



Socio-Economic Focus Group Agreed Record of Meeting September 29th, Edinburgh, UK

Rapporteur: JL Hatchard

Summary

The first meeting of the NSRAC Socio-Economic Focus Group (SEFG) provided the opportunity for discussion of two key issues: a draft protocol to assist the RAC to add a socio-economic dimension to its advice; and a funding proposal for a baseline study of fisheries dependency in the North Sea region.

Apologies were received from Ann Bell.

1. Introduction: Background to Focus Group and recap of Hamburg discussions

- 1.1 Nicki Holmyard, coordinator of the North Sea Women's Network (NSWN) and Chair of the meeting, explained the background to the establishment of the NSRAC SEFG. The NSWN had presented a paper to the Ex-Com in Hamburg in June 2005 proposing that the RAC should act as a vehicle to make sure the CFP lives up to stated economic objectives, and until now there had been no vehicle for that to happen. It was agreed in Hamburg that a focus group should draft a protocol to ensure that social and economic considerations were taken into account by the RAC in all its decision-making processes, and then to devise a proposal for a study of fisheries dependency around the North Sea.
- 1.2 The NSRAC SEFG hoped to work with the new economic analysis unit at DG Fish, to which Erik Lindebo of EAFE has been appointed. The unit's aims and objectives appear to be mainly economic, rather than socio-economic in focus, but Erik Lindebo is committed to liaising and working with the RACs, and to promoting socio-economic issues from the RAC in that forum. It is uncertain whether the analysis unit will ultimately have a firm focus on socio-economics, or remain economic/bio economic.

2. General Discussion – North Sea fisheries dependency

- 2.1 It was agreed that a number of commercial fisheries and angling dependency studies have already been carried out and that German scientists under the direction of Robert Arlinghaus in Berlin, are currently undertaking studies on the potential for angling diversification in rural communities.
- 2.2 Pim Visser reported that the EAFPA has just completed a fish auction 'datanet' project, which gives an overview of ports, auctions, sizes etc for 350 landing spots. The study demonstrated to the Commission the importance of fishing ports and auctions and highlighted the extent of fisheries dependency in many of the smaller ports.
- 2.3 James Anderson, Shetland Fishermen's Association (SFA), spoke of the work being undertaken by Shetland Council on fisheries dependency in the Shetland Isles. He explained that while there is only a 2% overall unemployment level in Shetland, some communities have 100% employment dependency on fishing, making it vital to keep fishing alive. Pim Visser noted the decreasing landing statistics in Den Helder – 9 million tonnes in 2001 down to 5 million tonnes in 2005, which is causing a trend towards downsizing in the fleet from big beam trawlers to smaller twin-riggers. It was agreed that there are also enormous side effects of policy decisions that are not compensated for, including impacts on crew, processors, infrastructure, boatyards, etc.

3. Fishing dependency, socio-economics and the RAC

- 3.1 Helen Davies (WWF) queried the process of analysis of socio-economic impacts and asked how the RAC would apply socio-economic analysis to proposals before putting them to the Commission, and to what that analysis would apply. Discussion ensued on how the NSRAC SEFG could persuade the RAC to apply a protocol.
- 3.2 Jenny Hatchard of the NSWN suggested that if DG Fish's economic analysis unit is conducting economic analysis of all commission proposals before they reach the RAC, then the RAC could use a protocol to give a qualitative reaction to the Commission's proposals.

4. Discussion of the issues around the Fisheries Dependency Study

- 4.1 Pim Visser proposed that one issue to be subjected to socio-economic analysis could be MSY.
- 4.2 Hazel Curtis of Seafish observed that in order to be confident about its advice, the RAC needed to know about communities, economics and biology. There was a need to characterise North Sea vessels and communities that are wholly or partly dependent on fisheries, and to analyse how a changing volume of fish would affect them. She proposed a map as a useful tool for decision-making.
- 4.3 It was agreed that the first task of the project should be to assess existing data and to undertake a gap analysis to identify avenues of research that remain untapped.

- 4.4 Jenny Hatchard suggested that the SEFG should look at microanalysis as a long-term objective, but a protocol in the short-term. Hazel Curtis agreed that the RAC could give indicative and relative advice without putting an absolute quantity on things.

5 Baseline dependency study: practical aspects

- 5.1 Helen Davies informed that much data is held by member states, which should be asked to contribute. She queried how useful a snapshot of communities would be, given that radical change can take place in short periods. Hazel Curtis agreed that this was the case and, therefore it was important to pull together existing knowledge and to characterize fishing communities as they currently stand.
- 5.2 Jenny Hatchard queried whether the RAC could also use this socio-economic knowledge to provide downstream advice to fishing communities.
- 5.3 Hazel Curtis stressed that fisheries management needs overall socio-economic aims/objectives and that the RAC should be a means of setting those objectives.
- 5.4 It was proposed that a project advisory group should be established within the SEFG to oversee a study, once the RAC has approved the proposal.

6. Baseline dependency study – agreeing an outline

- 6.1 The discussion moved on to agreeing an outline for the socio-economic study of North Sea fisheries:

Scope: The study would take in vessels fishing in the North Sea, and approximately 70 fishing ports dependent on fishing in the North Sea. Agreement to restrict the study to EU North Sea Member States – UK, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, France and Belgium. It was queried whether seasonal fishing activity from non-North Sea communities should be included in the study.

Definitions: Dependency would need to be defined.

Data: financial performance of fishing fleets/characterisations of fishing fleets; demographic data of dependency in communities/indicators of wealth; onshore industries – upstream/downstream dependency; relative dependency, starting with direct dependency. Social data on communities should be included. Data from other industries related to fishing – tourism, recreational fishing and aquaculture – should also be included. Input/output multipliers should be used to look at the wider economic effects of the fishing businesses, ie revenues and jobs.

Interfaces: with spatial planning working group, which is producing a map of fishing effort/distribution patterns.

Objective: A characterisation of fishing industry and community dependency; sensitivity to change in the fishing; cause and effect relationships between policy and industry/community. Signposting for a vulnerability analysis in relation to dependency: eg. ice plants, knock-on effects of fuel costs etc.

Tangible Products: Map for socio-economic reference; backed up by the full text of the study; gap analysis and value of filling gaps.

Timescale/Manpower: 6 months/3 people

1. Decide on kinds of information, approach people, and gather data. 3 people, 2 months. [Could also be doing logging data/analysis at this time]
- 2.
3. Read, understand, reorganise data and produce a report. Perhaps a database. 3 people, 4 months.

Projected Cost: £500 per day per person – 2.5 days a week - €100,000 euros; plus translation costs as some studies will be in other languages; and steering committee meeting budget for travel costs etc; €150,000 in total. It was suggested that a supervisory member of EAFE lead the project with three PhD students from different countries undertaking the data gathering. Members of the NSRAC General Assembly could provide links to local sources of information.

- 6.2 Hazel Curtis suggested that the gap analysis would lead to a proposal for further study to fill in those gaps. James Anderson asserted that it is also important to look at processing.
- 6.3 The SEFG on a 2-stage concept of a project characterising fishing communities, followed by a subsequent project to plug gaps etc as necessary. All agreed, subject to seeing the draft proposal.

7. Socio-economic Protocol for RAC: discussion

Hazel Curtis left the meeting at this point due to other commitments

- 7.1 It was agreed that socio-economic effects should be taken into account in all RAC discussions and that the RAC and its working groups need to demonstrate they have taken socio-economics into account.
- 7.2 Jenny Hatchard argued that value would be added to the RAC's advice by considering the likely socio-economic impacts of policies. A protocol should provide a framework for integrating socio-economic issues into the advice-making process. A dependency map from the study would be a very useful tool for this process.

8. Socio-economic Protocol for RAC: outline

- 8.1 On the basis of this discussion, Jenny Hatchard drew up a rough outline of a draft protocol for discussion by the participants. The outcome was the following 6-point protocol, which Jenny Hatchard and Nicki Holmyard agreed to re-write for approval by the members before submission to the RAC.
 1. Share knowledge about likely direct positive and negative socio-economic impacts – eg. demographic, employment, culture, fleet economics etc.

2. Consider external variables that will also affect the policy – eg. costs of fuel, changes in the market
 3. Discuss whether those socio-economic impacts are viable/acceptable eg. at local, regional, national, North Sea levels
 4. Discuss possible means of mitigating negative socio-economic impacts – eg. altering the time scale – and of reinforcing positive impacts of policies.
 5. Include discussed observations of impacts and agreed recommendations in the policy advice to the Commission.
 6. Where possible/necessary specialist socio-economic advice should be sought.
- 8.2 It was queried whether all working groups would have to follow this protocol and if there was the capacity to provide socio-economic advice on each working group. It was suggested that member states asked for more support on these issues.
- 8.3 The group agreed that the inclusion of socio-economics would broaden, deepen and add credibility to the RAC's advice and give fishermen confidence that their livelihoods were being taken into account in the policy process. There is a large gap between representatives and fishermen and the SEFG agreed that it should bridge the gap. James Anderson commented that as a fisherman he has never been able to talk to the Commission, and he welcomes the opportunity to do that through the RAC. He pointed out that members of the RAC already think about socio-economics, so the protocol did not mean additional work; it merely formalised the issue.
- 8.4 Helen Davies noted that the SEFG should guard against a persistent negativity and advised that the protocol should be objective and balanced. Nicki Holmyard suggested that the protocol be linked to the objectives of the Commission's new economic analysis unit.
- 8.5 It was agreed that there was a further task of educating the ExCom and GA about the socio-economic side of fisheries.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Nicki Holmyard concluded that the protocol should formalise the means to include socio-economics on a consistent basis, instead of it just being raised in snapshot form when a fisherman or his wife talks ad hoc at meetings, directly about the impacts on them.
- 9.2 There was consensual agreement among the participants of the SEFG that once drafted by Nicki Holmyard and Jenny Hatchard, the protocol and proposal would be sent out to members of the focus group for further comment as soon as possible, so that they can each be presented at the ExCom in Stockholm in October.

10. Any other business

- 10.1 It was decided that the next meeting of the SEFG would not be arranged until the RAC had considered the outputs from the first meeting.

11. Action Points

1. Draft Socio-Economic Protocol to be drafted by Jenny Hatchard and sent to participants for comment by 6.10.05	SEFG Rapporteur and Participants
2. Draft proposal for a socio-economic study of North Sea fishing to characterise fishing communities to be drafted by Nicki Holmyard and sent to participants for comment	SEFG Chair & participants
3. Once agreed by participants, draft Socio-Economic Protocol and draft socio-economic study proposal to be presented to the NSRAC ExCom in Stockholm in October 2005.	SEFG Chair to present the papers.
4. Recommendation that SEFG/NSRAC develop a dialogue with the new Economic Analysis Unit in DG Fish	SEFG/Secretariat
5. Recommendation that SEFG liaise with the NSRAC Spatial Planning WG regarding possible mapped outputs.	SEFG Chair & SPWG Chair
6. Next meeting of SEFG to be arranged as appropriate at a later date	Secretariat

12. In Attendance

Nicki Holmyard, Chair
Helle Vestergaard
Erik Lindebo
Helen Davies

Jenny Hatchard, Rapporteur
James Anderson
Hazel Curtis
Pim Visser