

**RACs  
Stakeholders**

**ICES  
CIEM**



**Our Ref: C24.g/BS/hgj**

30 October 2008

Dear reader,

ICES invites stakeholders to contribute new data sets relevant to fish stock assessments and hence the ICES advice on fisheries management.

Since no assessment can be better than the available data ICES welcomes additional input from stakeholders, so we can assure that all relevant data are considered and reviewed. You are invited to contribute new data sets, including data from non-traditional sources.

ICES reformed its advice strategy in 2007 with a view to improve transparency and quality control. The annual advice on fishery management is based on 'update assessments' that are based on set methodology. This set methodology will be reviewed every 3-5 years at 'benchmark workshops'<sup>1</sup>. Benchmarking is a technical review of the assessments to assure that these are based on all relevant data and that the underlying population model and estimation procedure reflects best science. ICES benchmarking is a science process that aims for consensus among the scientists on how best to assess a specific fish stock taking into account the level of knowledge on the population dynamics, available data and estimation procedure.

ICES plans to hold three such benchmark workshops early in 2009:

	<b>Dates and venue</b>	<b>Stocks to be Benchmarked</b>	<b>ICES Coordinator</b>
WKROUND Roundfish	16-23 January Copenhagen	Whiting in Skagerrak-Kattegat Cod in North Sea Cod in Celtic Sea	Chris Darby <a href="mailto:chris.darby@cefass.co.uk">chris.darby@cefass.co.uk</a> (CEFAS, Lowestoft)
		Cod in Kattegat Cod in Sub-divisions 22-24 Cod in Sub-divisions 25-32	Eero Aro <a href="mailto:eero.aro@rktl.fi">eero.aro@rktl.fi</a> (FGFRI, Helsinki)
WKFLAT Flatfish	6-13 February Copenhagen	Plaice in North Sea Plaice and Sole in Eastern Channel Plaice and Sole in Western Channel	Jan Jaap Poos <a href="mailto:Janjaap.Poos@wur.nl">Janjaap.Poos@wur.nl</a> (IMARES The Netherlands)
WKSHORT Short-lived species	5 days March/April (dates not decided) Bergen, Norway	Capelin Barents Sea Capelin Icelandic waters Anchovy in Bay of Biskay	Harald Gjøsäter <a href="mailto:Harald.Gjoesaeter@imr.no">Harald.Gjoesaeter@imr.no</a> (IMR, Bergen)

New, relevant time series of data can improve the perception of fish stocks. You are welcome to contact the ICES coordinator of the stocks involved if you have new data-series. The ICES coordinator can inform you on the relevance of your data-set (based on length of data series for example) and forward it to the stock experts.

At benchmark meetings proposals for modifications of the assessment procedure shall be presented. To allow proper review of the data and, if appropriate, modification of the assessment procedure it is important that the scientists can perform the analysis and model modification well in advance of the benchmark meeting. You are therefore asked to present proposals to the relevant Coordinator well in advance of the meeting.

<sup>1</sup> Annex 1: Benchmark Terms of Reference and Workshop procedure.

International Council for the  
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The meeting will be chaired by an expert with relevant expertise. This expert is recruited from outside ICES circles. The workshop members will be experts from and outside the ICES community. ICES invites you to participate in these workshops to contribute to data preparation and evaluation of data quality.

If you would like to participate or have practical questions please direct such queries to Helle Gjeding Jørgensen ([hgj@ices.dk](mailto:hgj@ices.dk)).

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hans Lassen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hans Lassen

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## Annex 1: Benchmark Terms of Reference and Workshop procedure

### Terms of Reference for Benchmark Workshops 2009

- a) Evaluate the appropriateness of data and methods to determine stock status and investigate methods for short term outlook taking agreed or proposed management plans into account for the stocks listed in the Text Table below. The evaluation shall include consideration of fishery-dependent, fishery independent, and life history data currently being collected for use in the current assessment work and the proposed assessment
- b) Agree and document preferred method for evaluating stock status and (where applicable) short term outlook and update the assessment handbooks as appropriate;
- c) Develop recommendations for future improving assessment methodology and data collection
- d) As part of the evaluation:
  - i) conduct a one day data compilation workshop. Stakeholders shall be invited to contribute data (including data from non-traditional sources) and to contribute to data preparation and evaluation of data quality. As part of the data compilation workshop consider the quality of data including discard and estimates of misreporting of landings;
  - ii) consider the possible inclusion of environmental drivers for stock dynamics in the assessments and outlook
  - iii) evaluate the role of stock identity and migration
  - iv) evaluate the role of multispecies interactions on the assessments

### The workshop procedure

**Data compilation** before the benchmark workshop will prepare the data basis for the ICES advisory methodology by evaluating the traditional and alternative data sources. This may inter alia involve the use of environmental and ecological data or the use of fishers knowledge or data for stock assessment purposes. Stakeholders can contribute new data and give input to data preparation and to the evaluation of data quality. The workshop can also make proposals of future data collection schemes.

When new data are presented at the workshop these will be considered on the basis of the following quality criteria

- relevance;
- appropriate coverage of space and time;
- objectivity;
- quality assurance procedures;
- transparency in the collection process;
- description of collection methods and manuals;

The workshop will advise on the use of new data. In case of a negative advice, the workshop will attempt to outline how the dataset can be improved for future use.

The quality criteria for acceptance of **new methodology** will be:

- improved data(-sources)
- low bias
- low uncertainty

- improved diagnostics

When new standard analyses methods are agreed by the workshop, the workshop should also evaluate the possible implications for biological reference points.