

**Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council (BSRAC)
Pelagic Working Group Meeting,
Sea Fisheries Institute, Gdynia, 17th March 2009**

Chair: Ryszard Malik

Rapporteur: Sally Clink

At this meeting there were 32 participants from 4 BS RAC Member States (list attached). A representative from the European Commission also participated, as well as scientists and researchers from scientific establishments around the Baltic.

1. Welcome, apologies, presentation

The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was a *tour de table*. No apologies had been received. A participants' list is attached.

a) Long Term Management Plan for Pelagic Species

- Information from the Commission

The Commission representative gave a short overview. The intention is to develop a long-term plan for all stocks in the Baltic, but there may need to be individual plans for some species. A request has been sent to ICES for scientific advice. ICES will provide its advice in two steps: on 1st April dealing with interactions with other stocks, and on 29th May addressing such questions as the current management divisions. The Commission is about to conclude a contract with a consultancy to provide socio-economic advice. A tender is not required, because the Commission has a framework agreement with the particular consultancy. The results of the work are expected by mid-July and will be sent to STECF. A consultation paper will be developed, and the BS RAC (and to some extent the Pelagic RAC) will be consulted in September/October. The consultation will take place by the end of the year, and a proposal will be put forward in January 2010.

A question was asked about consultations with Russia. The Commission representative informed that this would depend on whether an agreement with Russia is concluded this year. If there is an agreement, the aim was to set up a management committee with Russia. Russia has been kept informed of work with the long-term management plan. With respect to the JAKFISH/GAP project, the Commission is very interested and has agreed that the

best way is for the two processes to go along in parallel and to incorporate the results from the project at the right time.

- **Herring in IIIA and 22-24 consultation with Pelagic RAC**

Christian Olesen, chair of WG I of the Pelagic RAC, gave the background to the proposal to hold joint consultations between the two RACs on this stock. He explained that for the past 3 years, the Pelagic RAC had been looking at all herring stocks, including IIIa, but has never issued a recommendation for IIIa because of the overlap with the BS RAC. He foresees two problems: the biology of the stock and how much fishing it can allow, and to decide whether the herring should be caught in the Baltic Sea or in Skagerrak/Kattegat. The Pelagic RAC has asked the Commission to draft a management plan to include a +/- 15% limitation on the TAC and to include some new rules on the division of the TAC between area 22-24 and Skagerrak/Kattegat. The BS RAC WG members were positive to the proposal for cooperation between the two RACs on these migrating stocks.

It was agreed to set up a small Focus Group with one representative from each MS taking part from each RAC. Ryszard Malik was proposed as chair of this focus group. The proposed dates were 18th/19th/20th May in Copenhagen. The nature of the work would be fairly technical and the results would be reported on to both RACs. No decisions would be taken at the Focus Group. Names of participants were requested by the end of April.

The discussion broadened out to consider the overarching issue of a long-term management plan and its implications for the size of catches and yield in terms of MSY. It was agreed that the question was not whether there should be a management plan, but what it should contain. The interaction between sprat, central herring and the cod stocks was also raised, and the Commission representative informed that they had submitted a request to ICES to look at the interaction between the stocks. When the results are produced, the BSRAC will be invited to come with advice on how the TACs can be set. For instance: should all stocks be at MSY, or should there be some preference given?

- **JAKFISH/GAP Joint Research Project “Management plans for herring in ICES division IIIa and adjacent areas; perceptions of stocks and fishery”**

Piavi Hapasari (Helsinki University) gave a presentation of the JAKFISH project: Judgement and knowledge of in fisheries involving stakeholders. The project deals with legitimacy, which, she said, is an important aspect of fisheries legislation. She explained the aims of the project, which works on participatory modeling and involves different stakeholder groups. The aim is to produce a result, which can be used in BS RAC advice.

Robert Aps (Estonian Marine Institute) presented the GAP project proposal: “Bridging the gap between scientists and stakeholders mapping the fisheries in support of marine spatial planning.” He

explained that the background to this project is the growing pressure on the use of the marine area. The aim is to identify and map the actual and planned competing sea uses and to assess their possible impact on spatial allocation of fishing possibilities for the Baltic fisheries. Participatory modeling exercises are at the heart of the project. The project would offer the BS RAC a tool with which to collect and present the data on fisheries. The WG was positive about the project and had a short discussion on maritime spatial planning and its implications for fishing interests in the Baltic.

2) STECF Review of scientific advice for pelagic Baltic stocks for 2009 (including area IIIa) – discussion

Ryszard Malik WG Chair went through the recommendations for the pelagic stocks for the Baltic. The figures he gave covered recommendations from the BS RAC, those from STECF and the final decision taken at the Council. He asked the Commission representative in what way Council decisions differed from the STECF recommendations. The Commission representative explained the different roles played in the decision making process and the rules for the different pelagic stocks in the Baltic. She pointed out that for the western Baltic herring stock in area IIIa, the agreement is a political one, which member states do not want alter. However, for herring in the central Baltic Area and the Gulf of Riga the figures are set by management area and not by stock. There was a general discussion of whether the BS RAC actually makes a contribution to the decision-making process. WG members generally felt that the BSRAC did make a contribution to the process.

3) Improving communication between stakeholders gcPLUS project – results of the workshop in Gdynia - information

Ewa Milewska (BS RAC vice-chair) gave an account of the workshop (from January 2009), which had been an informal process. She added that a core group (Ewa Milewska, Ryszard Malik and Steve Karnicki (Deputy director MIR) was working on creating a roundtable to involve representatives from the other sectors and with the aim of improving communication between the different parties. They would report on this at the Science Workshop in May. This process was complementary to the Science Workshop.

4) Reform of the CFP and the role of the BSRAC in this – discussion.

The Commission representative was invited to contribute to this subject. She pointed out that she had not prepared to and give an account at this meeting of what is at stake in the reform process, but she would comment on questions put by the WG. She said that the Green Paper was due out by the end of April and that input from stakeholders could be made until the end of November. The Green Paper would contain questions as guidance, but it would be possible to raise other questions when commenting. The WG agreed that when considering the Green Paper, the BS RAC should relate its work to the concerns of the BS RAC and focus on issues that are relevant to the RAC.

One member informed the group of initial reflections by ACFA on the CFP (of which Europêche was rapporteur) and a paper made available on this (attached to these minutes). A question was asked about relative stability. The Commission representative explained that it was the view of the Commission that relative stability caused some problems and counter-acts some of the solutions in the fishing sector. She named three factors which give rise to a consideration of relative stability: mixed fisheries, the changing distribution pattern of stocks, and the fact that there is still over-capacity in some fisheries: an individual transferable system could help to alleviate capacity. The WG agreed that relative stability required further discussion and that it could have implications for the sharing of competences. One member reminded the WG about the workshop on rights based management (Copenhagen, January 2008) and the decisions taken there. The Commission representative informed the WG of a report recently published on RBM (attached to these minutes). One member asked about regionalisation and the possibility of more tasks being given to the BSRAC. The Commission representative said that this had come up as a topic, and the Baltic could be a good candidate, but it had implications for the sharing of competences and the need to look at the role of the RACs and of the Producer Organisations with respect to allocation of responsibility. Self-regulation and co-management were also discussed in the context of the Baltic, but it was pointed out that the Lisbon Treaty, if signed, would have implications for this in terms of influence by the European Parliament and a longer decision-making process. As for technical measures in this context, the BSRAC should have an internal discussion about what it feels ready to take over in terms of competence.

5) AOB

It was agreed that date and time of the next Pelagic WG depend on input from the Commission and the timing of its work with the long-term management plan. It was agreed to wait until after the ICES assessment WG or the ACOM working group, so a WG would probably take place in early June.