



MINUTES

33rd meeting of LDAC Working Group 2 North Atlantic RFMOs and Fishing Agreements

Thursday, 7 March 2024, 09:30-13:00h CET / GMT+1

Venue: Martin's Brussels EU Hotel (Bd. Charlemagne 80, 1000 Brussels)

Chair: Xavier Leduc.

Vice Chair: Tim Heddema.

1. Welcome by the Chair.

In the absence of WG2 Chair and Vice Chair, it is Mr. Iván López who chairs this meeting. He also apologises for the absence of Mr. Jean Christophe Vandeveld (Pew).

Then he welcomes all group members and all MS observers. Finally, he thanks invited experts from DG MARE and IEO-CSIC for their participation.

The whole list of members and observers is included as [Annex I](#).

2. Approval of the minutes of the last WG2 meeting (Madrid, 19 November 2023)

Prior to the meeting, the minutes of the last meeting were sent to all members via email or through the website.

DECISION: *The minutes are approved with no objections or additional comments.*

3. Approval of the agenda.

The agenda is approved with no changes to it.

4. Election of WG2 Chair and Vice Chair (June 2024-May 2027).

Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, General Secretary, explains the election procedure informing afterwards about the expressions of interest received in good time and appropriate manner: Mr. Emil Remisz's (High Seas PO - Poland) for the position of Chair and Mr. Tim Heddema's (DFTA-Netherlands) for the position of Vice Chair.

DECISION:

The members who are present and represented unanimously approve the appointment of the mentioned candidates, Mr. Remisz and Mr. Heddema, for the positions of WG2 Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. They will have a 3-year mandate starting on 1 June 2024 and ending on 31 May 2027.

The LDAC Chair, Mr. Iván López, thanks the outgoing Chair, Mr. Xavier Leduc, for his dedication and work over recent years. He then welcomes the incoming Chair and Vice Chair.



5. Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO)

5.1. Briefing on EU work priorities in NAFO for 2024 (DG MARE)

The EC representative, Mr. Ignacio Granell, informs that the Annual Meeting will be held in Halifax in September.

Regarding recommendations based on the assessment of stocks, he notes that the NAFO Scientific Committee meeting will be held in June and that the report is expected to be available sometime in July. This year, the stocks of higher relevance will be Greenland halibut (GHL), Flemish Cap cod (3M) and 3M and 3LN redfish. As for 3M shrimp, the previous annual meeting held in Vigo was difficult, since no agreement was reached among contracting parties. In fact, there is no interest in having an additional inter-sessional meeting on this stock, which remains in moratorium, so the situation will probably be the same as the year before as far as the lack of agreement on management measures is concerned, so it is likely that everything will be decided the following year.

Regarding 2J3KL northern cod, that has been in moratorium for 30 years, he says that they are waiting to know Canada's decision for this year and the proposal they will put forward concerning distribution criteria or allocation keys prior to the fishery's closure in the 1990's, so additional information has been requested from the NAFO Secretariat in this regard. The EC will wait to receive this information and then will decide the strategy to follow.

As far as NAFO working groups are concerned, he informs that:

- The Working Group on Risk-Based Management Strategies (WG-RBMS): will have an inter-sessional meeting on RBMS in April and then in August they will have a Joint Committee with the Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) Working Group.

Concerning the Candidate Management Procedures (CMP), the EC representative informs that they will be assessed this year in the case of Greenland halibut (GHL), highlighting that that for 3LN oceanic redfish should be adopted in 2025.

- The Working Group on Ecosystem Science and Assessment (WG-ESA): will have a meeting in November. No more VMEs will be closed for the time being until December 2026.

By means of the NEREIDA project, which is working well, the impact of fisheries on ecosystems will be assessed by defining the fisheries footprint, and the conclusions will be important to reassess NAFO bottom fisheries in 2026. At this point, he points out that there are discussions in progress with Canada on the impact of oil and gas extraction activities, so he requests the LDAC to convey its position or any information it may have in this regard.

Regarding control and enforcement, he says that at the last annual meeting held in Vigo, the observer programme was reviewed, as well as new provisions on by-catches, although these measures need to be assessed in 2024.

5.2. Ecosystem based approach to fisheries – multi-species assessment for Subdiv. 3M (IEO)

Dr. Mar Sacau, IEO-CSIC, makes a presentation that can be found on the LDAC website, on the section devoted to this meeting at:

https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation_Ecosystem_approach_framework_MarSacau_IEO.pdf



5.3. Feedback from LDAC - Identification of main elements for the drafting of the LDAC advice in preparation for the 46th NAFO annual meeting (Halifax, 23-27 September 2024)

Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, General Secretary, summarises the elements for the preparation of a piece of advice for 2014, thanking Mr. Edelmiro Ulloa (ARVI) for his collaboration.

In addition to the usual structure of analysis of the Scientific Council's advice and the technical feedback and recommendations to it on each stock of commercial interest, in the section on ecosystems, he summarises the points of interest.

1. To reflect upon the calculation of the Total Catch Index (TCI) and to comment on Flemish Cap - it seems it is below MSY and current quotas, so a warning will be displayed.

2. To use NAFO as reference or case study for future Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), VME impact on fisheries and integrated ecosystem approach with other activities, IOG (BBNJ), etc.

3. Ecosystem-based approach model: multi-species assessments, to make it clear that it is not possible to reach MSY for 3 Flemish Cap species, so it should not be used for short-term management.

4. Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME): to mention that they can be activated/deactivated, so they should be regularly reviewed to assess their effectiveness.

5. Ecosystem summary sheets: to praise this work since it contributes to better understanding by managers, and maybe to put it in context and make it consistent with the general views on ecosystems at ICES in terms of main human pressure, stress factors and other indicators.

6. Economic activities other than fisheries: how these activities challenge the ecosystem-based approach. To show in the piece of advice (if so authorised) the overlapping between human exploitation activities and VMEs.

The following **ACTIONS** are agreed:

- **The LDAC Secretariat will share with DG MARE representatives and with the members the MIAC report which discussed the update and review of the Joint ICES-NAFO Group on Pandalus that assessed the 3M shrimp stock; and the replies from ICES regarding its relationship with NEAFC and OSPAR in the framework of the Annual Meeting and the Cooperation Agreement.**

- **The LDAC will convene a focus group in the summer (July-August) once the Scientific Committee (SC) report is available, in order to identify potential areas of interest for the advice and feedback to the scientific recommendations for a first preliminary draft to be ready for discussion at the EC meeting with the LDAC, in principle scheduled for the last week of August, and for it to be adopted in September prior to the annual meeting.**

6. Update on coastal states' negotiations and bilateral and trilateral dialogues between the EU and North East Atlantic third countries (DG MARE)

6.1. Briefing on state of play of negotiations with Coastal States.

The EC representative, Ms. Jessica Demblon, informs on the different stocks of interest for distant water fleets:

- Mackerel (MAK): there is little progress to report, two negotiation rounds took place, but there was no new proposal for new distribution arrangements. Discussions are taking place at bilateral and trilateral level, and this is where the transfer of quota to the UK in exchange for access to catch mackerel in their waters will be discussed.



- Atlanto-Scandian herring (ASH): there is a more negative perception although a round will take place next week, the EU position is strong. There will be another round in two weeks to allow the parties time for reflection. Last month of October, at the annual consultations, the EU acquired the status of coastal state, being treated as a fishing country and this being negatively used by other parties, thus minimising opposition in distribution arrangements. Next steps are being worked on with EU Member States.

- Blue whiting (BWH): the consultation on the Atlanto-Scandian herring (ASG) has negatively influenced the negotiating atmosphere. It remains to be seen the position to be adopted by Faroe Islands in this regard.

In the recommendation on blue whiting, the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) indicates a provision on the limitation of catches in NEAFC only allocated to Russia and Greenland. There will be a limitation in catches for NEAFC of 5%, but the EC does not agree with this (and Iceland supports the EU position).

Regarding the long-term management strategy for Atlanto-Scandian herring and blue whiting, the EC representative thinks that there should be previous distribution arrangements.

The LDAC Chair, Mr. Iván López, suggests addressing this issue at inter-AC level, in a similar format to that of the Forum on Brexit, where all affected CCs and their representatives should be present. This could be done by setting up an inter-AC group or expanding the scope of the current one.

6.2. Norway and access to Svalbard FPZ.

The EC representative, Mr. Mael Le Drast, informs on bilateral negotiations between the EU and Norway, reviewing the results of last year's negotiations, access to waters and swaps, stressing that the level of quotas and access to fisheries in Norway were maintained (although they are still below historical levels both for blue whiting and for Atlanto-Scandian herring).

He says that there will be an increase of 10.000 tonnes for the return of the EU cod quota (due to its return), very important for the profitability of the fleet which depends on access to Norwegian resources.

The EC representative points out the importance of the link between access to the market and negotiation of quotas.

Finally, he informs of the possibility of not being able to use capelin as bargaining chip due to the scientific recommendation of zero TAC and the agreement with Iceland.

6.3. UK and Faroe Islands.

The EC representative, Ms. Demblon, notes that there is still no mandate for the 2024 negotiation, and that it is difficult to reach an agreement if it goes against the interests of the EU, for instance at the Coastal State Forum. In fact, since Brexit there are no bilateral agreements, and consultations carried out in 2020 and 2021 were unsuccessful.

Mr. Iván López, AGARBA, suggest reflecting upon this within the LDAC to address this matter at Inter-AC level and invites the EC to intensify the relationship with the Faroe Islands and Iceland as a geopolitical and negotiating strategy for the future with a view to having allies in the North East Atlantic.

Mr. Esben Sverdrup, PTA, voices his absolute support for the EU position on ASH, and underlines the importance of the Atlanto-Scandian herring for some countries like Denmark, as it is a stock of



millions of tonnes of quota. In his opinion, it would be prudent to enter into alliance relations with other fishing nations such as Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

6.4. Iceland.

Ms. Demblon notes the convenience of reaching an agreement with a key country in order to build alliances for the North East Atlantic and not be so alone at the Coastal State Forum. The mandate of the Council of the EU is to start a bilateral fisheries agreement in 2024 that has been dormant since 2008. What is important is that a fair and balanced agreement is reached in the interests of the EU.

6.5. Renewal of SFPA with Greenland: ex-ante/ex-post evaluation exercise.

Mr. Mael Le Drast, EC, stresses that there are underlying problems in this negotiation, like the fact that half of the swaps with Norway come from Greenland's waters. In the best-case scenario, the initial agreement could be implemented in June.

Mr. Iván López, AGARBA, declares that the industry's point of view is that they will participate in executing the advance distribution. He highlights that last year the industry was an example of responsibility and commitment. He admits that it could be more difficult this year with the situation of capelin, but that they will be available to meet and come up with a robust proposal.

7. North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission – NEAFC

7.1. Outcomes of 42nd NEAFC Annual Meeting (London, 14-17 Nov. 2023) – DG MARE.

The EC representative, Mr. Mindaugas Kisieliauskas, starts by explaining that Russia lost its right to vote because it had not paid the annual contribution for two consecutive years. In addition, Russia will not participate in the NEAFC Scientific Committee (PECMAS) and other countries with similar interests and concerns will be brought together.

Regarding oceanic redfish, he says that Norway presented a proposal to limit catches to 5.9% of the TAC. The EU offered 5.5%, but it was not accepted.

As for measures on oceanic redfish in the Irminger Sea, he points out that Russian fleets are managing this fishery, although the rest of states who are contracting parties closed their ports to Russian vessels and their catches. In fact, transshipments from those vessels are banned. However, he says that the activity continues as the Russian fleet uses its own vessels for transshipments.

Regarding control measures, in his opinion, NEAFC should devote more resources to this matter. Russia objected to the introduction of control measures, in fact, it has been blocking this kind of measures, so they are likely to report low levels of catches within the Norwegian EEZ.

Mr. Edelmiro Ulloa, OPNAPA, says that the redfish stock in Irminger is worse even though the fishery has been closed for many years. However, the Russian fleet catches an average of 25,000 tonnes and this makes it increasingly decimated.

The EC representative, Mr. Mindaugas Kisieliauskas, answers to Mr. Ulloa's comment by saying that they will monitor this issue together with his colleagues at the control unit. They know that the European fleet is responsible and scrupulous about compliance in this respect, so they will use this information to their advantage, insofar as there are no serious infringements.



He confirms that European vessels do not fish for oceanic redfish in the Irminger Sea. ICES will issue zero TAC scientific advice, like Russia and Iceland that also wish to issue one on the matter, as long as they have the agreement of the member states. Once again, he believes that the solution to the problem lies in scientific guidance.

As for Svalbard, he declares that the EU Director General for Fisheries informed the Norwegian Ministers for Fisheries and Foreign Affairs about the EU red lines (e.g. there is no legal basis for the imposition of 'collecting bags' on nets.) In addition, a meeting was held with the new Minister for Fisheries, but he believes there will not be any new developments until the Council meets in December.

Mr. Iván López, AGARBA, highlights the importance of having the complete allocation of 25% or 30% of the cod quota for Svalbard to enable vessels to make full trips, otherwise it is operationally complicated.

Ms. Béatrice Gorez, CFFA-CAPE, explains the situation of African fisheries regarding the production of fish meal in Africa, since a significant part is used to feed salmon that is later imported into the European market.

Therefore, the following **ACTION** is proposed and approved:

- The LDAC Secretariat will circulate a draft letter jointly prepared by CFFA and EUROPÊCHE for DG MARE on the need to address sustainability issues in fisheries and aquaculture production in EU-Norway relations.

Mr. Daniel Voces, Européche, complements the explanation given by Ms. Gorez stressing that the way in which food is produced needs to be looked at, insofar as Norway is not doing it correctly in terms of fisheries management (an example of this is its unilateral decision to overfish stocks such as mackerel).

The EU should examine the sustainability criteria, as well as the products that benefit from preferences, which is why autonomous tariff quotas (ATQs) are discussed.

7.2. Presentation of OSPAR QSR on the state of North Atlantic stocks – OSPAR

The Secretariat sent an invitation to OSPAR, but no reply was received.

7.3. Report from MIAC on ICES work with NEAFC and OSPAR – LDAC Secretariat.

Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez will send a written summary with the relevant information.

7.4. Proposal for LDAC work for dedicated advice on NEAFC + OSPAR – PEW rep.

The General Secretary, Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, explains Mr. Jean-Christophe Vandeveldé's proposal (Pew) in his absence, with the terms of reference and main elements for a future piece of advice on this matter that is expected to be ready by September/October to inform on the European Commission's negotiation mandate.

After briefly discussing this issue, the following **ACTIONS** are agreed:

- The Secretariat will circulate a proposal drafted by the PEW representative (Jean-Christophe Vandeveldé) on the work to develop a piece of advice for the NEAFC



Annual Meeting based on ecosystems for fisheries management and ways of cooperating with OSPAR.

- Once agreed, he will launch a call for interest for the creation of a Focus Group in June or July to start working on this matter.
- Then a draft will be sent to WG2 members for discussion and adoption in August/September in order for the Executive Committee to adopt it in September/October.
- DG MARE representatives will be invited to provide regular updates at the next WG2 meetings on the state of play of negotiations.

8. Trade Cooperation Agreement (TCA) UK - EU (no DG MARE expected):

8.1. Outcomes of UK-DEFRA public consultations on EMS, MAMPs, LO.

It is agreed that this information be sent in writing.

8.2. Oral report on work at Inter AC Brexit Forum (last meeting: 5 February).

It is agreed that this information be sent in writing.

8. AOB (only information points admitted)

With no other issues to address, Mr. Iván López closes the meeting recalling that the next WG2 meeting will be held in October 2024 in Brussels. He thanks the interpreters for the quality of their work and the Secretariat for their great coordination work.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING



ANNEX 1. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS WORKING GROUP 2

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

1. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA
2. Edelmiro Ulloa. Opana / OPP3/ Acemix / Agarba
3. Despina Symons. EBCD
4. Emil Remisz. High Seas Fish Producers Organization
5. Janne Posti. CONXEMAR
6. Juan Manuel Trujillo. ETF
7. Vanya Vulperhorst. OCEANA
8. Béatrice Gorez. CFFA
9. Esben Sverdrup. PTA
10. Javier Garat. CEPESCA
11. Daniel Voces. Europêche
12. Aivaras Labanauskas. Lithuanian Long Distance Fisheries Association

OBSERVERS

13. Ignacio Granell. DG MARE (NAFO)
14. Bernard Blazkiewicz. DG MARE (NAFO)
15. Mindaugas Kisieliauskas/Ilaria Vielmini. DG MARE (NEAFC, Svalbard)
16. Jessica Demblon. DG MARE (EU-NO, EU-NO-UK, EU-IS and EU-FO)
17. Mael le Drast. DG MARE (EU-NO, EU-NO-UK, EU-IS and EU-FO)
18. Mar Sacau. IEO
19. Luis Belmonte. SGP
20. Konstantinos Kalamantis. EP
21. Margarita Mancebo. Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA) Secretariat General for Fisheries, Spain (Zoom)

LDAC SECRETARIAT

22. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC
23. Manuela Iglesias. LDAC
24. Marta de Lucas. LDAC (Zoom)