

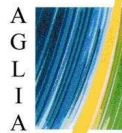
INTER RAC* Seminar
Regional Advisory Councils

**MANAGING EUROPEAN FISHERIES
ON LONG TERM**

**September the 11th & 12th of 2008,
Hôtel de Région Pays de la Loire
Nantes, France**

** The RACs join all stakeholders interested in the fishing issues (fishery sector and civil society) in order to propose to the European Commission and to the Members States advices on fishing management*





Sum up report

- 1) A Seminar was held at the Hotel de Région Pays de la Loire, Nantes, France on the 10th and 11th of September 2008 to discuss long-term management plans for fisheries in European waters. The Seminar was organised by the Baltic Sea, North Sea, North Western Waters, Pelagic, and South Western Waters Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). It was attended by representatives of these RACs, the European Commission, ICES, and a number of other organisations.
- 2) Long-term management plans could help achieve the political objective of moving depleted fish stocks towards Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), in line with the EU commitment at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002.
- 3) Long-term management plans would provide a management framework for each fishery over a longer period than at present. This would reduce the need for annual decision making on management measures (such as quotas), and provide greater stability for the fishing industry and for society in general, with consequent economic and social benefits. It would also enable the industry and society to take a longer-term view of fisheries management than is possible at present, with benefits for both.
- 4) The RACs bring together the principal stakeholders in fisheries on a regional basis and thus have an important role to play in developing and implementing long-term management plans. At present the RACs' main role is to provide feedback on proposals for long-term management plans drafted as non-papers by the European Commission's DG-MARE (for which a period of several months is allowed). Following this input, DG-MARE will draft a proposed Regulation for consideration by the Council of Fisheries Ministers, which has the authority to approve it.



- 5) Long-term management plans will have many common principles between different fisheries and areas. Hence it was appropriate to hold a joint inter-RAC seminar on the topic which it was hoped would help the RACs take a big step forward in their development.
- 6) Representatives of the European Commission, ICES and all five RACs provided the Seminar with their perspectives on, and experiences of, the development of long-term management plans to date, and on the role of RACs in this process. Other speakers discussed long-term management plans and RACs from social, economic, institutional, governance and environmental perspectives.
- 7) There was a general consensus that long-term management plans were ‘a good thing’. However, these were still early days and a considerable amount of work remained, both to develop specific plans, and to develop the processes through which they are developed, implemented and evaluated.
- 8) All of the RACs represented at the Seminar have been involved to some extent at least in developing long-term management plans, although there is considerable variation in the numbers of plans and their stages of development. This reflects to some extent the differing ages of the RACs and the differing circumstances or conditions in their particular areas. In general, the RACs had found the work that they had carried out in connection with these plans a positive experience, although neither easy nor straightforward, and all recognised that a considerable amount of work remains to be done, both on the plans themselves and on the systems and processes around them.
- 9) A number of speakers stressed the importance of stakeholder involvement in developing long-term management plans, and of building their trust and confidence in the process. This requires time and, together with other considerations, means that developing long-term management plans should not be seen as a quick process. Some criticism was directed at the European Commission for imposing short deadlines for the development of long-term management plans, such as that for Baltic Sea cod, although the counter-argument was also expressed that in urgent situations action has to be taken quickly.



- 10) Science has an important role to play in evaluating the success of long-term management plans, both to provide the necessary background information on which to base plans, and to help stakeholders make informed management choices. New approaches will be required to provide the information required for long-term planning, including the greater use of models and greater stakeholder-scientist collaboration. Providing the necessary scientific input is placing increased pressure on scientific organisations, and on the RACs' resources
- 11) A key theme was that the development of long-term management plans should not be seen as a single step, but as a process of repeated modification and improvement (which again implies a long-term process). Rather than attempting to achieve a final goal in a single step, it is better to make gradual progress in the right direction. This arises from a number of factors, including: the need to build stakeholder involvement and trust; the need to develop, evaluate and modify management approaches; the need to respond to changing circumstances; and the need to accommodate uncertainty and lack of information. Some speakers expressed the view that it was better to move in roughly the right direction than to worry about exactly where one was trying to get to.
- 12) While there was unanimous agreement that the RACs have an important role to play in developing long-term management plans, concerns were expressed about the workload that this could place on them. Representatives of several RACs commented that so much of the RACs' time is taken up dealing with short-term issues, particularly communications and consultations from the European Commission, that they have little time to devote to long-term issues. The Commission acknowledged that it perhaps needed to look at what it was asking the RACs to do, and there was general agreement that the RACs perhaps needed (and needed to be allowed) to focus more on longer-term issues. A related concern that was repeatedly expressed was that the RACs lacked the necessary resources to fully engage in long-term management planning. Although their administration costs are currently covered, they generally have little if any funding for things like independent scientific input and facilitating stakeholder involvement, both of which are seen as important elements of long-term management plan development.



In summing up the Seminar, key points identified included:

- There seems to be no alternative to long-term management plans, these representing the best management option for fisheries;
- There is a lot of scope for improvement in the management processes;
- There are a lot of ideas for how concepts such as 'results-based management' and 'interactive governance' could contribute to the long-term management planning process, although this will require further development;
- There is perhaps a need for some sort of standard general framework for the development and implementation of long-term management plans, although it was recognised that individual plans would have to vary to take account for the specifics of the fish stocks and fisheries concerned; and
- The RACs have a major role to play in developing long-term management plans, but to do this effectively and successfully they need time and resources.

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