



The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
H.C. Andersens Boulevard 44-46
1553 Copenhagen V

Copenhagen 21st June 2010

On 8th - 9th June, the BSRAC held a joint demersal/salmon/pelagic working group meeting in Stockholm to discuss the 2010 ICES advice for the Baltic stocks. Dr. Carl O'Brien represented ICES and he gave presentations of the assessments and advice.

The Baltic RAC would like to thank ICES in general and Dr. O'Brien in particular for the effort and the time spent. It was beneficial for the debate to have a well-informed scientist to explain many of the problematic issues.

In connection with the demersal fishery for cod, however, two specific issues were not completely clarified, and it was agreed to write to ICES to request further and more detailed clarification of the advice.

Cod in Western Baltic Sea Subdivision 22-24: the candidate fishing mortality target.

At the working group, some members asked why, in the advice summary for 2011 for western Baltic cod, only a single value of F_{msy} is given. Carl O'Brien explained to the working group that for some stocks ICES had proposed candidate values for the target fishing mortality rate as a range of values, and that it was not obvious to him why point values were suggested for the Baltic cod stocks.

The Baltic RAC would therefore appreciate an explanation as to why only a single value has been suggested – as well as a justification for the actual value, which seems rather low compared to target msy values for other stocks. The latter is particularly strange in the light of the historic high values for F_{pa} and F_{lim} . It would also appear that the area in question is a transit area and that intensive migration in and out takes place. Can ICES explain to what extent this has been considered, and/or what effect it would have on the estimation of target mortality?

Recent changes in the BACOMA fishing gear

In its advice ICES refers to the effects of regulations. In the case of the Bacoma fishing gear, the IBSFC introduced in 2001 a Bacoma codend with a 120-mm mesh. The regulation was amended in

October 2003 to a 110-mm Bacoma window. From 1st January 2010 (in SD 22-24) and 1st March 2010 (in SD 25-32) the Bacoma 120 mm was re-introduced, along with an extension of the Bacoma window (5.5 m).

The fact that the mesh size was revised in 2010 gave rise to discussion amongst the working group members. We would like to hear from ICES whether the changes in the Bacoma cod end have been taken into account in the forecasting, and in what detail. Members of the RAC were of the impression that the “forecasted” discard in the table is rather high in the light of the recent mesh size increase. Some expressed the viewpoint that the amount of discard could be added to the expected landings.

The BS RAC is in the process of preparing its recommendations on the Baltic stocks and has to meet the Commission’s deadline of 30th June. We will attach this letter to our recommendations to the Commission and to member states.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,



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Chairman of the BS RAC



Ewa Milewska
Vice-chair of the BS RAC