liked the mixed fisheries approach, feeling this should be ICES focus for giving advice in the future. ACOM leadership explained that operationally, the mixed fisheries analysis was a big issue because the Fcube model would need to be run early on in the season for it to be useful to the managers. It was explained that the advice would be needed in September so the managers could start their negotiations then, but because of the reopening in the North Sea this was currently impossible. Some of the TAC advice was for stocks without mixed fisheries models. Some of ACOM felt that it was a prioritization issue. The ACOM leadership commented that attempts to drop the reopening of advice had failed for a range of reasons.

The approach was also discussed at WGCHAIRS the chairs were asked to take the request to their groups and ask them how best to deal with this. The Chairs were reluctant to do this, as the 0 catch advice is the ICES advice. ACOM leadership explained that the managers needed these other options to have a sensible basis for other catch scenarios.

ACOM leadership also detailed how a medium term projection could also be undertaken, as has been done with western Baltic cod in the past couple of years.

ACOM asked if it was possible to set up a training programme for mixed fisheries. This was well received.

Decision: 5.1.1 ACOM agree to the suggested approach in Doc 05a.

Action: 5.1.1 ACOM leadership to enact the decision on standing request for 0 TAC advice.

5.2 Discards and survivability (wanted/unwanted)

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on a number of issues raised by DGMARE and Norway about ICES interpretation of wanted and unwanted catch and also the lack of consistency incorporating survivability estimates into stock assessments, forecasts and advice (Doc 05b).

Survivability.

On the issue of survivability, it was highlighted the importance that the studies follow the guidelines produced by the Working Group on Methods for Estimating Discard Survival (WGMEDS) but the process to incorporate the new estimates to the advisory process is not clear: perhaps a benchmark is needed, or WGMEDS will review the process, or who decide on the outcomes? In spite of clear data, the recent *Nephrops* process was not transparent on the implementation on the reference points in the final advice. It was also noted that the requesters have pointed out the different approaches used on different species (i.e. flatfishes, *Nephrops*, elasmobranchs).

ACOM discussed the role and composition of WGMEDS, the need of benchmarks with the consequent delays for the advice and /or the need for a dedicated WK including many stocks at the same time, the timing issue to address this on the 2020 advice, etc.

Wanted/unwanted wording used on the advice.

There is a need to clarify or change the current use of the wording to categorize the different components of the catch presented on the advice. Some of the recent changes in wording derives on the needs from the requesters to address issues formulated by the landing obligation, but not all ICES member states have the same issues and understanding of the wording currently used.

There is a difference in how the data is uploaded into Intercatch and used in the advice. Another option discussed was to explain the approach in the introduction to the advice and not adding extra text on the advice, which may bring caveats on the interpretation of the advice by requesters.

ACOM agreed that the wanted/unwanted phraseology was confusing to the readers of the advice. After discussion on potential terms, it was decided that the terms 'Projected landings' and 'Projected discards' be used in the catch scenario tables to replace the terms 'Wanted' and 'Unwanted'.

Actions:

5.2.1 A special workshop should be organised, linked to the outputs of WGMEDS (with an additional chair from stock assessment community), to design a generic approach for all stocks (including flatfishes, *Nephrops*, elasmobranchs and others).

5.2.2 Phraseology of wanted and unwanted catch to be replaced by 'projected landings' and 'projected discards' in the catch scenario tables in advice sheets produced in 2020 (the current year).

5.3 MSY advice- North Sea herring

A requester of advice had highlighted that the current headline advice for North Sea herring does not follow the standard MSY approach text. It includes additional comments on fleet assumptions.

ACOM leadership explained that the problem with current configuration of the headline advice for NS herring is that it sounds like we are giving fleet based advice, but in the 'Issues relevant for the advice' section it is clear that this is not what we are doing.

It was asked if ICES should give an overall stock advice. However, the advice provided right now is only MSY advice for the A fleet (the human consumption fleet). So ICES should not imply there is MSY advice for the entire stock.

There was no agreement, despite the formation of a subgroup to find a solution. So no decision or action.

Note: the issue was further discussed on the ACOM forum. Agreement was reached to use the standard MSY formulation. The fishing opportunities advice published in 2020 said: ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2021 should be no more than 365 792 tonnes. <http://ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2020/2020/her.27.3a47d.pdf>

5.4 Reporting back from benchmarks and workshops

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on the issues raised during the quarter 1 2020 benchmarks and workshops (Doc 05d).

The following expert groups were considered:

ICES Workshop and Benchmark Q1 2020	
IBPSandeel	Inter-benchmark process (IBP) on sandeel (<i>Ammodytes</i> spp.) in Area 2r (central and southern North Sea, Dogger Bank), and Area 3r (Skagerrak, northern and central North Sea)
WKFlatNSCS	Benchmark Workshop for Flatfish Stocks in the North Sea and Celtic Sea
WKCELTIC	Benchmark Workshop on Celtic Sea Stocks
WKCLuB	Benchmark Workshop on Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in the Gulf of Bothnia
WKDEM	Benchmark Workshop for Demersal Species
WKGSS	Benchmark Workshop of Greater silver smelt

ICES Workshop and Benchmark Q1 2020	
IBPBASH	Inter-benchmark Process on Baltic Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) and Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)
WKBaltic	Workshop on the Ecosystem Based Management of the Baltic Sea
WKREBUILD	Workshop on guidelines and methods for the evaluation of rebuilding plans
WKMixFish	Scoping workshop on next generation of mixed fisheries advice
WKRFSAM	Workshop on the Review and Future of State Space Stock Assessment Models in ICES

The main discussion point was problematic delivery of French data, which impacted two of the benchmarks (WKDEM and WKCELTIC). A working document explaining this issue has been provided to ACOM.

The main issue was to do with how spatial/temporal gaps in age sampling for age-length keys (ALKs) are filled. France departed from the previous practice, which changed the number at age in the older ages and created inconsistencies in cohort tracking. This approach was then reversed and France reverted to the previous method. The raising of discards was also problematic. Previously landings were used to raise observed discards to whole fleet. There was an attempt to use fishing effort instead, but there were difficulties regarding how effort was recorded (especially in mixed fisheries, or for vessels using different gears within a trip). The change in process lead to a notable difference in the estimated quantities of raised discards.

It was noted that these data issues pointed to a failure of the benchmarking process. i.e. for WKCELTIC there were two data workshops to try get similar raising procedures for all the stocks. That was agreed at the data workshop, but then different data was submitted. The decision was not followed-through on, which is a concern. Belgium took the decision to not continue with the benchmark once the issue came to light. What happened with France could happen with any member state, and ACOM needs a formal procedure for when benchmarks 'fail'. i.e. rules for closing/stopping benchmarks. Serious issues such as these affect the quality of data, quality of advice, experts involved in the process and the credibility of ICES. Belgium stakeholders attended WKCELTIC, though thanked the Secretariat for dealing with the issue smoothly.

The issue of raising discards, and what appropriate raising variables are (days, effort, landings etc.), is a common one. Ideally data workshops should look at the impact and make a call on the most plausible method. These issues will arise in future as we transition to using the RDBS. When all other countries show their procedures and underlying data we are likely to find more inconsistencies. There will be a need to plan how to adapt to this in the future (e.g. new raising methodologies etc. for the RDBS).

For WKCELTIC, the chair and experts have agreed to prolong the process and delay advice to the autumn. If new data arrives before the relevant WGs, they will look at it during the WG (and play with models) . In the last week of August they will have a final meeting to finalise models and run forecasts to use for the advice for 2021 (through ADGNephrops). ACOM supported these suggested approaches.

It was noted that reference point issues were flagged at several benchmark meetings. This common concern will be addressed by the ACOM subgroup looking into reference points, and clearer (simpler) guidelines need to be produced.

Regarding WGs other than benchmarks, WKBALTIC currently has no champions to take on the main work the requesters are asking about (mixed fisheries and multispecies challenges). The ACOM chair will go to Bureau and Council to report on it. WKMIXFISH attracted a lot of interest

from stakeholders. WKSAM progressed well and was considered successful in creating a broader understanding of the SAM assessment model.

<i>Action: 5.4.1 ACOM Leadership circulate explanation of the French data issues.</i>

5.5 Reporting back from ADGs

The Chairs of ADGs were invited to highlight the challenges encountered in 2019. This will include a review of recommendations from ADGs (Doc 05e).

ADG chairs said that guidance is needed on what should be in the advice sheets, maybe supporting some more surveys, local management rules etc. It was mentioned that the issues raised concern improving communication between ACOM and WGs, maybe increasing WG members participation to the ADG could help with this. There was a weakness of the guidance in the categories 4,5 and 6 stocks.

There was still a lack of feedback on the decisions made on ecosystem overviews. An example being the updated Bay of Biscay pressures diagram that WGEAWESS had been working on and there was not enough feedback given to the WG regarding the rejection of the diagram.

It was mentioned that there is always a discussion on what goes in the quality of the assessment. ACOM chair asked whether ACOM needs to further improve this process? ACOM felt that it needs to be more defined. ACOM leadership stated this would be the reason to hold a benchmark, it might seem a minor problem for the assessment but for stakeholders it is an issue.

The ACOM chair agreed that this point is conceptually important, there is good enough advice but stakeholders are doubting the quality of the advice, and ACOM needs to work this out, there is a need to start a process on this.

5.6 TAF implementation

ACOM was invited to comment on the status of development and implementation of TAF (Doc 05f).

TAF is a tool in the quality assurance framework with the purpose to assure quality, improve efficiency and transparency of data and analyses in the advisory process. Its future development was explained. The WG on Transparent Assessment Framework Governance (WGTAFGOV) was established and met in January 2020. This WG will guide the governance of TAF as it develops. See document 05f for details.

5.7 Ecoregions document

ACOM was invited to comment and asked to approve the explanatory document which explained that ICES is regularly approached to provide the rationale, methods and documentation for the ecoregions. Doc 05g is a synopsis of the methods and current approach for ICES ecoregions.

ACOM leadership discussed the initial ICES ecoregions and criteria used to set these up, correspondence with requesters, ICES fishing areas, boundary changes, links to the different GIS layers, explained that this document will be the basis for a webpage, and asked ACOM for feedback.

It was pointed out that the use of ecoregions is an improvement, mentioned the names of the ecoregions can pose a problem, especially when working in a bordering area, and asked what happens when a physical ecoregion goes around the ICES ecoregion boundaries.

A clarification on the mention of the evolving ecoregions boundaries (due to climate change etc.) and when these would be reevaluated; is there a need to do this continuously or to have a set evaluation deadline was requested. It was mentioned that in order to reconsider boundaries it would be useful to look at productivity by sub-regions. It was pointed out that changing the ecoregion boundaries will cause issues to the ICES overviews and this should be taken under consideration.

A comment from SCICOM was that the development of the ecoregion boundaries needs to consider biological, oceanographically, political issues and that it would be healthier for ICES that this is a long term view, something that doesn't include sudden changes in boundaries. There was consensus that changes in ecoregion boundaries should not be frequent.



Decision: 5.7.1 ACOM supported that Doc 05g could be published as ICES advice.

Action: 5.7.1 ACOM leadership and Secretariat to publish the document.

Note: The document was published in May 2020 as ICES advice:

<https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2020/2020/Ecoregions.pdf>

5.8 Data limited approaches

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on a number of issues associated data limited approaches (Doc 05h).

- *Benchmarking of Cat 3 MSY advice.*
- *Consistency of SPiCT Bmsy with MSY Btrigger.*
- *Further development of Cat 3 to 6 advice methods.*

The ICES approach to developing our approach to DLS assessments and advice has evolved. When it was first implemented, ICES held RGs, RG-ADGs, training workshops and training courses for stock assessors and ACOM members to apply the methods. Recently, WKLIFE VIII and IX developed methods and advice rules for MSY advice for category 3 stocks using SPiCT.

ACOM was asked how to proceed: is a benchmark needed on a stock by stock basis for data limited category 3 MSY advice, or for the method in general. ACOM supported the proposal to have a dedicated workshop for SPiCT stocks in 2021 to see if SPiCT is functioning with a given list of stocks to provide MSY advice. A concern was raised that we are using an engineering solution to create MSY advice, and this may not be appropriate; more complex models may not help us find the best solution. That said, SPiCT is not complex, so this may be a good way forward.

Should the definition of MSY Btrigger be redefined and made more consistent with age-structured models? For SPiCT, as for other production models ICES has defined MSY Btrigger = 0.5BMSY. The rationale for this definition can be found in the technical guidelines for category 3 and 4 reference points. The use of MSY Btrigger = 0.5BMSY originated with the use of deterministic surplus production models for category 1 and 2 stocks. Defining MSY Btrigger as 0.5 BMSY was considered consistent with other management systems. MSY Btrigger has also been set as the lower bound of stock size fluctuation around BMSY. For age-structured models, the lower bound has been defined as the lower 5th percentile of B when fishing at FMSY obtained through stochastic simulations. Given the SPiCT provides stochastic estimates of BMSY (e.g. median BMSY), it would be possible to define MSY Btrigger based on the 5th percentile of BMSY using this approach. This would make the MSY Btrigger from SPiCT more consistent with the approach. ACOM should put this question to WK LIFE. ACOM was not ready to contribute to this technical discussion.

ACOM agreed that ICES should further develop category 5 and 6 methods. This is of interest from a major requester and we will explore opportunities to resource these efforts.

Decisions:

5.8.1 ACOM supported that a benchmark workshop be set up for MSY advice of category 3 stocks.

5.8.2 Refer the consistency of SPiCT Bmsy with MSY Btrigger to WK LIFE.

5.9 Consistent approach to changing productivity in fisheries advice

ACOM was to be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on a number of issues on reference points, and incorporation of changed perceptions of ecosystem productivity in advice:

- *Implementation of conclusions from WKIRISH.*
- *Decisions about productivity regimes (e.g. Iberian sardine, western Baltic SS herring).*
- *Incorporation of new key runs of multispecies models into advice (estimates of M).*
- *Propose workshop on fisheries management reference points in a changing ecosystem.*

However due to the need to plan for Covid-19 disruption this item was dropped from the agenda.

Action: 5.9.1 Productivity be placed on the agenda for ACOM consultations September 2020.

5.10 Introduction to the advice/advice basis

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on the introduction to advice (advice basis, Doc 05j). The introduction has been criticised as difficult to read, too fisheries focused and too long. Is it still fit for purpose, if not, what next? Will the publishing of an ecosystem advice framework mean that it is necessary to change the introduction. If the advice is published using html approaches rather than pdf, is there an opportunity to keep it as a useful reference document.

ACOM were asked to consider three questions relating to the introduction to the advice/advice basis:

- 1) Is the current 'Introduction to ICES advice' adequate or does it need to change? ACOM concluded it needs to change.
- 2) What should be the timing of the publication of the 'Introduction to ICES advice'? ACOM concluded that the advice basis should be ready at the beginning of every year.
- 3) Is the 'Introduction to ICES advice' sufficiently visible? ACOM did not conclude on this issue, but stressed that the basis was currently "dull", but an extremely useful resource.

ACOM leadership mentioned that this agenda item was closely linked to the ecosystem framework developments. A discussion followed about the strengths and weaknesses of the introduction of advice and ACOM agreed that a change was required.

Decision: 5.10.1 ACOM leadership should revise the advice basis and explore new approaches to display the information.

Action: 5.10.1 ACOM leadership to revise the advice basis.

5.11 Stakeholder engagement

ACOM was to be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on stakeholder engagement (Doc 05k). In 2019, progress was made in working with stakeholder (e.g. WKSCINDI and WKRRMAC) but a number of challenges still remain in how ICES works with stakeholders. ACOM was asked to consider the following issues:

1. Does ICES need an overarching stakeholder engagement strategy?
2. Can ICES develop a method for sense/sanity checking analytical results with stakeholder perceptions?

However due to the need to plan for Covid-19 disruption this item was dropped from the agenda.

Action: 5.11.1 Stakeholder engagement be placed on the agenda for ACOM consultations September 2020.

Note: The ACOM chair and the ICES human dimension strategic initiative have been working on the issue throughout 2020.

5.12 Lessons from mackerel

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on the experience of mackerel advice. ACOM agreed to create a subgroup to explore the issues surrounding the poor performance of ICES advice on mackerel over the last 6 years. However this subgroup has not met and a personal reflection was given by Ciaran Kelly (Doc 05l was made available during ACOM).

The presentation explained that ICES does not have a good track record of consistency with the NEA mackerel assessment and advice and thus we overplay the certainty associated with the advice. Some personal observations in terms of the transparency of ICES advisory process and how it may be used and abused:

- The industry uses information they acquire as observers at ICES meetings to influence externally for their own interests. ICES need to not be naïve to this and should seek to hold the industry to some degree of accountability in this regard as they (rightly) hold ICES accountable for actions in giving advice which is not reliable.
- When the credibility of ICES is impugned in the press, ICES should not leave false statements in the media unchallenged.
- When ICES invite industry representatives to our science meetings and give them authorship on the reports (e.g. benchmark reports), ICES should not expect that others outside the network will think anything other than those representatives have had an influence on the (scientific) outcome. If this is unintentional, ICES should address authorship of benchmark reports, or address the outside perception that the science process can be influenced by vested interests.

There were no decisions or actions on this item.

5.13 Recommendations from expert groups

ACOM was to be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on the recommendations from expert groups (Doc 05j).

However due to the need to plan for Covid-19 disruption this item was postponed to be addressed using the ACOM forum.

Action: 5.13.1 address recommendations on ACOM forum

6 Additional issues on delivery of advice

6.1 Advice view

ACOM was invited to comment on advice view. Advice view is an output from databases of ICES advice (including headline advice and catch scenario tables, Doc 06a).

A demonstration was given of advice view. The development was broadly welcomed. However, the uploading of catch scenarios tables to the advice view seemed the wrong way around to ACOM. Ideally a system generating outputs for the advice sheets should be used rather than

reading information from the advice sheets into databases. This functionality will come when TAF is fully implemented, both the Advice View and advice sheets should in future be able to get Catch Scenario tables as a direct output of TAF.

It was noted that it would be useful to have example scripts for the various web-services that exist to access various databases held at the ICES Secretariat. These are currently being developed for the Stock Information Database (SID). Advice view web-services are still in production, and example scripts will be produced when they are ready.

There were no action or decisions.

6.2 Fisheries Overviews

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on fisheries overviews. ACOM was updated on opportunities and challenges encountered in 2019 during the production of fisheries overviews (Doc 06b). This included examples of their use by requesters and stakeholders.

ACOM considered the following questions:

- Should a process to set up criteria and assess distribution and ecoregion attachment of stocks be initiated by ACOM, or postponed?
- What can be done to improve the consistency of content of the overviews?
- How can the production of the overviews be made more efficient?
- Does the inclusion of mixed fisheries and bycatch advice make the fisheries overviews more operational?

There are challenges around the allocation of stocks to fisheries overviews, as both advice requesters and researchers are complaining. Is the allocation fishery or species distribution driven, what further criteria should be used to allocate a fish stock to an ecoregion? This issue is further complicated by being similar to the concept of zonal attachment and thus could potentially influence the current dynamics of the BREXIT negotiations. ACOM discussed this issue and decided that while it was very important, ACOM would postpone further discussion for at least 18 months.

Some felt that the ADGs were useful for consistency, but not a perfect solution, for instance, if a section is missing. Consistency across ecoregions should be maintained through clear templates and guidelines. Production could be more efficient by making use of the RCGs outputs and automate production of the figures whenever possible. There was broad support for the inclusion of mixed fisheries and bycatch in the fisheries overviews.

In the longer term there was support to combine the ecosystem and fisheries overviews to make them more useful. It was noted that some important nationally assessed stocks are not currently included in the overviews. It was felt that the new RDBES would help efficiency, as might aggregated tables and more maps.

ACOM supported the formation of a fisheries overviews subgroup that would meet remotely.

The current renewal cycle of updating every year with a more complete update every 2-3 years was kept.

Decisions:

6.2.1 Delay development for re-analysis of distribution of fish stocks across ecoregions for a further 18 months.

6.2.2 Mixed fisheries and bycatch advice/issues to remain in the fisheries overviews.

6.2.3 A subgroup on fisheries overviews to be established, meet remotely and report to ACOM by September. The subgroup will include members of ACOM, secretariat and invited experts.

Action:

6.2.1 ACOM leadership to post ToRs and membership for fisheries overviews subgroup on the forum.

6.3 Delivery of advice online

ACOM was to be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on advice online. Council released equity to create one post in the secretariat to focus on the online delivery of advice in 2021. Some EU project proposals are also proposing to assist ICES and many institutes have developed shiny apps to display advice.

However due to the need to plan for Covid-19 disruption this item was postponed.

6.4 Progress on and commitments to overviews and viewpoints

ACOM was invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate on the synopsis of progress for delivery of ecosystem, fisheries and aquaculture overviews. The allocation of leads for overviews was reviewed and re-conformed by ACOM.

Two new ecosystem overviews were published in 2019, for the Oceanic Northeast Atlantic and the Azores. There was an update of the overview for the Bay of Biscay and Iberian Waters and two new IEA WGs to help with the overviews production, on the Greenland Sea ecoregion (WGIEAGS) and the Azores (WGIAZOR); this latter specifically to help with the Azores fisheries overview. There will be two meetings in 2020 (for the Arctic Ocean and the Greenland Sea ecoregions), two updates (for the Norwegian Sea and the Celtic Seas ecoregions) and the Technical Guidelines for EO production will be updated.

It was agreed that WKTRANSPARENT should be postponed as it would be impossible to have the preparatory work and discussions achieved in time due to the COVID-19 disruption.

There had been four new fishery overviews published in 2019, for Icelandic Waters, Norwegian Sea, the Barents Sea, and Bay of Biscay and Iberian Waters. There had also been three new mixed fisheries advice added to the North Sea, Celtic Sea and Iberian Waters overviews, and general updates to all overviews. The plans for the 2020 production were outlined, with new overviews planned for the Greenland Sea, the Azores, the Oceanic Northeast Atlantic and the Faroes.

Development of the aquaculture overviews has continued, with major feedback received from stakeholders and managers. The plan was to close the scoping survey in March and agree content jointly with Science and Advice by end of April. After this there would need to be a decision on the first ecoregion, which will probably be for the Norwegian Sea, and a plan for the workshop.

Some of the planned Viewpoints were progressing well.

The ACOM leadership then checked that the ACOM members with responsibility for each ecoregion for the EOs and FOs were still able to fulfil their responsibilities.

Ecosystem Overviews

- Icelandic Waters, Gudmundur Thordarson.
- Oceanic Northeast Atlantic, Odd Aksel Bergstad.
- Faroes, Petur Steingrund.

Fisheries Overviews

- Agreed that ACOM prefers maximum two ACOM members cover each fisheries overview.
 - Bay of Biscay and Iberian Waters, Francesco Velasco and Marcos Llope
 - Barents Sea, Bjarte Bogstad and Yury Kovelev
 - Norwegian Sea, Cecilie Kvamme
 - Oceanic Northeast Atlantic, Colm Lordan, Francisco Velasco and Kristjan Kristinsson
 - Great North Sea, Ewen Bell
 - Baltic Sea, Didzis Ustups
 - Celtic Seas, Colm Lordan
 - Icelandic Waters, Kristjan Kristinsson
 - Faroes, Petur Steingrund
 - Greenland Sea, Jesper Boje
 - Azores, Maria Fatima de Borges

Note: the list of responsible persons was updated and finalized after ACOM meeting.

- There needs to be a clear message that updates are about graphics and catches, NOT text (unless there is a mistake or actual error). For most fisheries overviews the annual drafting does not update the substance of the text of the overviews at ADGs.

Aquaculture Overviews

- It was agreed that the first aquaculture overview will be the Norwegian Sea ecoregion. Norway already have advanced national documents regarding aquaculture (in Norwegian), they have the only coastline in this ecoregion, and are prepared to progress with this. Bjarte Bogstad will act as ACOM link with WKAO to be held in early 2021, and the overview released at the end of 2021. ACOM agreed.

Viewpoints

- The biofouling viewpoint was well received at IMO. From the mid-90s onwards, various ICES EGs had helped the IMO. ICES is held in great esteem at the IMO. Whilst they don't take advice, they take Working documents and TIMES from a range of groups.
- The planned viewpoint on ship scrubbers was also discussed and is considered exciting and will also likely be well received by stakeholders.

Decisions:

6.4.1 Postpone WKTRANSPARENT.

6.4.2 The first aquaculture overview to be the Norwegian Sea ecoregion to be delivered at the end of 2021.

6.4.3 No more than two ACOM representatives responsible for fisheries overview per ecoregion under normal circumstances.

Action:

6.4.1 Various member countries to confirm ACOM responsible member for fisheries overviews.

7 Roundtable reflections on ACOM 2020

Each member of ACOM was to be asked for their personal reflection on ACOM 2020. However due to the need to plan for Covid-19 disruption this item was dropped from the agenda.

8 Contingency COVID 19

Unplanned agenda item.

ACOM met during the week that Denmark prepared for lock down to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. This allowed ACOM to prepare and take a number of decisions to mitigate the imminent disruption.

ACOM discussed the likely lack of physical meetings for a number of months, special requests, recurrent requests, the prioritisation of the terms of reference for expert groups under FRSG, the format of the fishing opportunities advice, and the need for further evaluation.

Note: ACOM had an extraordinary meeting on 28th April 2020, to re-evaluate the decisions documented here. The minutes of the extraordinary meeting are provided in Annex 3 of this document.

8.1 Physical meetings

ACOM assumed (rightly) that it would operate and prepare the advice by remote means only for the foreseeable future.

Expert groups will be encouraged to work in sub-groups and then at a later stage have bigger WebExes. Remote facilities should have additional support from the ICES secretariat. The ADGs will also be remote.

This is an opportunity to see how the advice process can be streamlined; the spring need to be reviewed during the autumn.

Decision: 8.1 Expert groups and advice drafting groups will be encouraged to meet remotely rather than postpone activities.

Action: 8.1 Advice support to ask all expert groups that feed into the advice (to be delivered in May–June 2020) to work remotely and to facilitate this transition.

8.2 Special Requests

ACOM considered that work on the majority of the special requests that had been accepted could continue, only 3 need to be considered in terms of delaying advice:

Requester	Request	Release	Status
DGMARE	Deep Sea	November	OK
DGMARE	ING	Early June	Issues, may need to start work offline and delay WK
DGMARE	Bycatch	End May	OK - Seems to be OK even though WGBYC was cut short
DGMARE	MSFD D3	November	OK - doing work in Secr, meeting end June
DGMARE	Eel migration	March	OK - work well developed already (WK complete)
DGMARE	Mackerel MSE	August	OK - WK not yet planned (May/June). Work could continue offline
DGMARE	VME	July	OK
DGMARE	Baltic Salmon MSE	May	OK - work far advanced (WKs complete), can be completed by correspondence
DGENV	Trade-offs	End 2020	Uncertain - no request yet, may not come. Could be delayed to later in the year.
NEAFC	VME	July	OK
NL	Pulse trawl	End May	Difficult, but possible. Release end May. WK may still go ahead in NL/Webex
NEAFC/OSPAR	Deep Sea shark	End Sept	OK - Having webexes, part of a longer process. WK in June.
OSPAR	Deep Sea shark	End Sept	Potential issues, still need to work out the process with WGEF

New incoming special requests will not be taken in and requesters will be informed about this shortly. ICES will stop for new special requests into the foreseeable future (to be evaluated on 28th April (see annex 1)). A dialogue with requesters will be initiated. Pending requests (the SAR-SWE and the Inter-area flex-DGMARE) will be put on hold.

Experts and advice requesters are to be informed on this planning by the ICES Secretariat.

Decision: 8.2 No pending or incoming special requests to be accepted. Evaluate this decision on 28th April.

Action: 8.2 advice support to inform requesters of advice to be informed that special requests are not being accepted at the moment due to Covid-19 pandemic.

8.3 Recurrent requests

Expert groups need help in prioritizing their efforts when providing the evidence for advice. ACOM prioritised the Generic ToRs and added comments; the high priority ToRs will be ranked on top of the ToRs, then medium and ultimately low.

Decision: 8.3 The terms of reference for expert groups were prioritized, with instruction to focus on producing and quality checking the numbers and planning for future data submission (Annex 4)

Action: 8.3 Decision on the prioritisation of ToRs to be passed to expert groups by advice support (Annex 4).

8.4 Advice sheets

The style of the advice sheets will be changed to reduce the workload for expert groups and ADGs. ACOM considered the type of advice sheet that is appropriate and criteria for choosing which advice sheet type was suitable for which stock. ACOM agreed to produce 3 types of advice sheet:

- Standard
- Abbreviated
- Rollover

An abbreviated advice sheet will contain the following features:

- Headline advice
- Figure 1 + the stock summary table but without any description of trends
- Figure 2 (retrospective plot)
- Traffic lights
- Table of assumptions and Table of scenarios
- Table of history of advice
- Table of the Summary of the assessment
- Annex on last year's advice sheet which has the text available on other sections as the current advice sheet only provide the core advice.

ACOM will begin a dialogue with requesters to confirm that the adoption of abbreviated advice sheets and discuss the allocation of which type to which stock. The final decision will be taken by ACOM after completion of the dialogue.

Notes:

- The decision to create rollover advice sheets was overturned by ACOM in April 2020, and fishing opportunities advice was only published in standard or abbreviated styles.
- ACOM decided: at the 28th April evaluation, to offer more flexibility to the ADGs for the inclusion of additional information, but ACOM would review these decision stock by stock.

The below scheme is to be used to determine the type of the stocks up for advice and then subsequently send a prioritized list to the EGs. The EGs need to be alerted that this list takes into account the entire advice process including the workload associated with ADG, WC. Thus a dialogue is to be initiated with the EG-chairs by the Secretariat.

1. Standard advice (the stocks with newly benchmarked methods, i.e. this year)
2. Abbreviated advice – the advice will be updated based on the new analyses but only the basic elements of headline advice, catch scenario tables, plots and automated tables will be contained in the document. (Last year's advice will be added as an annex to each sheet). This will include management plan and MSY advice stocks but excluding the recently benchmarked stocks. This will apply to category 1-2. For category 3-4 stocks not part of a MP, the advice will be updated if a significant change is observed in the stock; i.e. if the index ratio >1.2 or <0.8 . For category 3-4 stocks part of a MP, an abbreviated advice sheet has to be made.

Note: actual practice for 2020 was to update all category three advice

3. Rollover advice – the same advice as most recent advice. For stocks in this group, no analyses will be updated in the advice sheet.
 - a. The headline advice should read: '*ICES advises that analyses for this stock have not been updated but that the advice for 2020 remains valid. ICES advises that catches [formulation used in the previous advice].*' The rollover follow the frequency used in the most recent advice. If e.g. the advice was given for 2 years, then the rollover would be for two years. The rest of the advice sheet will remain unchanged from the last time advice was provided.
 - b. This will be provided for stocks in the following categories:
 - i. Category 1 - zero TAC has been advised in recent years and no change likely,
 - ii. Category 3-4 except if the advice is due to be reviewed in 2020 and if the index ratio indicates a significant change in the stock (point 2 above)
 - iii. Category 5-6 regardless of advice frequency
 - iv. long lived stable stocks, with no strong trends in dynamics in recent years (eg. redfish and Greenland halibut).
 - v. Some non-standard stocks (e.g. North Atlantic salmon), in this case these will have updated tables of catches and other data as available.

Decision: 8.4 Advice to be published in standard, abbreviated or rollover advice sheet following scheme developed. Content of abbreviate advice sheet described above. Final decisions of allocation of stock to type of advice sheet to be made after dialogue with requesters.

Action: 8.4 ACOM leadership and advice support to enact the decision 8.4.

9 Closing

ACOM closed one day early. The ACOM was thanked for all their efforts, consideration and decisions. ACOM was wished a safe and speedy return home.

10 List of decisions and actions

Decisions

- 1.1 ACOM confirmed that there were no conflicts of interest.
- 3.1 ACOM maintained support and made minor changes to the tasks in the advisory plan.
- 4.2.1 ACOM approved the roadmap for bycatch advice and continuing process as described in Doc 04b.
- 4.3.1 ACOM leadership to further develop the ecosystem framework within the overall structure of the Advice and report by September 2020 to ACOM.
- 4.4.1 Rebrand Fp.05 as Fpa. For stocks where Fp05 cannot be estimated the current Fpa method can be used.
- 4.6.1. An ICES benchmark is based on a set of principles and contains a number of elements.
- 4.6.2 A guidance document of best practice is to be written.
- 4.6.3 The ToRs for the benchmark oversight group were approved.
- Decision: 4.7.1 Agree to further develop the tasks for identifying needs and develop a mechanism to review recommendations from expert groups more frequently.
- 4.8.1. ACOM thanked the WKREO chair and recommends the SCICOM consider the recommendations carefully. No decisions necessary.
- 5.1.1 ACOM agree to the suggested approach in Doc 05a.
- 5.7.1 ACOM supported that Doc 05g could be published as ICES advice.
- 5.8.1 ACOM supported that a benchmark workshop be set up for MSY advice of category 3 stocks.
- 5.8.2 Refer the consistency of SPiCT Bmsy with MSY Btrigger to WKLIFE.
- 5.10.1 ACOM leadership should revise the advice basis and explore new approaches to display the information.
- 6.2.1 Delay development for re-analysis of distribution of fish stocks across ecoregions for a further 18 months.
- 6.2.2 Mixed fisheries and bycatch advice/issues to remain in the fisheries overviews.
- 6.2.3 A subgroup on fisheries overviews to be established, meet remotely and report by September. The subgroup will include members of ACOM, secretariat and invited experts.
- 6.4.1 Postpone WKTRANSPARENT.
- 6.4.2 The first aquaculture overview to be for the Norwegian Sea ecoregion to be delivered at the end of 2021.
- 6.4.3 No more than two ACOM representatives responsible for fisheries overview per ecoregion under normal circumstances.
- 8.1 Expert groups and advice drafting groups will be encouraged to meet remotely rather than postpone activities.
- 8.2 No pending or incoming special requests to be accepted. Evaluate this decision on 28th April.

8.3 The terms of reference for expert groups were prioritized, with instruction to focus on producing and quality checking the numbers and planning for future data submission (Annex 4)

8.4 Advice to be published in standard, abbreviated or rollover advice sheet following scheme developed. Content of abbreviate advice sheet described above. Final decisions of allocation of stock to type of advice sheet to be made after dialogue with requesters.

Actions

3.1 ACOM leadership and secretariat to work further on the tasks.

4.2.1 ACOM continue process described in Doc 04b.

4.3.1. ACOM leadership to work further with the subgroup to develop the frame-work (the core components) to sit in the introduction to the advice.

4.4.1 ACOM Leadership to post the new guidance to the forum for comments by end of April.

4.5.1 ACOM to highlight the expertise needs and resource shortages during all relevant opportunities.

4.6.1 ACOM leadership to initiate the BOG and create a guidance document for ICES benchmarks.

4.7.1 ACOM leadership to progress these tasks further.

5.1.1 ACOM leadership to enact the decision on standing request for 0 TAC advice.

5.2.1 A special workshop should be organised, linked to the outputs of WGMEDS (with an additional chair from stock assessment community), to design a generic approach for all stocks (including flatfishes, Nephrops, elasmobranchs and others).

5.2.2 Phraseology of wanted and unwanted catch to be clarified by ACOM leadership.

5.4.1 ACOM Leadership circulate explanation of the French data issues.

5.7.1 ACOM leadership and secretariat to publish the document.

5.9.1 Productivity be placed on the agenda for ACOM consultations September 2020.

5.10.1 ACOM leadership to revise the advice basis

5.11.1 Stakeholder engagement be placed on the agenda for ACOM consultations September 2020

5.13.1 Address recommendations on ACOM forum

6.2.1 ACOM leadership to post ToRs and membership for fisheries overviews subgroup on the forum.

6.4.1 Various member countries to confirm ACOM responsible member for fisheries overviews.

8.1 Advice support to ask all expert groups that feed into the advice (to be delivered in May–June 2020) to work remotely and to facilitate this transition.

8.2 Advice support to inform requesters of advice to be informed that special requests are not being accepted at the moment due to Covid-19 pandemic.

8.3 Decision on the prioritisation of ToRs to be passed to expert groups by advice support (Annex 4).

8.4 ACOM leadership and advice support to enact the decision 8.4.

Annex 1 List of participants

Name	G/C Role	Institute and country	Email
Mark Dickey-Collas	Chair	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	mark.dickey-collas@ices.dk
Alain Biseau	Member	Ifremer Lorient Station France	abiseau@ifremer.fr
Anne Cooper	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	anne.cooper@ices.dk
Bjarte Bogstad	Member	Institute of Marine Research Norway	bjarte.bogstad@hi.no
Christopher Zimmermann	Member	Thünen Institute Thünen-Institute of Baltic Sea Fisheries Germany	christopher.zimmermann@thuenen.de
Ciaran Kelly By WebEx	Member	Marine Institute Ireland	ciaran.kelly@marine.ie
Colm Lordan	Vice-Chair	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	colm.lordan@ices.dk
David Miller	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	david.miller@ices.dk
Didzis Ustups	Member	Institute of Food Safety Animal Health and Environment (BIOR) Fish Resources Research Department Latvia	Didzis.Ustups@bior.lv
Eirini Glyki	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	eirini.glyki@ices.dk
Els Torreele	Member	Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO) Belgium	els.torreele@ilvo.vlaanderen.be
Eugene Nixon	Vice-Chair	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	eugene.nixon@ices.dk
Ghislain Chouinard	Vice-Chair	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	ghislain@ices.dk
Gudmundur Thordarson	Member	Marine and Freshwater Research Institute Iceland	gudmundur.thordarson@hafogvatn.is
Helle Gjeding Jørgensen	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	hellej@ices.dk
Henn Ojaveer	Vice-Chair	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	henn.ojaveer@ices.dk
Inigo Martinez	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	inigo@ices.dk
Jan Horbowy	Member	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute Poland	horbowy@mir.gdynia.pl
Jari Raitaniemi	Member	Natural Resources Institute Finland Natural Resources and Bioproduction Finland	jari.raitaniemi@luke.fi
Jesper Boje	Greenland Observer	DTU Aqua -National Institute of Aquatic Resources Denmark	jbo@aqu.dtu.dk
Joakim Hjelm By WebEx	Alternate member	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences Institute of Marine Research Sweden	joakim.hjelm@slu.se
Kiersten Curti By WebEx	Member	NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center	kiersten.curti@noaa.gov

United States

Linas Lozys	Member	Nature Research Centre Lithuania	linas.lozys@gamtc.lt
Lotte Worsøe Clausen	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	lotte.worsoe.clausen@ices.dk
Marcos Llope	Alternate member	Instituto Español de Oceanografía Centro Oceanografico de Cádiz	marcos.llope@ieo.es
Maria de Fátima Borges	Member	Portuguese Institute for the Sea and the Atmosphere (IPMA) Portugal	mfborges@ipma.pt
Michala Ovens	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	michala@ices.dk
Morten Vinther	Member	DTU Aqua, National Institute of Aquatic Resources Denmark	mv@aqua.dtu.dk
Niels Hintzen	Member	Wageningen University & Research Netherlands	niels.hintzen@wur.nl
Patrick Lynch	FRSG Chair	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration NOAA Fisheries USA	patrick.lynch@noaa.gov
Petur Steingrund By WebEx	Faroe Islands Observer	Faroe Marine Research Institute Faroe Islands	peturs@hav.fo
Pieter-Jan Schön	Member	Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) United Kingdom	pieter-jan.schon@afbini.gov.uk
Robert Aps	Member	Estonian Marine Institute Estonia	robert.aps@ut.ee
Rui Catarino	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	rui.catarino@ices.dk
Sebastian Valanko	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	sebastian.valanko@ices.dk
Sven Kupschus	EOSG Chair	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) Lowestoft Laboratory United Kingdom	sven.kupschus@cefass.co.uk
Sarah Millar	ICES Secretariat	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	sarah-louise.millar@ices.dk
Yury Kovalev	Member	Polar branch of the FSBSI "VNIRO" ("PINRO" named after N.M.Knipovich) Russia	kovalev@pinro.ru

Annex 2 Agenda

1) Welcome, code of conduct, review of action points from consultations and review of membership (Docs 01a, 01b, 01c, 01d)

The agenda will be adopted via the ACOM forum beforehand.

ACOM will reflect on the code of conduct.

The list of action points from ACOM consultations will be reviewed.

ACOM will be invited to review and update the ACOM membership list. Changes should be reported to the Secretariat.

Structure of the meeting: after reflections on 2019, the meeting will cover strategic (Advisory Plan, agenda 3), developmental work (agenda 4), operational issues (agenda 5) and additional issues on advice delivery (agenda 6).

2) Reflections on 2019 advice activities and process

a) Chair's report to ACOM (Doc 02a)

The Chair's report contains an overview of the advice activities in 2019 including reporting on MIRIA, MIACO and WGCHAIRS. This will include a description of formal meetings with requesters of advice.

ACOM will be invited to comment.

b) Vice Chairs' reports to ACOM (Doc 02a)

The Vice Chairs will be invited to report on activities in 2019.

ACOM will be invited to comment.

c) Head of Advisory Support report (Doc 02a)

The head of ICES Advisory Support will present a review of the advisory process in 2019.

ACOM will be invited to comment.

d) ACOM members review

ACOM members will be individually invited to review and comment on the advisory activities and process and the performance of ACOM.

e) SCICOM (Doc 02b)

The SCICOM Chair will provide a report of SCICOM activities of relevance to ACOM.

ACOM will be invited to comment.

3) Advisory plan: progress on delivery and planning (Doc 03)

Overview of tasks in priority areas, and update on current progress. Plan action for gaps.

ACOM will be invited to comment on coverage and planning.

4) Developmental work

a) Quality control/assurance of data and advice (Doc 04a)

Progress for accreditation of quality assurance for data and estimation methods in ICES will be reported to ACOM. Also on the discussions at MIRIA & MIACO for a workshop on quality assurance of advice. The proposal to form WGQUALITY and SCICOM discussions on data and DIG will also be highlighted.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

b) Bycatch roadmap (Doc 04b)

The draft bycatch roadmap will be presented to ACOM. The roadmap describes research and advisory needs for assessing the impacts of bycatch by fisheries on non-target populations of sea mammals, birds and fish. Regional seas conventions and the EU require more robust evidence from ICES. The draft has been developed by ACOM leadership and expert groups, with input from MIRIA and MIACO. If accepted by ACOM, it will be further circulated to stakeholders.

ACOM will be invited to comment and asked to approve the roadmap.

c) Ecosystem framework and dialogue meeting (Doc 04c)

Progress made by the ACOM subgroup on both the ecosystem framework and the structure and dates for the dialogue meeting will be reported to ACOM.

ACOM will be invited to comment and asked to support further development of the framework and planning for the dialogue meeting.

d) Precautionary reference points in the ICES fisheries advice framework (Doc 04d)

Progress and recommendations made by the ACOM subgroup on precautionary reference points will be reported to ACOM.

ACOM will be invited to comment and approve the subgroups recommendations.

e) Resourcing & workload across the network and within ICES

ACOM will be briefed on Council efforts to resolve the expertise and workload crisis across the expert group network.

ACOM will be invited to comment.

f) Benchmarks (Doc 04f)

*Progress and recommendations made by the ACOM subgroup on benchmarks will be presented to ACOM. ACOM will split into **groups** to discuss the recommendations and the potential way forward.*

ACOM will be invited to comment and approve the subgroups recommendations. There will be at least two sessions (Wednesday and Thursday) on this item.

g) Identifying needs (Doc 04g)

*The Advisory Plan priority area Identifying Needs is the least developed priority area. ACOM will split into **groups** to consider the task list and issues not covered in the task list.*

ACOM will be invited to propose and approve procedures to deliver the tasks. There will be at least two sessions (Wednesday and Thursday) on this item.

h) Update on Workshop on the Realigning of the Ecosystem Observation Steering Group (WKREO) (Doc 04h)

A presentation of the report of the workshop.

ACOM will be invited to comment.

5) Operational challenges

a) Standing request for 0 TAC advice, expertise, resources and approach (Doc 05a)

DGMARE has requested a standing special request for advice when ICES advises 0 TAC for a stock (e.g. consequences for catches of others stocks in mixed fisheries and scientific fisheries).

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

b) Discards and survivability (wanted/unwanted) (Doc 05b)

A number of issues have been raised by DGMARE and Norway about ICES interpretation of wanted and unwanted catch and also the lack of consistency incorporating survivability estimates into stock assessments, forecasts and advice.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

c) MSY advice- North Sea herring (Doc 05c)

A requester of advice has highlighted that the current headline advice for North Sea herring does not follow the standard MSY approach text. It includes additional comments on fleet assumptions.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

d) Reporting back from benchmarks and workshops (Doc 05d)

Workshops and benchmarks occurred in quart 1 2020. This agenda item gives ACOM the opportunity to review, discuss and take action on potential issues raised.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

e) Reporting back from ADGs (Doc 05e)

The Chairs of ADGs will be invited to highlight the challenges encountered in 2019. This will include a review of recommendations from ADGs.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

f) TAF implementation (Doc 05f)

ACOM will be briefed on the status of development and implementation of TAF.

ACOM will be invited to comment.

g) Ecoregions document (Doc 05g)

ICES is regularly approached to provide the rationale, methods and documentation for the ecoregions. Doc 05g is a synopsis of the methods and current approach for ICES ecoregions.

ACOM will be invited to comment and asked to approve the explanatory document.

h) Data limited approaches (Doc 05h)

A number of issues need to be addressed by ACOM on data limited approaches.

- *Benchmarking of Cat 3 MSY advice*
- *Consistency of SPiCT Bmsy with MSY Btrigger.*
- *Further development of Cat 3 to 6 advice methods*

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

Approach to Agenda items 5i, j, k and l.

ACOM will split into groups to address these issues. ACOM members will be asked to choose between 5i (consistency of approach to changing productivity) and 5j (introduction to the advice) and then between 5k (stakeholder engagement) and 5l (lessons from mackerel). These groups will be given one hour on Thursday morning to discuss the issues and proposals and an hour to reconvene in plenary. If necessary reconvene later on Thursday or Friday to further advance their deliberations.

i) Consistent approach to changing productivity in fisheries advice (Doc 05i)

*A number of issues need to be addressed by ACOM on reference points, and incorporation of changed perceptions of ecosystem productivity in advice. ACOM will split into **groups** to consider and propose action on the following issues:*

- *Implementation of conclusions from WKIRISH*
- *Decisions about productivity regimes (e.g. Iberian sardine, western Baltic SS herring)*
- *Incorporation of new key runs of multispecies models into advice (estimates of M)*
- *Propose workshop on fisheries management reference points in a changing ecosystem.*

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

j) Introduction to the advice/advice basis (Doc 05j)

The introduction to advice ([advice basis](#)) is an important and useful document. It has been criticised as difficult to read, too fisheries focused and too long. Is it still fit for purpose, if not, what next? Will the publishing of an ecosystem advice framework mean that it is necessary to change the introduction. If the advice is published using html approaches rather than pdf, is there an opportunity to keep it as a useful reference document. ACOM will split into groups to consider and propose action on potential next steps for the advice basis.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

k) Stakeholder engagement (Doc 05k)

In 2019, progress was made in working with stakeholder (e.g. [WKSCINDI](#) and [WKRR-MAC](#)) but a number of challenges still remain in how ICES works with stakeholders. ACOM will split into **groups** to consider and propose action on the following issues:

1. Does ICES need an overarching stakeholder engagement strategy? (see [article](#) by ACOM Chair)
2. Can ICES develop a method for sense/sanity checking analytical results with stakeholder perceptions?

Proposals: potential Workshop with social scientists to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy and ACOM subgroup on sense checking (linked to agenda item I-lessons from mackerel).

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

l) Lessons from mackerel (Doc 05l)

At the 2019 ACOM consultations, ACOM agreed to create a subgroup to explore the issues surrounding the poor performance of ICES advice on mackerel over the last 6 years. ACOM will split into **groups** to consider and propose action on the issues raised by the subgroup.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

m) Recommendations from expert groups (Doc 05j)

ACOM will address in groups the recommendations from expert groups.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

6) Additional issues on delivery of advice

Overviews & viewpoints next steps – progress, discussion and decisions Fisheries Overviews approach

Advice online – reporting status, discussion and future strategy

Overview commitments

a) Advice view (Doc 06a)

Advice view will be presented to ACOM. Advice view is a database of ICES advice (including headline advice and catch scenario tables).

ACOM will be invited to comment.

b) Fisheries Overviews (Doc 06b)

ACOM will be updated on opportunities and challenges encountered in 2019 during the production of fisheries overviews. This will include examples of their use by requesters and stakeholders. ACOM will split into **groups** to consider and propose action on the following questions:

- Should a process to set up criteria and assess distribution and ecoregion attachment of stocks be initiated by ACOM, or postponed?
- What can be done to improve the consistency of content of the overviews?
- How can the production of the overviews be made more efficient?

- *Does the inclusion of mixed fisheries and bycatch advice make the fisheries overviews more operational?*

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

c) Delivery of advice online

*Council released equity to create one post in the secretariat to focus on the online delivery of advice in 2021. Some EU project proposals are also proposing to assist ICES and many institutes have developed shiny apps to display advice. ACOM will split into **groups** to scope priorities and approaches for ICES advice online.*

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

d) Progress on and commitments to overviews and viewpoints (Doc 06d)

A synopsis of progress on delivery of ecosystem, fisheries and aquaculture overviews will be presented. The allocation of leads for overviews will be reviewed and re-conformed by ACOM.

ACOM will be invited to comment, agree on actions, and take decisions as appropriate.

7) Round table reflections on ACOM 2020

Each member of ACOM will be asked for their personal reflection on ACOM 2020.

8) Closing

Annex 3. Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of ACOM on 28th April 2020 to re-evaluate ACOM response to the Covid-19 pandemic disruption.

Advisory Committee Meeting

Chair: Mark Dickey-Collas

14:00–17:00 28th April 2020 by WebEx

Participants

ACOM: Mark Dickey-Collas (Chair), Alain Biseau (France), Bjarte Bogstad (Norway), Christopher Zimmermann (Germany), Colm Lordan (Vice-Chair), Didzis Ustups (Latvia), Els Torreele (Belgium), Eugene Nixon (Vice-Chair), Fatima Borges (Portugal), Francisco Velasco (Spain), Ghislain Chouinard (Vice-Chair), Gudmundur Thordarson (Iceland), Henn Ojaveer (Vice Chair), Jesper Boje (Greenland observer), Kiersten Curti (USA), Massimiliano Cardinale (Sweden), Mikko Olin (Finland), Morten Vinther (Denmark), Niels Hintzen (the Netherlands), Petur Steingrund (Faroe Islands observer), Pieter-Jan Schön (United Kingdom), Robert Aps (Estonia), Yury Kovalev (Russia)

SCICOM and Steering Groups: Simon Jennings (SCICOM Chair), Patrick Lynch (FRSG Chair), Sven Kupschus (EOSG Chair)

Secretariat: Anne Cooper, David Miller, Inigo Martinez, Julie Kellner, Lara Salvany, Lotte Worsøe Clausen, Michala Ovens, Ruth Fernandez, Sarah Millar, Sebastian Valanko

Welcome, code of conduct, adoption of agenda

Participants were welcomed by the Chair. The agenda was adopted and the ICES Code of Conduct was presented and considered by the meeting.

Progress and challenges of the spring 2020 approach

ACOM leadership reflected on progress and challenges so far experienced with the spring 2020 approach and ACOM was invited to comment

Expert groups

- The EGs have shown willing to cooperate and make the meetings work.
- Some pushback from experts on the abbreviated advice sheets; experts do not consider those timesaving for the expert groups. Was meant as a time-saving process for the entire advice process (ADGs, etc.).
- Presentation of advice to recipients of advice and stakeholders will imply quite a lot more work as information now will have to be found in the reports or by correspondence with the expert groups directly.
- ADG minutes need to be carefully done and included any discussions/issues. Tables will be missing (allocation of advice by area, etc.); need to be found in the reports.

- Data issues have happened, QA/QC need to be in focus this year.
- Discussions and problems have been pushed forward in time given the difficulty in discussing these things online. This does halt the momentum and impacts the quality of the assessments this year. Two years of web-meetings should be avoided.
- On-line meetings have shown variable success, depending on the group, chair and complexity of advice tasks.
- Effective meeting coordination has been predominant.
- Difficult when you don't know people.
- Web-cams are very important to use to give the feel for a group and not just a blank screen.
- Time-zones can be challenging.
- Meetings that are dragging out are counter-productive; deadlines for decisions must be hard and kept to.
- Missing body language,
- Missing coffee breaks to solve problems.
- Long meetings are tiresome
- Face-to-face meetings are preferred by several

Relationships with requesters of advice

Throughout the process since mid-March the advice requesters have been included in the decisions and actions taken by ACOM for the covid-19 disruption and the consequences for advice. No advice requester has expressed anything but understanding for the situation. Advice requesters have provided inputs to timing of advice as well as the shape of advice (abbreviated/full).

Delivery of advice

So far no delays in advice provision; the advice is very dependent of the timely delivery of reports from the groups though.

Address planning challenges for the remaining 2020 advice

Future planning proposals for 2020 advice were presented by the Chair.

Meeting of expert groups up to October 2020.

Proposal: to encourage continuing of remote working to provide clarity and purpose.

ACOM was of the feeling that the decision should be made centrally (e.g. Bureau) based on recommendation from ACOM that expert groups should prepare to meet remotely until at least October 2020.

ACTION: ACOM Chair – send ACOM recommendation to the general secretary and president.

Format of fishing opportunities advice July to October 2020. Revert to previous system for advice or maintain abbreviated advice?

Proposal: maintain abbreviated advice.

Abbreviated advice with some flexibility (the ADGs will have to deal with these, e.g. including tables) was decided to be continued until October. It was underlined that the record of the advice will be more difficult to understand in the future if the abbreviated advice is continued for e.g. also next year.

ACTION: ACOM Leadership and secretariat.

Special requests. Whether to continue the current approach of not accepting new special requests and working behind the scenes with requesters, or begin evaluating and accepting special requests. (see Annex 1).

Proposal: begin evaluating and accepting special requests as prior March 2020.

ACOM supported the proposal and will start evaluating special requests put forward in the light of the restricted resources in the expert community under the covid-19 disruption.

ACTION: ACOM leadership & secretariat

Implications and potential solutions for the disruptions to surveys and monitoring/sampling of the catch.

The survey task force has monitored the developments so far. There is no consistent pattern across the network. We will not to duplicate other monitoring of the changing situation and thus are closely following the EU RCG assessments and working directly with ACOM members from Norway, Iceland, Russia and representatives from the Faroes and Greenland. ACOM is working with EOSG Chair.

ACOM was asked for comments and feedback and decide action on the following proposal:

Proposals:

- i) *ACOM Leadership/Secretariat to work with the survey task force to prepare a list of methodological options as soon as possible. This will provide a limited range of solutions to expert groups. The list will be placed on the ACOM forum for comment and agreement.*
- ii) *expert groups to be encouraged to use the list of methodological options but can also diverge from the list (as stipulated above).*
- iii) *ACOM to develop a template to record clearly in the reports where a stock's analysis has deviated from the stock annex and provide the reasons why this was necessary.*

ACOM approved the proposal, the list will be for guidance and there is the freedom to apply other methods. All methods need to be fully documented in the report of the Expert Group and new methods applied to update the guidance document. ACOM Leadership will develop a template to record clearly in the reports where a stock's analysis has deviated from the stock annex and provide the reasons why this was necessary. The documents will be on the forum for a week for comments.

ACTION: ACOM Leadership

The ICES Secretariat will meet with the National Correspondents regarding status of data collection for 2020-2021. ICES will be asked to comment on priorities for sampling efforts as well as a presentation of the main challenges for our advisory work caused by potential missing data.

ACOM will be asked for comments and feedback. A small subgroup is asked to be formed, providing feedback to Lotte by May 4th. ICES Survey groups are monitoring and coordinating/facilitating coverage of surveys by region. This topic is also on the agenda for the RCG meeting in June. The survey task force will discuss options for coordinating 'coverage-rosters' for ship-time.

Member of the subgroup are: Els Torreele, Christopher Zimmermann, Sven Kupchus, Kiersten Curti+ one more assessment oriented expert by invitation from ACOM Chair.

Comment on likely implications of dramatic changes in selectivity and fishing behaviour in 2020 for 2021 advice

Many fleets are not fishing as predicted in our 2019 advice. Additionally, changing fishing patterns, in response to [health, access and market conditions](#) will challenge many assumptions and disrupt methods used for stock assessments and forecasts.

As data are collected into the years ahead, ACOM will be able to comment on the changes in fishing pattern however information on catches for 2020 may already be available to expert groups.

Proposal: *remaining expert groups to carry out and report on a number of additional forecasts with reduced catch in 2020. Where possible, expert groups should gather statistics on uptake of catch for 2020 to inform these extra forecasts.*

ACOM rejected the proposal as it was not seen as a useful way forward, however, expert groups need to be very careful with their interim-year assumptions and these should be clearly described. ACOM LS will inform/instruct chairs on this.

ACTION: ACOM Chair will send an email to EG chairs about the interim assumptions.

ACOM consultation September 2020

The 2020 annual science conference has been postponed to 2021. The physical ACOM consultation will not take place. ACOM is asked to comment and adopt the following proposal:

Proposal: *ACOM consultations will take place remotely for 3 hours on 8th and 10th September (starting 14:00 Copenhagen time). Subgroups, if required could meet on 9th September. Dates to be confirmed.*

The proposal was approved by ACOM

Date of next evaluation

Proposal: *ACOM is asked to further evaluate the approach on 2 July 2020.*

The proposal was approved by ACOM

NOTE: This evaluation was postponed to late August by ACOM in June 2020.
--

Any other business

ACOM Vice Chair Henn Ojaveer updated the meeting about ADGBYC1 and the 2020 advisory process for the EU special request on emergency measures to prevent bycatch NE Atlantic com-

mon dolphin and Baltic harbour porpoise. There has been big diversity within the group of experts regarding focus and interpretation of the legislation and the process has a lot of attendance from observers.

It was suggested that ICES could potentially be more careful considering the acceptance of requests where interpretation of legislation is part of the request.

Special requests on hold

Client	Request name	Status	Next step
DGMARE	Interarea flexibility for different biological stocks and in the case of plaice in the Celtic Sea	Received; Rui scoping with the WGCSE	ON HOLD
DGMARE/Spain/Portugal	Revision of the 2019 TAC for Iberian sardine	Not received, only addressed in a letter to ACB, LWC	Dismissed but expected to re-appear
Sweden	Yearly SAR values in Swedish EEZ (2009-2018)	Received, process outlined with experts.	ON HOLD Getting permission to use data from data providers
DGENV	Trade-offs between fisheries and seafloor (D6)	Received; planning/preparations with experts underway - COVID timing an issue	ON HOLD timing an issue
OSPAR 2021 workplan	COMPEAT	Received	Will prepare a process and cost proposal for OSPAR Heads of Delegation meeting 20 May 2020. Work to start in 2021*
OSPAR 2021 workplan	Contaminants app	Received	*Same as above
OSPAR 2021 workplan	Marine mammals bycatch estimates	Received	*Same as above
OSPAR 2021 workplan	DATRAS for common indicators	Received	*Same as above
OSPAR 2021 workplan	Status assessments for Sea lamprey, Allis shad, European eel and salmon	Received	*Same as above
OSPAR 2021 workplan	Update of VMS data layers	Received	*Same as above

Annex 4. Prioritisation of Generic ToRs for Regional and Species Working Groups

2019/2/FRSG01 The following ToRs apply to: AFWG, HAWG, NWWG, NIPAG, WGWIDE, WGBAST, WGBFAS, WGNSSK, WGCSE, WGDEEP, WGBIE, WGEEL, WGEF, WGHANSA and WGNAS.

The working group should focus on:

- a) Consider and comment on Ecosystem and Fisheries overviews where available; **Medium**
- b) For the aim of providing input for the Fisheries Overviews, consider and comment for the fisheries relevant to the working group on:
 - i) descriptions of ecosystem impacts of fisheries
 - ii) descriptions of developments and recent changes to the fisheries
 - iii) mixed fisheries considerations, and
 - iv) emerging issues of relevance for the management of the fisheries; **Medium** contributions can be provided intersessionally, Mixed fisheries WGMIXFISH
- c) Conduct an assessment on the stock(s) to be addressed in 2020 using the method (analytical, forecast or trends indicators) as described in the stock annex and produce a **brief** report of the work carried out regarding the stock, summarising where the item is relevant: (Check the list of the stock to be done in detail and those roll over)
 - i) Input data and examination of data quality; **High**
 - ii) Where misreporting of catches is significant, provide qualitative and where possible quantitative information and describe the methods used to obtain the information; **High**
 - iii) For relevant stocks (i.e., all stocks with catches in the NEAFC Regulatory Area) estimate the percentage of the total catch that has been taken in the NEAFC Regulatory Area in 2019. **High**
 - iv) Estimate MSY proxy reference points for the category 3 and 4 stocks **Low**
 - v) The developments in spawning stock biomass, total stock biomass, fishing mortality, catches (wanted and unwanted landings and discards) using the method described in the stock annex; **High**
 - vi) The state of the stocks against relevant reference points; **High**
 - vii) Catch scenarios for next year(s) for the stocks for which ICES has been requested to provide advice on fishing opportunities; **High**
 - viii) Historical and analytical performance of the assessment and catch options with a succinct description of quality issues with these. For the analytical performance of category 1 and 2 age-structured assessment, report the mean Mohn's rho (assessment retrospective (bias) analysis) values for R, SSB and F. The WG report should include a plot of this retrospective analysis. The values should be calculated in ac-

cordance with the "Guidance for completing ToR viii) of the Generic ToRs for Regional and Species Working Groups - Retrospective bias in assessment" and reported using the ICES application for this purpose. **High**

- d) Produce a first draft of the advice on the stocks under considerations according to ACOM guidelines. **High** - revised format to be used for stocks except those that have had a benchmark
- e) Review progress on benchmark processes of relevance to the Expert Group; **High** for application; **Medium** for upcoming by correspondence
- f) Prepare the data calls for the next year update assessment and for planned data evaluation workshops; **High**
- g) Identify research needs of relevance for the work of the Expert Group. **Low**
- h) Review and update information regarding operational issues and research priorities and the Fisheries Resources Steering Group SharePoint site. **Low**
- i) Take 15 minutes, and fill a line in the audit spread sheet 'Monitor and alert for changes in ecosystem/fisheries productivity'; for stocks with less information that do not fit into this approach (e.g. higher categories >3) briefly note in the report where and how productivity, species interactions, habitat and distributional changes, including those related to climate-change, have been considered in the advice. **Low** can be done intersessionally