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Report of the Fishery Statistics Liaison Working Group (WGSTAL)

26–27 May 2011

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ICES

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1 Introduction

The participants consisted of representatives of all the EU Member States, the EU Candidate Countries, JRC, European Market Observatory, FAO, ICES and GFCM.

(Various delegations and EuroStat criticized the unexplained absence of a representative of DG MARE.)

See Annex 1 for the participants' list.

1.1 Data transmission compliance review

EuroStat expressed general satisfaction with the compliance by Member States with the EU catch, landings and aquaculture legislation. Spain reported difficulties in meeting its obligations and expected an improvement next year. EuroStat is required to report the compliance with EU legislation to its hierarchy.

1.2 Rationalization of catch legislation

Responding to decisions within the European Statistical System EuroStat is considering proposals to merge and simplify the regulations on catch and landing statistics. These proposals may be ready in time to submit to the 2012 meeting of the Working Group.

1.3 Implementation of the Regulation on aquaculture statistics

Despite certain minor difficulties EuroStat expressed satisfaction with the first exercise of data collection and processing. Some issues regarding derogations from the Regulation have still to be resolved.

1.4 Progress report of the Task Force on quality of fishery statistics

The Working Group reviewed and approved the report of the Task Force and agreed to complete and submit to EuroStat the two questionnaires on catch and landing statistics and on aquaculture statistics. These submissions should include methodological information, thus relieving the Member States of their obligation to submit methodological reports under the EU legislation on catch, landings and aquaculture statistics.

1.5 Confidentiality issues

EuroStat reported that certain Member States had indicated problems with confidentiality of data submitted under EU legislation (particularly with aquaculture and landing statistics). The Working Group briefly reviewed EuroStat's treatment of this topic in other domains and EuroStat proposed establishing a Task Force to formulate a policy on confidentiality of fishery statistics. Member States were requested to indicate their interest in joining this Task Force.

1.6 SDMX and EDAMIS projects

EuroStat reviewed with general satisfaction the progress with the EDAMIS and SDMX projects and initiated a discussion within the Working Group of general problems encountered. (Technical problems were discussed in Task Force meeting convened at the end of the Working Group meeting.) Some work still has to be done on code lists (species, areas, countries).

1.7 Cooperation with the DG MARE

Although limited by the absence of representatives of the DG MARE, EuroStat reviewed its cooperation with the DG MARE. This was largely in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two Directorates-General. Discussions covered the DG MARE's data warehouse project and data collection overlaps, contributions by EuroStat to information for the Marine Policy, the interest of the DG MARE in the SDMX project and the lead being taken by EuroStat chairing the Action Group on improving socio-economic data for maritime sectors and the regions (Note: the latter is despite EuroStat Unit E2 not collecting socio-economic data.)

Several members of the Working Group drew EuroStat's attention to the need for EuroStat and DG MARE to have common concepts and definitions.

The representative of the Market Observatory reviewed the data requirements for its work. The main problems related to a lack of data on processed products and on supply balance sheets for fishery products. EuroStat acknowledged the interest in fish balance sheets but regretted that, as a consequence of limited resources, this topic has a negative priority in its programme of work.

1.8 Cooperation with international agencies

With FAO and OECD EuroStat and DG MARE are coordinating the drafting of a section on socio-economic data for inclusion in a revised version of the FAO Handbook of Fishery Statistics Standards.

EuroStat is intensifying its collaboration with GFCM and envisages a partnership agreement with that organization. It is foreseen that the adoption by GFCM of Geographical Statistical Areas, which do not correspond completely to the current CWP subareas for the Mediterranean, will entail the necessity for a revision to the EU legislation on Mediterranean catch statistics.

1.9 FAO's FISHSTAT J software

FAO presented a demonstration of the FISHSTAT J software (a recent development from the FISHSTAT Plus software).

David Cross, representing ICES, commented that he had successfully installed the software on by notebook running under Windows XP. Loading of the program took longer than that of FISHSTAT Plus (probably because of the fact that FISHSTAT J loaded a batch of databases from the FAO website whereas FISHSTAT Plus permitted the loading of individually selected databases on the remote computer. Once loaded the presentation of the data by FISHSTAT J on the computer is similar to that for FISHSTAT Plus and should present a user of FISHSTAT Plus with little difficulty in adapting to the new software.

David Cross noted that ICES uses the FISHSTAT Plus software as the main method of disseminating catch data on its website ¹. Currently there was no method of loading the ICES data on FISHSTAT J. FAO responded that this was a subject for upcoming

¹ FishStat Plus has been the main method in the past, but the dissemination is through a number of different formats due to demand from end-users.

discussions between the two organizations and that a future development of FISH-STAT J would permit the loading of individual datasets ².

A remaining question relates to the other FISHSTAT Plus data on the ICES website: namely, the stock assessment data.

² This has been discussed on a web/phone conference where it was stated what fields ICES needs to include from the dataset to be available in FishStat J. Additional fields that are part of the existing dataset are added by EuroStat and it is therefore a three way decision in how to best achieve this in FishStat J.

2 Joint meeting of EuroStat Working Group “Fishery Statistics” and ICES Liaison Working Group

Franco Zampogna as Chair of ICES Liaison Working Group chaired the meeting.

2.1 Approval of the minutes of meeting on 4/6/2010

The minutes were approved without comment.

On matters arising David Cross presented the final report on the project to extend the ICES catch databases.

Data in FISHSTAT Plus format for 1950–2009 were now available on the ICES website. Excel work sheets with the data for 1903–1949 are also available. A report of the project and an analysis of some data will be published in ICES Cooperative Research Reports as “One hundred years of catch statistics for the Northeast Atlantic”.

2.2 Cooperation between ICES and EuroStat

EuroStat reported on the cooperation between the two organizations covering such topics as socio-economic indicators, sustainability indicators and cooperation on SDMX.

2.3 Any other business

David Cross responded to a request from national delegations for information on any other data requests from ICES. He mentioned the questionnaire on preliminary data on catches required by 31 January and the use of these data in the work of ICES stock assessment groups. The French delegation said that such a request with a deadline so soon after the end of the reference period caused problems for his services.

EuroStat proposed that future Joint Meetings should be expanded to include contributions from other CWP agencies (notably FAO and GFCM) and sought the view of participants on this proposal. There was no reaction (neither positive nor negative) to this proposal from the national delegates and it was agreed that EuroStat should consult the ICES Secretariat on this topic.

3 Coordination meeting with International agencies

At the end of the meeting of the Working Groups a coordination meeting was held to review the results of the meeting and to plan further cooperation. EuroStat, FAO, ICES and GFCM participated.

The following topics of interest to ICES were discussed:

FAO said that it was attempting to reduce its responsibility for the transmission of paper questionnaires, particularly where other organizations were making duplicate requests. EuroStat and ICES said that it was unnecessary for FAO to distribute STATLAND 27A questionnaires to those countries required to meet obligations under EU legislation (namely, EU Member States, Iceland and Norway). However, ICES noted that three ICES countries (Faroe Islands, Greenland and Russia) had no such obligations and proposed that FAO should contact the ICES Secretariat to arrange an appropriate procedure.

FAO reminded ICES that at the last CWP session Hans Lassen had undertaken to draft the section on fleet statistics for the revised Handbook of Fishery Statistics Standards. FAO wished to receive this draft by the end of September in order to transmit it to other CWP agencies for their comments according to the agreed timetable.

FAO mentioned the interest being exhibited by the UN Statistics Commission in sustainability indicators for fisheries. She would have to submit a review of this topic to the Commission shortly and she would welcome information on developments on this topic.

EuroStat reported on the discussions within the EU Commission services on discrepancies between data from the quota management and the official catch statistics. It was being proposed by the DG MARE that EuroStat should make greater use of the quota management data. FAO (supported by David Cross) advised against such an approach.

Annex 1: Participants list

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Annex 2: Terms of Reference 2011

2010/2/ACOM22 The **Fishery Statistics Liaison Working Group** (WGSTAL), chaired by Franco Zampogna, EuroStat, will meet in Luxembourg on 27 May 2011 and back-to-back with the EuroStat Working Group “Fisheries Statistics”, to:

- a) Review the cooperation between ICES and EuroStat and detailing the future procedures within the framework of the ICES/EuroStat Partnership Agreement;
- b) Review progress with the FIGIS/FIRMS project (for information);
- c) Discuss the sources, quality and use of data on non-reported landings and provide guidance on how best to estimate the magnitude of these landings;
- d) Review the report of the Meeting of the CWP and agree follow-up actions within the EuroStat/ICES partnership on fisheries statistics. Topics for the intersessional CWP July 2011 (for information);
- e) Review progress on the development of sustainability indicators;
- f) Inform on progress with the update of the Handbook on Fisheries Statistics Standards;
- g) Review progress on establishment of SDMX as a framework for fisheries statistics.

WGSTAL will report by 1 August 2011 for the attention of ACOM.

Supporting information

Priority:	The work of the working group is essential to maintain contact with the national statistical focal points and to ensure a continuation in the quality of the fisheries statistical data not least for use by the fish stock assessment working groups.
Scientific justification and relation to Action Plan	Detailed, high quality fisheries statistics are essential to fish stock assessments. In particular to ToR on “non-reported landings there should be a discussion based on the use of catch statistics made by the assessments groups. The scientists are using these data but the reliability of the official statistics is under dispute. There is documentation of non-reported landings of significant magnitude in some fisheries. This documentation is emerging from the processing industry and from the scientists. The discussion on the sustainability indicators will be based on ICES/EEA/EuroStat work.
Resource requirements	The Secretariat shall prepare appropriate working papers in particular on progress with developing data checking software.
Participants:	WGSTAL will meet together with EuroStat’s Working Group “Fisheries Statistics”, where Fisheries Statisticians from national statistical offices meets. The meeting will include more than 50 participants. (ICES Member Countries, most EU and accession countries and several IGOs).
Secretariat Facilities:	ICES has entered into a Partnership with EuroStat on developing and running fisheries statistics systems covering the Northeast Atlantic fisheries. ICES and EuroStat will be in the fringe and back-to-back with this meeting meet with EuroStat to review the Secretariat arrangements as stipulated in our agreement. EuroStat will make the practical arrangements for the WGSTAL meeting. ICES will meet with EuroStat in the margin of this meeting to review progress with the project on establishing software for data checking and to review the cooperation between the two secretariats.
Financial:	
Linkages to advisory committees:	Closely linked to ACOM activities.
Linkages to other committees or groups:	