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Opinion 103: Request for further assessments for the development of a multiannual plan for the benthic and demersal species of the south-western waters

1. Grounds - General context

In view of the work initiated under the Management Plan for the Baltic, which will serve as a model for other multiannual plans, the SWW AC wishes to make a request for several specific evaluations in order to take the opportunity of extending the scope of this future tool so that it is able, as far as possible, to meet the objectives of the CFP and of stakeholders.

These different requests are primarily motivated by a desire to see the smooth transition of interannual fishing opportunities during the final phase of achieving MSY (2017-2020). It also now seems necessary to assess the decision-making process with regard to fishing opportunities from a socio-economic angle, in order to ensure full compatibility with sustainable development.

To this end, it is hoped that fishing opportunities can ultimately be set, in order to maintain stocks as high as possible, using harvesting rules aligned with the fishing mortality ranges established as part of the future management plan.

2. Modeling in support of the transition to MSY

a. Medium-term evaluation of various scenarios

The SWW AC seeks a detailed assessment of harvesting rules, according to the usual methodology and indicators, over the period 2017-2020.

The management scenarios to be considered are listed below:

- **Scenario 1:** TACs are set annually between 2017 and 2020 by applying a fishing mortality level equal to the median Fmsy figure;
- **Scenario 2:** In 2017 and 2018, the TAC is based on the median Fmsy figure. Then in 2019 and 2020, these TACs are set in accordance with the lower Fmsy figure.
- **Scenario 3:** In 2017 and 2018, the TAC is based on the higher Fmsy figure. In 2019 and 2020, the median figure is applied
- **Scenario 4:** Rollover of TACs using the 2016 TAC as a reference;

Wherever possible, interannual variability limiting mechanisms can be tested. In addition, this work should ideally take into account the schedule for the deployment of the Landing Obligation. Specifically, in the case of sole in the Bay of Biscay, the SWW AC also requests the updating of the assessment work carried out by the STECF in 2013, under what is known as the 'Fixed Multiannual Tac' approach. This work will be carried out by exploring the same TAC range (from 3500 to 4500 Tn), and will be based on the median Fmsy figure.



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Note, the proposals for measures and example scenarios are not intended to be a framework for the scientific exploration work. In light of its extensive experience on the subject, the SWW AC naturally recommends that work prior to modeling be carried out by scientists and stakeholders working together. The preceding paragraph refers to 'harvesting rules', an analysis to find 'the best' way of achieving the objectives could be carried out to develop optimal harvesting rules.

b. Multispecies management

The SWW AC believes that greater convergence in fishing opportunities is desirable for stocks whose catches are highly correlated. For example, defining the management of groups of species (e.g. monkfish / skate / megrim) would reduce the occurrence of limiting species in certain fisheries. Once these groups have been defined, specific caps on differences in relation to quotas for the various stocks could be developed. To this end, the SWW AC needs scientific experts to identify clusters of species for which related variations of fishing opportunities should be implemented.

c. Harvesting rules for stocks for which no statistical evaluation is available

Where permitted by ICES work on Fmsy estimations, it would be useful for scenarios similar to those mentioned in point 2 to be appraised. Where this is not the case, rules based on changes in abundance indices should be used. For example:

- The TAC is increased by 10% if the average abundance of the stock for the previous two years is greater than or equal to over 20% compared to the average abundance for the previous three years;
- On the contrary, the TAC is reduced by 15%, if the index indicates a fall in abundance of 20% or more on the same basis.

3. Indicators requested

The standard indicators from biological and socioeconomic evaluations are requested:

- Biological indicators
 - Abundance (SSB)
 - Fishing mortality and fishing mortality relative to Fmsy
 - Average catch level
 - Percentage of variation in fishing opportunities
 - Probability of achieving the stated biological objectives
 - Risk of collapse of the biomass
 - ...
- Socio-economic indicators
 - Changes in turnover of the fleets concerned
 - Net profit



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- Jobs
- Reserve capacity
- ...

4. Integration of socio-economic aspects

a. Socio-economic reference points

To improve the overall process for fixing fishing opportunities, it would now seem to be extremely useful for relevant socio-economic indicators to be accessible to enable the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers to refine its decision-making process.

The SWW AC desires that the following indicators be determined in the same way as the biological reference points for the Biomass Limit and Precautionary Limit:

- A minimum turnover such that 90% of fishing companies are profitable and able to update their production facilities
- A minimum turnover such that 60% of fishing companies are profitable and able to update their production facilities

These indicators need to be assessed based on data collected through the DCF, across the SWW AC territory, and using a methodology that will allow annual review.

These benchmarks will aim to position fisheries concerned by the annual plan socio-economically and thus limit the excessive weakening of fisheries.

b. Assessment of scope

It appears from contacts previously made with scientific institutes that one of the main obstacles to an improved appreciation of socioeconomic factors is the single-species approach. Thus, the SWW AC is campaigning for the implementation of a more comprehensive approach. Concerned to strike a practical balance, it desires that scientific experts should evaluate its proposal for species subject to this plan, by determining whether the list set out in Appendix II makes such an assessment possible. Thus, the SWW AC requests that the list presented in Appendix II be assessed in such a way as to enable optimum consideration of socio-economic factors further down the line. Indeed, regarding the issue of mixed fisheries and the socio-economic aspects to be considered, a maximum number of species contained in the catch compositions needs to be included (or at least those with a high commercial value, not just high tonnage species).

5. Support for the implementation of capacity-based management



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The SWW AC sees capacity-based management (Fishing Authorisations ..) as a major vehicle for achieving all the objectives defined in the CFP.

In this context, and given the many existing options (single species EAF, per fishery EAF, reference levels), the SWW AC would like to see scientific experts assess the best way of deploying this management approach, by making recommendations.



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APPENDIX 1

1. Presentation of the three-step approach implemented under harvesting rules

As part of the evaluation of harvesting rules three approaches can be developed:

- (1) single species approach
- (2) multispecies approach
- (3) 'socio-economic constraints' approach

(1) The single species approach would focus on an exploration of specific measures for stock by stock management. (2) The multispecies approach would aim at developing mechanisms to manage stocks jointly. (3) The final approach would enable the exploration of measures including socio-economic frameworks/caps. Once the three approaches have been looked at, it would seem appropriate to consider them cumulatively in terms of fishing opportunities. In other words, at every stage an intermediary quota would be calculated and adjusted after each approach is considered in order to arrive at a final quota at the final step.

Overall this consists of a management proposal allowing the integration of the particularity of mixed fisheries and the objectives of stakeholders with regard to fishing opportunities and the inclusion of socio-economic parameters in fisheries management. This would enable the development of a management approach that is closer to the reality on the ground. This approach and the various measures connected to it are not however the only ones that need to be envisaged. In addition to harvesting rules, further discussions on additional measures to be put into place need to be conducted, such as the regulation of effort and capacity, as well as technical measures and measures for the management of one-off (recruitment, management of nurseries and so on) and spatio-temporal factors.

2. Presentation of the method governing harvesting rules

Step 1: Single species management

Goal: Limit the interannual variation of fishing opportunities with the help of pre-established rules fixing quotas, while achieving the objectives of the CFP.

Specific measures:

- Stocks for which statistical evaluation is available: Fixed multiannual TAC or measures to regulate interannual variations in fishing opportunities.
- Stocks for which statistical evaluation is not available: Measures to regulate the interannual changes according to levels of available indicators.

Step 2: Management by species groups



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Goal: Define groups of species to be managed jointly i.e. species belonging to the same catch compositions (e.g. monkfish / skate / megrim) to limit the appearance of limiting species in certain fisheries.

Specific measures: a cap on differences in relation to quotas for the various stocks belonging to predefined species groups.

Step 3: Socio-economic constraints

Goal: define minimum socio-economic viability thresholds for companies.

Specific measures: from a socio-economic viability study, these minimum thresholds could be converted to minimum quotas below which the survival of businesses would be compromised.





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Appendix II: List of stocks concerned

List of stocks covered by the plan

List of stocks covered by the forthcoming multiannual plan:

- a) Anglerfish (*Lophius budegassa*, *Lophius piscatorius*) VIIIc and IXa
- b) Monkfish (*Lophius budegassa*) VIII a, b, d
- c) Hake VIII a, b, d (northern stock)
- d) Hake VIII c and IX a (southern stock)
- e) Megrim (*Lepidorhombus boscii*, *Lepidorhombus whiffiagonis*) VIII c and IX a
- f) Megrim (*Lepidorhombus whiffiagonis*) VIII a, b, d
- g) Lobster VIII a, b
- h) Lobster Northern Galicia
- i) Lobster West Galicia and Northern Portugal
- j) Lobster Southwest and Southern Portugal
- k) Lobster Gulf of Cadiz
- l) Lobster Cantabrian Sea
- m) Sole VIII c and IX a
- n) Sole VIII a, b
- o) Pollack VIII a, b
- p) Pollack VIII c
- q) Pollack IX a
- r) Ray fish VIII and IX a
- s) Whiting VIII and IX a
- t) Plaice VIII and IX a

