

Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council

Executive Committee Meeting

Vaasa, 23rd June 2009

Minutes

Chairman: Reine J. Johansson

Rapporteur: Sally Clink

1. Welcome

a. Apologies and adoption of the agenda

There were apologies from:

Peter Breckling (Union of German Cutter Fishery) – mandate given to Lothar Fischer (German Cutter-and Coastal-Fishermen’s Association)

Bengt Ingerstram (Swedish Consumers’ Coalition) – mandate given to Jesper Kobberø (ASECO)

Kim Jordas (Finnish Fishermen’s Association) was substituted by Markku Saiha (Finnish Fishermen’s Association).

Staffan Danielsson (CCB) – mandate not given to another member.

Vaida Sakaite (Lithuanian Fisheries Producer's Association, substituting A. Bargaila) - mandate not given to another member.

The list of participants is in Annex I. There were 19 ExCom members present and 21 votes assembled.

The agenda was adopted. It was agreed to move Point 9 CFP reform - creation of a Working Group forward and re-number it point 3.

b. Adoption of the minutes from ExCom 08/05/09

The minutes from the last ExCom were adopted.

c. Appointment of members to verify the minutes from the meeting

Michael Andersen (Danish Fishermen’s Association) and Alex Olsen (AIPCE-CEP) were appointed.

2. Update by the Secretariat

Budget status (2008-2009 and 2009-2010)

The Secretariat informed that the accounts for 2008-2009 were almost closed, and that final payment of the outstanding EU contribution was awaited. An update was given on the 2009-2010 budget, so

members could follow expenditure for the different items. The members took note that the interpreting and translation had been expensive item. It was agreed that this was an important item and should be prioritized. The secretariat pointed out that membership payments for the year 2010-2011 would be requested in advance.

Chalmers University contribution to Science Workshop of 6th May 2009

The ExCom was informed of the donation of 27,000 SEK by Chalmers to support subsistence costs of the evening session of the Science Workshop on 6th May.

Communicating with members

The ExCom confirmed that they were happy to receive information from the Secretariat as a weekly/bi-weekly newsletter and suggested that any attachments be put on the website and not just attached in an e mail. It was also suggested that a link to the Polish website should be added to promote it.

The creation of a formal Inter-RAC

The Secretariat explained the proposal in connection with a coming Inter-RAC meeting of creating a formal Inter-RAC to deal with such things as common press releases. Some members pointed out that this had been discussed in the RAC earlier. It was confirmed that the BS RAC position continued to be that it was acceptable to formalise the Inter-RAC process within the framework of meetings, but that the Inter-RAC it was only for dealing with budget and administrative matters. The political decisions should be left to each RAC. Some members pointed out the regional approach, which underpinned the individual role of each RAC.

3. CFP reform - creation of a Working Group

The BS RAC chair referred to discussions from the previous ExCom, when it was agreed to create a Working Group on CFP reform. It was important that all BS RAC countries took part, and members were invited to send their name to the Secretariat. It was agreed to start with a two-day meeting – starting in September. The work would be finalised in mid-December. The end product would be a paper to be discussed and approved by ExCom. The ExCom approved the proposal to have Niels Wichmann (Managing Director, Danish Fishermen’s Association) as chair of this group. Stefanie Schmidt (DG Mare) pointed out that there was a variety of topics in the Green Paper, some of which are technical. She was willing to investigate whether it was possible for Commission representatives to come and provide further input e.g. on ITQs. The RAC was invited to formulate a request to the Commission.

4. Outcome from Demersal WG

Michael Andersen, Demersal WG chairman, explained the outcome of the recent Demersal WG. He went through the contents of the draft recommendation from the WG for demersal species 2010. He explained what was discussed with respect to selectivity and the WG recommendation to the ExCom to establish a selectivity project. Finally, in connection with Commission's Communication on fishing opportunities for 2010, a draft text from the BS RAC would be finalised in a written procedure to meet the Commission's deadline for comments by 31st July.

The draft recommendation from the WG for demersal species 2010.

WWF asked for a specific reference in the text to the fall in the level of mis-reporting and reservations with respect to the actual level of mis-reporting. It was agreed by ExCom to include this in the preamble, as well as a reference to previous commitments by the BS RAC on IUU fisheries.

Stefanie Schimdt (DG Mare) pointed out that the STECF had now given its advice and recommended that fishing effort in the eastern Baltic be reduced by a further 20%. The ExCom regretted that this recommendation from the STECF had only come now, and discussed how to take this into account with respect to effort management in general and to the different fleet segments in the Baltic. In particular, concerns were raised by representatives of the fisheries sector about the effects of further effort reduction on the small-scale fisheries. It was agreed to set aside the STECF advice with respect to the BS RAC recommendation.

With respect to quota flexibility between the western and eastern cod stock, it was agreed to maintain the quota issue, but to state it in the preamble, rather than in the actual recommendation. As for the discussion on effort and the implications of further effort reduction for small-scale fisheries, several members from the two-thirds group suggested recommending a derogation from further effort reduction from the 2009 level. There was an exchange of views as to whether small-scale vessels included vessels below 12 metres or 8 metres, and it was agreed to use 12 metres according to the definition by the former IBSFC. Representatives from WWF and the Fisheries Secretariat abstained on the recommendation for the derogation of vessels below 12 metres. The ExCom adopted the recommendation with the amendments and the abstention by WWF and the Fisheries Secretariat.

Selectivity project

Michael Andersen sought the consensus of the ExCom to the proposal from the Working Group of a BS RAC selectivity project.

Stefanie Schmidt mentioned that the Commission was very positive and supportive of this project. She underlined that it was important to get the member states onboard. Furthermore, she explained that the financing of the project was an open issue, given that the three options she had mentioned at the Demersal working group were not ideal. She was investigating different options, and there were internal discussions in the Commission to see if a grant could be made available.

Stefanie Schmidt pointed out that one thing from the minutes of Demersal Working Group was not clear: in 2010 there will be a ban on high grading, but that did not imply that there would be a discard ban from 2011. It was important to distinguish between measures for 2010, and further measures that can be taken for subsequent years. The ExCom took note.

Michael Andersen thanked the Commission for its support to the selectivity issue, but stressed that some key member states must also give their support.

The ExCom gave its mandate to go further on this project. Michael Andersen would finalise the text containing a project description, and there would be discussions with governments on help with this project.

5. Outcome from Pelagic WG

Ryszard Malik, Pelagic WG chair went through the outcome of the Pelagic WG and the contents of the draft recommendation for herring and sprat. The ExCom were generally favourable to the contents of the text. Several members pointed out the importance of enhanced cooperation between ICES and the industry in order to improve the quality of the assessments, and cited the current year with the sprat fishery as an example where experience from the fisheries was in contradiction with the ICES advice.

Ottilia Thoreson (WWF) referred to their written contribution sent to the Pelagic Working Group, and explained that although it was not good for the industry to have too many variations in the catch possibilities, WWF was unable to support a rollover in the fishery when ICES recommended reductions. For herring in SD 25-29 and 32, and sprat in SD 22-32 WWF recommended a reduction of 15%. This was supported by the Fisheries Secretariat, and the recommendation was amended accordingly.

The question was raised why the BSRAC was making a recommendation for herring in SD 22-24, when no advice was yet available from ICES on this stock. Several members agreed that this was a problem. Lothar Fischer, representing the German fisheries sector pointed out that the German fishermen were heavily dependent on this stock, and it was very important to have advice from the BS RAC ExCom, be it now or later. There was a lot of discussion on this point. The BS RAC ExCom agreed to include in the recommendation the reservation that the BSRAC had been unable to give a recommendation because of the late arrival of the advice for this stock.

Stefanie Schmidt (DG Mare) promised to take this up in the Commission and to investigate the possibility of extending the deadline for the BS RAC to send in a recommendation later on in the

summer.¹ She added that the issue of the Western Baltic herring would be best dealt with when discussing the management plan for all the Baltic pelagic stocks, and this goes beyond the TAC/quota discussions.

The draft BS RAC recommendation for the pelagic stocks, with the amendments made, was approved by the ExCom. The minority positions by WWF and Fisheries Secretariat were included.

6. ICES advice for salmon

Gunnar Asplund, Chair of the Salmon WG, presented the formal advice from ICES, which he was very disappointed with. He explained that ICES had deviated from building on the management objectives of the Salmon Action plan from 1997, and instead had decided on management objectives ahead of the management institutes. He presented to the ExCom a draft text with a BSRAC recommendation for salmon.

There was widespread support and praise for the text, which, it was felt, reflected well the fact that ICES had taken on a management plan role, and this was unacceptable. Several members regretted the fact that BS RAC representatives were not able to take part in the ICES Salmon WG, and suggested that this should be pointed out to the Commission. Ewa Milewska (WWF) pointed out that the ICES advice on the TAC was not acceptable for the industry, and proposed instead a TAC figure based on the precautionary approach. There was some discussion about whether to include any reference in the text to a TAC, and some members suggested omitting it.

The ExCom approved unanimously the draft text, excluding any recommendation on the TAC, and this would go forward as the BS RAC recommendation on salmon.

7. Cormorants (from ExCom 080509)

Vesa Karttunen (Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations) presented the modified initiative concerning cormorants. He explained that the text had been modified due to the progress made in connection with the European Parliament. There was no need for a European level management plan for cormorants, because of the costs involved. Instead clarification should be sought from the Commission on the nature of the derogations under Article 9 of the Council Directive on the

¹ The Commission has confirmed that due to the mismatch in timing of the ICES advice for herring in SD 22-.24, the deadline for the BS RAC to send its recommendation is the beginning of September.

conservation of wild birds. It was the opinion of the Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations that it should be possible to change the directive.

This proposal gave rise to considerable discussion about the appropriate way to deal with wild bird populations in connection with fisheries. There were differing opinions concerning the appropriateness of using the provisions in the wild birds directive, or whether it was more appropriate to support the drawing up of a wider management plan for cormorants. The discussion broadened out to consider the wider environmental concerns and ecosystem considerations with respect to protecting wild populations and the consequences of singling out particular species for protection.

Stefanie Schmidt (DG Mare) pointed out that the CFP did not contain provisions to deal with cormorants, so the Environment Directorate General should be addressed.

Consensus was reached on sending to DG Environment a recommendation, which included both short-term and long-term considerations. The draft initiative was modified to encourage the drawing up of a long-term management plan for cormorants, and if this was effective, to add cormorants to Annex II of the Wild Birds Directive. At the same time, the short-term provision of using Article 9 of the Wild Birds Directive was also included in the recommendation.

8. Update on Maritime Spatial Planning

Ottilia Thoreson (WWF) reminded the ExCom of the BSRAC workshop on Maritime Spatial Planning where there was a discussion about the lack of knowledge of the rules concerning

jurisdiction. Under the Baltic Sea Action Plan funding had been made available for WWF and other partners to support activities on MSP and stakeholder involvement. One of the tasks was to carry out a desk study to collect data together on the different legal jurisdictions relating to MSP in the different countries, and thereby improve gaps in the knowledge and reach a level playing field. The BS RAC was invited to support this activity and to take part. The final report could be used jointly with the RAC: to be presented to the ExCom or to be used to influence the Commission and member states in order to get fisheries more involved in the process. ExCom members signalled their interest in taking part, and agreed that such a project could help the BS RAC deal with the issue of MSP. The Secretariat would collect together names of those willing to be contact persons from each of the BS RAC countries.

9. BS RAC Conference 1st -2nd October 2009

The ExCom chair stressed that the aim of this conference was to highlight the Baltic and the BS RAC. He ran through some of the topics and speakers on the draft programme and pointed out that the ministers would have to be invited to address a broader theme than that given in the draft programme. A statement for the ministers would be prepared in advance. The European Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) had agreed to pay for the interpreting costs, and the German and Polish representatives sought confirmation that there would be interpreting for those two languages. There were no comments to the draft programme. The secretariat would be sending out a short text on the conference in English, and hoped that members would translate it into the BS RAC languages.

10. IUU fishing and trade statistics

Alex Olsen gave a brief power point presentation on the subject of IUU fishing and unreported landings based on import-export statistics from Eurostat. (Presentation is on website: http://www.bsrac.org/archive/Dokumenter/ExCom230609/20090623_BS_RAC_Unreported%20landings%202008.pdf).

The study has focused on Poland and is based on trade statistics 2005 - 2008. The findings confirm that the level of unreported landings in Poland is low in 2008, and mirrors the results from ICES. Trade statistics are another way of looking into unreported landings. He explained that the important part is to look at the trend and to note the dramatic drop in Polish fishing days in 2008, which reflects the improvements made in the control system in Poland. The ExCom was positive about the information, which was considered an interesting alternative to other sources of data. It was suggested that this presentation could be made before the ICES fisheries assessment working group meets next year.

11. Date and venue for next ExCom

It was agreed to meet on Tuesday 3rd November 2009 in Copenhagen.

12. AOB

Pehr Eriksson (Swedish Fishermen's Federation) raised the Femern Link project, and it was agreed to put this on the agenda for the ExCom in November.