

ANNUAL MIACO REPORT 2019

ICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Report of the Annual Meeting between ICES, Advisory Councils and other Observers (MIACO 2019)

17–18 January 2019

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the Exploration of the Sea

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1 Welcome and opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened and all the participants introduced themselves.

2 Adoption of agenda

The agenda had been agreed by correspondence before the meeting. Meeting dates for 2020 proposed as 16–17 January 2020 and accepted by all.

3 Review

3.1 Review of ICES Advisory services in 2018

3.1.1 Round table of views from observers and advice councils (ACs)

Views were shared by SWWAC, PELAC, NWWAC, NSAC, BSAC and LDAC. Comments were also provided by the EU Fisheries control agency, EU fishmeal, Scottish Fisheries Federation/Whitefish Producers Association Scotland and the Norwegian fishing industry.

Overall, there was a degree of satisfaction and appreciation of the work done by ICES. The presentations by ACOM leadership at the ACs on the advice were useful and should continue. There were concerns raised about specific pieces of advice (e.g. southern horse mackerel, data quality for pelagic fish, lack of consistent advice, data limited and zero TAC advice).

Special meetings such as that in Portugal on ICES advice were welcomed. There were requests for ICES to engage with the ACs in the development of rebuilding plans and management strategy evaluations. Questions were raised as to how different fisheries data can be incorporated more into the assessments, benchmarks, such as genetic studies. There were offers to start using commercial data to supplement data gaps in research data flows. The data flows on discards were beginning to improve and were useful. The ecosystem and fisheries overviews were seen as a useful addition to the portfolio of ICES advice products. There was a request to be informed early about incoming special requests for advice. A few ACs thanked ICES for gear selectivity workshops.

3.1.2 Review of 2018 by the Head of Advisory programme

The head of the ICES advisory support presented an overview of the advice year, from the ICES perspective (Document 3). The quality assurance of ICES processes were challenged. ICES reflected that quality assurance is a top priority. It was emphasised that the consistency of advice was also very important.

It was raised that the manner special requests were formulated was not completely transparent and sometimes the answers to requests were too centred on the recipients needs and not the generic reader.

3.1.3 Action point

ICES to maintain momentum to improve quality assurance.

3.2 Skills shortages

ICES informed MIACO that there was a shortage of experts in research areas such as management strategy evaluation, mixed fisheries, stakeholder engagement and some more complicated stock assessment modelling. The Council of ICES is investigating how ICES should address expert fatigue and diminish skill shortage. There are several options being considered:

- Using funds to provide training and education;
- Upskilling the expertise within existing experts;
- Cooperation with members' countries and Member States.

From around the table there were several suggestions and ideas on how to tackle this issue like:

- 1) Move some of the work done by ICES (like MSE) to clients and consultants and keep only the reviewing part at ICES, thus reducing the workload. This would require ICES setting guidelines and specific frameworks to run MSEs to ensure that MSE are done impartially.
- 2) The Industry could create a fund to sponsor PhDs relevant to fisheries science, "luring" future new experts to the area.
- 3) The building of expertise pools might help relieve the strain on the system. Quality assurance and consistency

3.3 Quality assurance

In the preparation for MIACO, it was emphasised to ICES that many ACs viewed quality assurance as one of the key issues that needs to be addressed by ICES.

A presentation by ACOM was given on the initiative on quality assurance in ICES (doc 4a). The presentation was acknowledged by MIACO. Concern was raised that certain data streams had less quality assurance than others (e.g. tagging data for NE Atlantic mackerel). Also, was the data assurance as robust on special requests as it is on recurrent advice? It was suggested that ICES test the system with dummy data and see the sensitivity of the process.

But it is not just about the input data, there is a need to also quality assure the advice process and the products. It was suggested that there is a trade-off between the complexities of the models and people's understandings of the models.

There was concern within industry over the large changes in TACs from year to year. But, it was noted that the QA of the process, which we are controlling, should be separated from the issue of the quality of the assessment itself. Consistency of the advice was the next item on the agenda.

3.3.1 Action points

ICES will update MIACO on the special group on quality assurance.

3.4 Greater consistency in outcome

ACOM presented a discussion point on the consistency of the advice (Document 4D). There are a number of reasons for changes in the advice, not necessarily caused by the advice process. It was as much a management challenge as an advice challenge. MIACO suggested that protocols should be developed to account for mistakes, bias and

sudden changes in reference points. ICES reiterated that there was a need for a management solution.

3.5 ICES Code of Conduct

The new ICES code of conduct was explained to MIACO. Stakeholders felt that the ICES system generally exhibited independence, transparency and non-political advice. However, some questioned whether this CoC (Code of Conduct) could really be effective as someone may choose not to disclose information or influences. Others however supported the CoC because it allows researchers from a broad range of organisations to bring knowledge and data to the table and facilitate the collaboration with industry. Some organisations have their own CoC signed to that they can participate in equal terms and in a transparent manner in the meetings.

The CoC will be tested for three years. MIACO was reminded that participation in ACOM related expert groups was through nomination by national ICES delegates and different member countries had different policies. When scientists work in ICES expert groups they do not represent their country but use their scientific expertise on how to develop the advice.

4 Layers of advice

4.1 Mixed fisheries advice

The challenges associated with providing mixed fisheries advice were presented by ACOM (Doc 5a). The type of mixed fisheries advice being produced by ICES needs to change to account for management needs on selectivity, seasonality, spatial effects and more fleet analysis. The current mixed fisheries advice is difficult to interpret. MIACO discussed the relevance of mixed fisheries advice in light of the regional multiannual plans, the F ranges and the landing obligation. The Norwegian industry expressed interest in selectivity studies. Multispecies interactions and mixed fisheries need to be seen as separate disciplines.

4.1.1 Action point

ICES to propose a scoping meeting for research needs for mixed fisheries management later in the year.

4.2 Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews

4.2.1 Ecosystem Overviews: Pertinent points of the discussion

The state of development for ecosystem overviews was presented by ACOM (Document 5b). The ecosystem overviews are regarded as interesting and informative, but are they operational advice? Why did some single-species advice (sprat and cod in the Baltic) have ecosystem inputs, whereas other stocks do not have these inputs? Some stakeholders asked for only one document with mixed fisheries considerations and ecosystem inputs all together.

The meeting was informed that ACOM is in the process of discussing how to integrate productivity changes of the ecosystems into the single species advice to help fisheries managers achieve the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy and other national fisheries management policies. The ecosystem advice should be consistent in the context of the EU legislation and fishing opportunities advice.

4.2.2 Fisheries Overviews

The fisheries overviews were also presented (Document 5b). Some participants felt that managers don't read the overviews in the same way they read the single-stock advice. They felt that important information should be placed into a fishing opportunity advice. ACOM leadership found that in their experience, the overviews are being read, and for instance, the UK and Iceland have asked that in their new MoUs, the overviews should be included.

MIACO felt that it would be good to have more on regional recruitment and more information on age structure in Fisheries Overviews. The sections on mixed fisheries work currently combine many single-stock assessments, but not really a holistic, ecosystem approach.

4.3 Frameworks for ecosystem advice

ACOM presented the outcomes of two workshops (WKECOFRAME in 2017 and WKECOFRAME2 in 2018), and the ACOM proposal for ICES to facilitate a higher-level dialogue meeting in 2020 between fisheries and environment representatives to discuss and agree on higher-level management objectives. This in order to guide ICES in its work in providing ecosystem and environment advice.

MIACO welcomed the initiative by ICES. It was mentioned by the LDAC that this was something they were wanting to work with DGMARE on, and that developing an overall framework jointly under ICES would better ensure similar ways of thinking and contribute to a more coordinated approach within the field of international fisheries governance (e.g. building on existing work developed within RFMOs). The proposed dialogue meeting is thus very timely.

It was mentioned that ICES is at present developing an information package on its work on ABNJ (Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction) and BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction), and that ICES now also has observer status at the UN.

There was general consensus that a dialogue meeting was a good idea.

4.4 Multidisciplinary nature of special requests

MIACO had no comments to the presented examples, acknowledging that ICES has a wider range of advisory products than single-stock specific requests for advice.

5 Operational advice

5.1 ICES MSY approach for category 1 and 2 stocks below B_{lim}

In 2018, ICES advised zero catch for a number of stocks that were estimated to be below B_{lim} . ICES has considered this issue further in line with international practice and is updating its approach to provide catch advice for these stocks.

ICES gave a short presentation of the approach and invited MIACO to discuss the approach applied by ICES to the advice rule. It was stated that for the fishing industry and fish processors, a zero advice is detrimental; going from a TAC to zero TAC overnight destroy livelihoods. Zero advice is not helpful advice in a mixed fishery situation; ICES needs a new way to work with managers to find a workable solution in situations when stocks are under B_{lim} . It is widely accepted by fisheries scientists that it is difficult to predict what happens with the stock dynamics when the stock is below B_{lim} .

Suggestions from MIACO on how to tackle this issue include:

- ICES should provide a likelihood for where a stock will be in a certain time-period and then leave the decision (advice) to managers.
- ICES to look at ICCAT's different approach. Scientists provide a 'decision space' and not a total block.
- Instead of zero catch, it would be preferable to have no direct fisheries or a symbolic value for advice so it does not create a big problem.

Changes in reference points, especially B_{lim} , can lead to big changes from one year to another, thus a mechanism to deal with such transition phases would be an idea to look into. ICES pointed out that reference points, and especially B_{lim} , are crucial to its advice and a lot of effort and thinking goes into its development.

Some doubts were raised regarding the foundations and usage of B_{lim} , pointing out that, for some stocks one could say B_{lim} is too high? With very little knowledge of what affects it, e.g. climate change? ICES does include evidence of regime shifts, productivity shifts, etc. however, ICES needs to have improved scientific understanding of the process and better documentation for the regime shift, before it can be adopted in the reference points (e.g. WBSS). Some stronger points were also made; the notion that when we are below B_{lim} , we don't know what is going on in the stock and saying that this puts the stock at risk of extinction is unscientific and fearmongering. There are many stocks that have many datapoints below B_{lim} , and we have a good idea of what happens.

MIACO commented that in the absence of rules for how to manage stocks under B_{lim} , ICES needs to develop probabilistic forecasts and other means, in order to provide advice that is not zero by default. If falling below B_{lim} , there is a need for assertive decisions to avoid stock depletion. The NWWAC is happy to host a session at their meeting in Madrid in March, and invite an ICES representative for discussion and inputs to the issue regarding stocks below B_{lim} .

In the Baltic herring, zero advice was not followed; if it had been, it would have closed not only the herring fishery, but another three different fisheries. Also, it is unrealistic that ICES by default expects to rebuild a stock in a year. We need to find ways to increase the rebuilding objective within a realistic time frame.

ICES underlined that when a stock drops below B_{lim} , it goes into an area for which it was not tested in an MSE, the HCR needs to be retested to ensure that it is still precautionary. Until this point, the zero advice rule will be maintained unless a recovery or rebuilding plan is put into place, and found to be precautionary.

The precautionary clauses in the blue whiting MP and the Norwegian spring-spawning herring management plan when the stock is below B_{lim} means that of these MPs, the plans stipulates that the $F=0.05$ (F_{min} value); a sensible approach for these stocks. Should an MSE not include cases where the stock is below B_{lim} , and the stock falls below this, a retesting is needed and the managers alerted. A critique point is that whilst ICES provided zero advice on the principle of the stock being below B_{lim} , then how can ICES find a MP with a minimum F precautionary without having tested this for situations where the stock is below B_{lim} .

BSAC is working on a rebuilding plan for the Western Baltic spring-spawning herring; have difficulties with a rapid rebuilding as being within one year. In the ICES review of how this is done around the world – in general the time frame is linked to the longevity of the stock and then evaluated a risk-trade-off for the particular stock.

Concluding points

ICES is fully aware that zero catch advice is very difficult for managers, fisheries and processors.

The dynamics of stocks below B_{lim} are extremely hard to predict.

Independently of the ICES advice, the decision on what TAC to apply especially in mixed fisheries, is a management challenge.

As resources become available, ICES will explore in detail for individual stocks that are currently under B_{lim} in order to provide a useful advice that is still precautionary in the future.

5.1.1 Action point

ICES to reconsider how to link advice rule for stocks below B_{lim} to MSE for rebuilding plans.

5.2 Special workshops in 2019

ACOM presented information on two upcoming workshops to scope research needs for better management of NE Atlantic mackerel and mixed pelagic fisheries in the Baltic Sea. MIACO welcomed both workshops.

6 Looking to the future

6.1 ICES Strategic Plan

The new ICES strategic plan was presented to MIACO during the evening reception. It can be read here <https://www.ices.dk/news-and-events/news-archive/news/Pages/ICES-Strategic-Plan.aspx>

6.2 ICES Science Plan

The new ICES science plan was presented to MIACO during the evening reception and also discussed during the plenary session. It can be read here https://is-suu.com/icesdk/docs/ices_science_plan_2019_web

MIACO welcomed the setting of clear objectives in the Science plan reflecting the Sustainability Development Goals with a vision for food security and climate change. Questions were asked about the new working group on economics. Several stakeholders questioned the competence of ICES in economics compared to other well-known institutions, and managers should consult with those in social and economic matters.

Inserting some social sciences into the advice is good, like trade-offs of goods and services, etc. but on more economic issues like the value of landings, the performance of fleets, etc. the ACs already collaborate with STECF. Although STECF is only EU focused. Some felt that there is a good system in EU already with good methodology, and ICES should not duplicate efforts.

It was noted that the ICES working groups in economics are science expert groups with no specific agenda and broad scoping ToRs on the application of economic knowledge to catch advice. ICES has no intention of giving economic advice unless requested (i.e. our advice in trade-offs on benthos).

With regards to the shortage of expertise, MIACO expressed that there is not a lack of people in laboratories, but the quality of scientists may be a problem, since they don't

get credit for assessments, but only for papers. Including top scientists in marine sciences in general is difficult, and we have to make the subject attractive, where a competitive career can be built. ICES has a role in sustaining the recruitment of experts into the system. The Council has an initiative to improve training specifically in quantitative fisheries sciences and management strategy evaluation, setting up courses if money can be made available for this.

ICES Capacity on Aquaculture

Stakeholders noted that there was limited representation of Aquaculture in the meeting, and links to this part of the stakeholders should be improved. Expertise is needed to assess for example the use of antibiotics in aquaculture and how this affects the wild stocks. The Marine Ingredients has a team working on sustainable aquaculture with discussions not only on science, and look forward to engaging with ICES on this.

ICES has many expert groups on aquaculture, and may look into effects of antibiotics in the natural environment in time and engage with stakeholders. Contact to the AC for Aquaculture has been made prior to MIACO, however, they declined participation but will look to engage in 2020.

6.3 Single-stock advice on line in html

MIACO were shown the new prototypes of web-based advice sheets. There was much appreciation for the interactive advice. HTML format will make the advice much more accessible. Everyone liked the look of the advice, the interactive graphs and underlined that it would be very useful for strategic communication.

ACOM Chair explained that ICES hopes to make this the main advice product in future, and assured that it will always be possible to create a pdf version of the advice as well. ICES is starting to combine SAG and SID in a spatial approach, which, hopefully, will go into the EU Marine Atlas.

MIACO made the following comments:

- The link to [SID](#) could be clearer.
- Kobe plots would be useful in this product. To this, the ACOM chair explained that due to security issues with FLASH (which was needed in the production of the Kobe plots), we had to abandon this idea for now, but points out that the Fisheries Overviews already include Kobe plots.
- Would be great if it was possible to subscribe/receive notifications when the HTML for a stock has been updated/changed.

6.3.1 Action point

ACOM chair pointed out that ICES would like to develop this interactive approach to advice further, but as resources are not available at the moment, there is no timeline for this. ICES will canvass for resources.

7 ICES Advisory Work-plan 2019

The Head of Advisory Programme presented the Advisory work plan for those MIACO participants new to ICES.

An introduction to the Advice Activities Forum was made and MIACO participants were encouraged to set up Alerts on the Forum. There was no response from MIACO to this item.

8 Any other business

The Fisheries Secretariat (FishSec)

Is any discussion on a "traffic-light" indicator for population and age structure as related to the Marine Strategy Framework directive, or for Recruitment? Or any other way of making this information more available to managers and stakeholders?

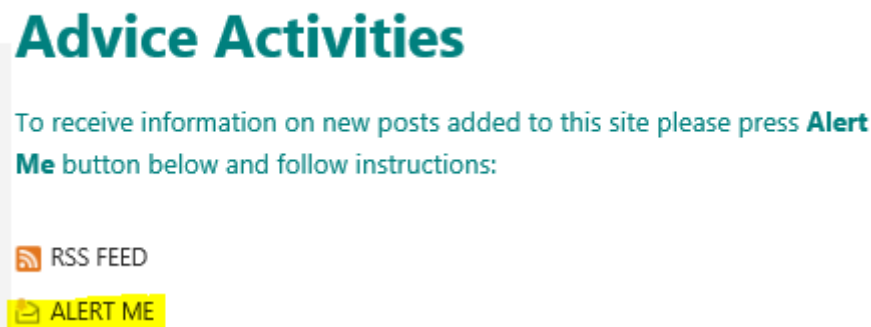
The chair answered, that they exist for MSFD D3c1 and D3c2 in the fisheries overviews but not for size of fish because guidance on MSFD D3c3 was still under development.

PELAC

The PELAC asked that the outcome of MIACO, action points and minutes be made available sooner than MIACO 2018 were, where action points took six months to come. Please can the minutes of MIACO 2019 be circulated in draft, before finalising and in good time, including action points?

Advice Activities SharePoint site

To receive information on new posts added to the [Advice Activities site](#), press Alert Me button and follow instructions.



9 Close of meeting

Chair closed with thanks and a summary of meeting. In his mind, the take-home message was that MIACO seemed to ask for stricter procedures and quality assurance with more flexibility and response to concerns. It was going to be a challenge to reconcile these objectives.

10 Summary of action points

3.1.3 ICES to maintain momentum to improve quality assurance.

4.1.1 ICES to propose a scoping meeting for research needs for mixed fisheries management later in the year.

- 4.3.1 Although not an action point, there was general consensus that a dialogue meeting was a good idea.
- 5.1.1 ICES to reconsider how to link advice rule for stocks below B_{lim} to MSE for rebuilding plans.
- 6.3.1 To develop the online advice sheets further, ICES will canvass for resources.

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