

## BSAC input to the MIACO meeting 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020<sup>1</sup>

Copenhagen 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Under Agenda item 2: specific issues for MIAC meeting is the specific point b:

- b. Zero TAC advice: example of Western Baltic herring **[BSAC]**
  - i. Transparency in decisions taken at WGs, ADGs and ACOM
  - ii. Decisions relating to timing of reference points

The BSAC has raised this point in relation to Western Baltic spring spawning herring. However, the point relating to a discussion on the zero TACs is a general one, and the BSAC would like to know how, or if, ICES is working with this issue. A zero catch advice, as explained below, is of no practical use and is rarely followed and simply adds to the conflict between stakeholders (e-NGOs and fishermen) and managers. We invite ICES to comment on this and come with suggestions as to how this can be improved.

The BSAC is not sure who suggested the two sub-points to the agenda item, but below is input to justify the point.

### **Sub-point i:** Transparency in decisions taken at WGs, ADGs and ACOM

This is believed to be related to what happened in ICES when it was decided to interpret the rules in the ICES Advice basis, version 13<sup>th</sup> July 2018:<sup>2</sup>

- “If the F following from applying rule 2<sup>3</sup> is insufficient to bring the stock above Blim in the **short term** ICES advice will be based on bringing the stock above Blim in the **short term**. This may result in advice of zero catch.”

This rule was interpreted as:

- “If the F following from applying rule 2 is insufficient to bring the stock above Blim ***within one year, ICES advice will be a zero catch advice.*** (text in italics, not sure of the exact formulation)

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Claus Reedtz Sparrevohn, Danish Pelagic Producers Organisation, BSAC ExCom sub. and to Michael Andersen Demersal WG chair for input

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2018/2018/Introduction\\_to\\_advice\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2018/2018/Introduction_to_advice_2018.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> F = FMSYx spawning–stock biomass/MSY Btrigger when the stock is below MSY Btrigger and above Blim;

We would like to know if there is an analysis which underpins the statement that “one year” is the correct interpretation. Why not 2 years? Or 3 years? Or one generation? Or half a generation?

Since the background and support for implementing such a decision is unclear, it is also very difficult to come up with alternatives, or at least alternatives that are supported by scientific arguments. We would like to know whether the analysis behind choosing 1 year - if it is available - could be presented by ICES at MIAC?

Moreover, we invite ICES to reflect on this and come up with a roadmap for alternative sustainable methods of producing catch advice when a stock is below Blim.

Such an approach leads to a binary advice, switching between a quota and no-quota. This needs to be changed as it is dysfunctional, is of no practical use and has no beneficial impact on the stocks. Moreover, it is rarely followed, and adds to the conflict between e-NGOs, managers and fishermen. The difficulty is knowing how to change the approach to the advice, without knowing why it was implemented in the first place.

#### **Sub-point ii: Decisions relating to timing of reference points**

This relates to the need for more clear guidance and information on which time period the reference points should be based upon. For Western Baltic spring spawning herring, it is obvious that there is not a continuum in the SSB/R relationship. There are two separate periods: one with high productivity back in time and one with lower productivity. The question is: how to decide between using the entire period or using the present period? Moreover, we would welcome some information on what ICES does to secure some consistency in the periods used when estimating reference points, both between stocks and within a stock.