



Pelagic



Regional Advisory Council



POSITION ON CFP REFORM

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For correspondence, please contact the secretariat:

PO Box 72  
2280 AB Rijswijk  
The Netherlands

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**Part one:**

**Position on the reform of the CFP  
and its governance system including  
the future of the RAC**

**Part two:**

**Review on the functioning  
of the Pelagic RAC**

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## Foreword

After the publication of the Green paper in April 2009, a series of discussions during three Working Group meetings and two Executive Committee meetings, were held to formulate the opinion of the Pelagic RAC membership about the reform of the CFP. Rather early in the process, it was decided to focus mostly on the aspect of governance of the CFP, and the role that the Regional Advisory Councils could, or should, have after the reform. In December 2009, the Pelagic RAC submitted its position paper to the Commission.

Approximately one and a half year before that, the Pelagic RAC members had evaluated how the Pelagic RAC was functioning internally during its first three years of existence and had reflected upon the role of the RAC in relation to the management of pelagic fisheries. In February 2009, the Pelagic RAC submitted this 'self evaluation' to the European Commission.

As the secretary of the Pelagic RAC, I have felt privileged to be part of these two processes in which all members collaboratively made major efforts to come up with ideas, debate all issues in great detail and formulate texts; but most of all perhaps, to reconcile different opinions between different members when necessary. The result, which lies before you in print, is worthwhile reading to anyone with an interest in pelagic fisheries management in Europe. Or anyone who simply enjoys fish...

Aukje Coers  
Executive Secretary  
of the Pelagic RAC







**PART ONE:**

**The reform of the CFP and its  
governance system**

## 1. Summary

First of all, the Pelagic RAC (PRAC) would like to emphasise that pelagic fisheries are just different from other fisheries. So they should be treated differently from other fisheries. The fish targeted by the industry in the PRAC form a distinct group of species, which behave in a different manner from many other commercially targeted fishes. This consequently means that research, policy and control require a unique approach. This is also why, at all stages of the CFP reform process, pelagics should be separately addressed. Both in terms of the objectives and measures in the CFP, as well as in addressing the governance system and the future role of the RACs in that governance system. The PRAC reiterates that it feels that it is functioning well, but that at the same time management of the pelagic stocks could be improved with a strengthened stakeholder advisory role.

The pelagic stocks are in general good shape and Long Term Management (LTM) plans are in place for all major stocks. Many stocks in other types of fisheries need rebuilding, and the main aim is first and foremost to reduce fishing mortality. For pelagic stocks, the current focus is on improving the performance of LTM plans that are already implemented. The PRAC feels that there is great potential to strengthen its effectiveness by being given more responsibility, in relation to defining and providing the scientific knowledge base. Access to funding specially allocated to this purpose is essential in realising this.

The effectiveness of the PRAC as an advisory body is as much dependent on its own capabilities and the quality of its advice as on the willingness and possibilities of the receivers to follow it. It is thus very relevant to the RAC how the EU organises its governance system. The Commission's Green paper makes suggestions on (1) the devolution of management responsibilities to stakeholders and (2) a possible decentralisation of the management system. Regarding the former, the PRAC feels that the RACs could not have a role in the implementation of management, and the Commission should focus on devolving responsibilities to the POs and other industry groupings where possible. Regarding the latter, the pelagic sector should be left out of a decentralisation altogether, or, a separate pelagic

entity should be established, on the condition that it would have fully devolved power, e.g. by having a mandate to negotiate with third countries. In no case should the management of the pelagic stocks be scattered among or across the remits of several different regional entities.

This paper furthermore explores a third option: (3) a combination of the previous two suggested changes, which might be realised through the establishment of Regional Management Organisations, incorporating stakeholders. In the light of this, it is concluded that in no case should the stakeholder advisory function be incorporated into such regional management organisations, if this would mean that only a small number of stakeholders could be incorporated, as an alternative to having the RACs.

Finally, a fourth option is explored: (4) a supra-centralisation of the pelagic stakeholder advisory role, through the establishment of a stakeholder lead advisory body under the auspices of a 'neutral' organisation such as NEAFC. Since the RAC is an EU-based body, while the five major stocks in the remit of the PRAC are jointly exploited with non-EU countries, its advice has not been taken on board by managers on a number of occasions. This is likely because the advice is not directed at all competent authorities and because it is not underwritten by all relevant stakeholders. It is clear to the PRAC that this situation will not change as a result of the reform of the CFP, but that it needs to be resolved in a wider context. Therefore, the establishment of a stakeholder lead advisory body under the auspices of a 'neutral' organisation such as NEAFC would seem appropriate.







### 1.1. Recommendations

On the governance of fisheries management:

- pelagics should be left out of a decentralisation;
- pelagic stocks should in no case be scattered in the remits of several different regional entities;
- the stakeholder advisory function should in no case be included into regional management bodies, if it means that only a small number of stakeholders could have a seat, and it would replace the RACs in their current composition;
- only under strict conditions (e.g. have fully devolved power to negotiate with 3rd countries) should a separate decentralised entity be created to specifically deal with pelagic issues;
- responsibilities in terms of the implementation of management should not be devolved to RACs, i.e. RACs should keep a purely advisory role;
- however, RACs should be given responsibility in terms of deciding on (part) of the research agenda;
- EU should take the initiative to establish, together with other competent authorities, a stakeholder advisory body for pelagics under the auspices of a 'neutral' organisation.

On other, general, issues:

- catching capacity and economical viability are different concepts per definition and the Commission should carefully distinguish between them;
- the CFP's objectives should be prioritised on a temporal scale and they should not include MSY;
- LTM plans need to be easily adjustable and the PRAC needs additional access to funding to be involved in these complex processes;
- the creation of a culture of compliance is dependent on having a level playing field among all stakeholders (within EU as well as between EU and non-EU countries);
- the system should move towards setting TACs for more than one year;
- scientists should be enabled to innovate the simulation models used for assessments and evaluation of management LTM plans.



## 2. Introduction

Recently, the European Commission published its Green paper<sup>1</sup>; thereby launching the discussion on the reform of the CFP by 2012. Managers, politicians, the scientific community, the fishing industry and NGOs in the field of marine conservation are contemplating the future of the CFP. But it is not only the CFP's objectives, measures and control system that are up for discussion. In addition, alternative governance systems of the CFP are being considered<sup>2</sup>. Decisions will be made for instance on whether or not the management system should be decentralised and how an increased role for stakeholders in the process could be realised. To be able to make informed decisions on a policy that is as broad as the CFP is, it is imperative to first address the specific situations and priority management tasks on a differentiated fishery-by-fishery basis.

### 2.1. Objectives and scope of this paper

This paper sets out to provide a response to the Commission's Green paper, while mostly focussing on exploring several possible operational changes to the CFP's governance system. Subsequently, it focuses on how the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) are affected by those changes. This paper by the Pelagic Regional Advisory Council (PRAC), takes its approach from pelagic fisheries throughout, and thus consequently investigates possible future roles for the PRAC. It will consider the unique situation of the pelagic fleet, the general state of the pelagic stocks and the specific management tasks that have priority in pelagic fisheries. We argue that of the three policy areas of the CFP – conservation and sustainability; market organisation; and fleet structure – the only remaining real challenges in relation to pelagic fisheries management, are to be found in the first policy area. The pelagic fleet has undergone a major structural adjustment already and overcapacity is not considered a problem. In addition, market organisation is regarded by most stakeholders as a mostly set framework, which defines the conditions in which the industry operates, and if stakeholders were to be involved in the design of it at all, then it should not be up to the RACs, but to the Producer Organisations (POs). In the light of this, the PRAC has, since its establishment, exclusively dealt with what it was mainly established for: conservation and sustainability issues related to the stocks. In consistence with that this paper focuses on those issues.

### 2.2. Five structural failings?

Before going into the main topic of this paper, the governance of the CFP and the future role of the RACs, this section comments on the five, by the Commission identified, structural failings of the CFP, mostly in relation to pelagic fisheries.

#### 2.2.1. Overcapacity

The PRAC feels that defining overcapacity as a discrepancy between the catching capacity and availability of natural resources is too simplistic and does not address the actual core issue: economical viability of the fleet. Due to a rather rigorous restructuring of the pelagic fleet, it is generally economically viable. But at the same time, having a large catching capacity is a necessity for the pelagic fleet in order to utilise its quota as most pelagic fisheries are highly seasonal and it allows fishermen to land their catches maintaining the best possible quality. It also ensures flexibility between years to adapt to changes in quota. It is important to emphasise that technical catching capacity and economical viability are different concepts per definition. Having catching overcapacity may (partly) inhibit some fishing fleets from being profitable, but not necessarily so. The Commission should thus, at all times, carefully distinguish between catching overcapacity and economic overcapacity.

#### 2.2.2. Objectives of the CFP

The objective of striving for economic, ecological and social sustainability can be interpreted in many different ways and the Commission asks in its Green paper how the objectives in these three fields could be prioritised. The PRAC feels that the most sensible way to consider priorities is on a temporal scale. Without compromising on absolute ecological targets, the realisation of social and economic targets can be maximised by setting a longer time frame for allowing to reach the ecological targets. In other words, moving toward long term management should also incorporate weighing economic benefits of reaching targets over different time spans.

In relation to the question of whether or not MSY should be defined as an objective, the PRAC would like to emphasise that MSY reference points should be treated as signposts indicating the direction in which gains can be made rather than as definitive targets for fisheries. In other words, the PRAC fully agrees with the Commission's viewpoint on this, as was communicated to the PRAC in September 2009<sup>3</sup>. The PRAC believes that MSY cannot be considered as the optimal target for all stocks.



Even in single species fisheries such as in pelagic fisheries it is not certain what MSY actually means in terms of output. Existing interactions among different species in a certain marine area mean that trade-offs are an inevitable feature of fisheries management. Predation by other (commercially exploited fish) species becomes an increasingly important factor in the determination of a stock's growth potential as stocks grow larger. The maximisation of the output of some stocks would thus inevitably result in a lower harvest rate potential for other stocks. Stating that all stocks are to be simultaneously managed according to a theoretically calculated maximum output is no basis for a rational policy making process as it cannot be achieved. Particularly not when these theoretical objectives are calculated on the basis of single stock performance, while ignoring these interactions. The Commission needs to be clear about this in the policy setting framework and this would require an in-depth discussion, involving experts and stakeholders, on how to implement the ecosystem approach, before setting the objectives rather than after.

In addition, it remains unclear how to operationalise the concept of MSY. A heated debate among leading scientists during an ICES workshop in December 2009<sup>4</sup>, illustrated that this issue is still highly controversial. In any case it is clear to the PRAC that ensuring a long term, maximal sustainable yield should be realised by focussing on the fishing mortality (F) and not by setting a biomass target. The size of a stock is not solely constrained by the level of fishing, but also by all other natural circumstances, which together determine the carrying capacity of the environment. Therefore, identifying targets in terms of stock biomass is not only very difficult, but it is also impossible to determine whether they are achievable.

Finally, the PRAC is of the opinion that LTM plans can very well be developed, tested by ICES as sustainable in the long term, and work effectively without defining absolute values for MSY reference points.

### **2.2.3. Long-term principles**

LTM plans are in place for all major pelagic stocks. In addition, for four relatively small stocks, a LTM plan is either in place or currently being developed. The PRAC has taken initiative, or worked together with the Commission and (ICES) scientists on the development or refinement of all of them. The PRAC feels that it is important that LTM plans are seen as a 'work in progress'. Circumstances change and

new information becomes available continuously. This is why LTM plans should be easily adjustable. The PRAC sees it as one of its highest priorities to work on the improvement of the performance of LTM plans. Such a process requires thorough scientific support. Running simulations and comparing results of several different Harvest Control Rules in a participatory process between scientists and stakeholders is a much more elaborate task than asking ICES whether one HCR is precautionary or not. The PRAC is hopeful that the Commission, one way or another, is able to provide the RACs with the needed funding to facilitate this (see also chapter 6).

### **2.2.4. Responsibility of the industry to implement the CFP**

The PRAC feels that there cannot be a role for the PRAC in the implementation of management, because it is not the appropriate stakeholder forum. Responsibility as meant here can only be carried by industry stakeholders and this discussion should thus be left between the Commission and the POs or other industry groupings. Notwithstanding this, the PRAC feels that there is potential to strengthen the effectiveness of the RAC by giving it responsibility in relation to defining and providing the scientific knowledge base (see also chapter 4).

### **2.2.5. Culture of compliance**

First and foremost, the PRAC feels that a Culture of Compliance benefits from having a 'Level Playing Field' established among different stakeholder groups. The Commission should do everything in its power to realise this internally (within the EU) and externally (among Coastal States). It is imperative that the future control and enforcement system properly addresses the external dimension. A situation as currently exists with the mackerel and horse mackerel management, where otherwise generally effective LTM plans are jeopardised by additional fishery outside the management framework, should at all times be avoided. Furthermore, in matters of accession of new member countries to the EU, this is an extremely important issue as well. A culture of compliance hugely benefits from the knowledge that the same rules apply to everyone and these rules should thus be non-negotiable by accessing countries.

### 3. The importance of a stakeholder lead advisory body on pelagics

First and foremost, pelagic fisheries are just different. The fish targeted by the industry in the PRAC form a distinct group of species, which behave in a very different manner from other commercially targeted fishes. This consequently means that research, policy and control require a unique approach. This is perhaps the most important reason for needing a stakeholder lead advisory body, which is dedicated to exclusively advise on pelagic fisheries, because the stakeholders are able to bring unique experience and expertise to the table.

Second, the economic importance of the pelagic fishing industry is considerable. In 2009, the total value of first-hand sold pelagic fish by EU fishermen was over € 600 million. And since pelagic fish are an important product category for processors, the total value of the pelagic fisheries across the chain should not be underestimated.

Last but not least, the pelagic stocks are generally in good shape and LTM plans are in place for all major stocks. This is why the management of pelagic stocks is in a different stage to many other fish stocks across Europe. While many other stocks need rebuilding, and the main aim accordingly is to reduce fishing mortality, the current focus for pelagic stocks is to improve the performance of LTM plans already implemented.

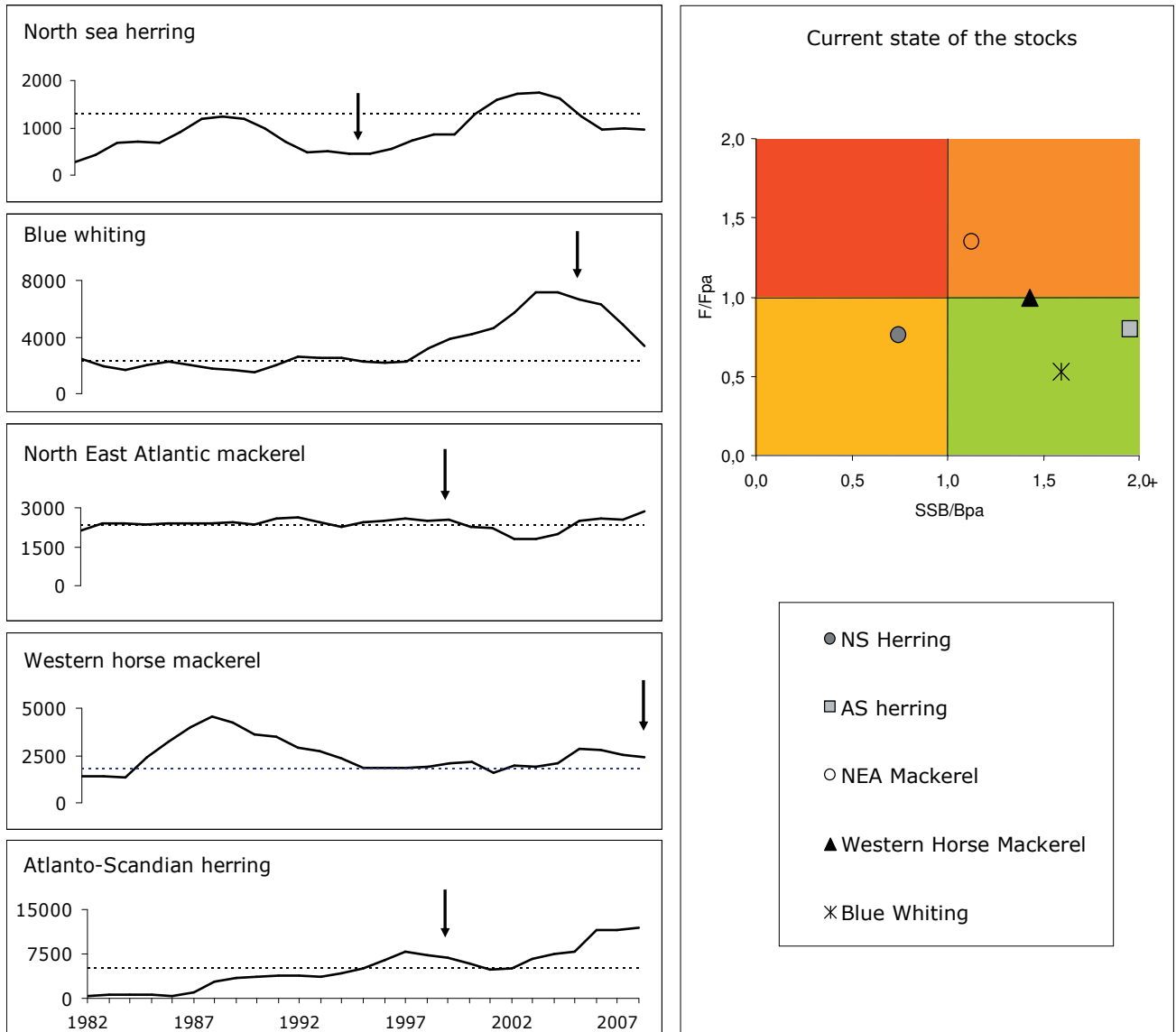
#### 3.1. Uniqueness of pelagic fisheries

Pelagic fisheries are typically single species fisheries, due to the biological nature of the targeted species which group into schools, most often without mixing with other species. This facilitates fishermen to manage the up-take of their quota per species rather precisely and means that by-catches of unwanted species is relatively low. In addition, since pelagic fishing takes place in mid-water, bottom habitat disturbance is nil.

The introduction of Individual Transferrable Quota (ITQs), in one form or another in most countries, has resulted in a considerable consolidation of most fleets on a national level, resulting in a fleet consisting of relatively few but large vessels. (Exceptions to this general trend can be found in Ireland and some small artisanal fleets in Spain and France). These large vessels, which make up the majority of the fleet, have an extensive action radius, enabling them to steam further away from their landing ports, turning fishing grounds into international residences where vessels flying different flags fish side by side. In line with the vast investments that have to be made for obtaining and maintaining the vessels, company managers / owners need to consider long term performance of their vessels and need to make plans accordingly. Fishing time is largely made up of the time searching for the fish schools and consequently no clear relationship between fishing effort and catches can be described for

**Table 1:** Overview of the relative importance of different stocks within the remit of the Pelagic RAC. S = shared management; A = autonomous management by EU. 1 = EU; 2 = Norway; 3 = Faroe Islands; 4 = Iceland; 5 = Russia. In grey are the five major stocks, as describe in group 1. Note that the provided first-hand value figures are calculated as quota quantities multiplied by crude estimations of average prices in 2009. These figures by no means provide a realistic reflection of the actual turn-over of the fleet, but instead should merely be considered as an indication of the relative values for the different stocks. \*Note that the Western horse mackerel stock is migratory and resides in Norwegian waters part of the year where it is being targeted by Norwegian vessels. Management of the stock, however, is currently solely dealt with by EU managers.

		TAC 2009 (tons)	EU quota share (2009)	Value first-hand		S / A	(Jointly) exploited by
				Stock	EU-share		
				€ (millions)	€ (millions)		
Herring	<b>Atlanto-Scandian</b>	<b>1.643.000</b>	<b>106.959</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>1,2,3,4,5</b>
	Western Baltic	37.722	32.190	6	5	S	1,2
	<b>North Sea</b>	<b>171.000</b>	<b>121.410</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>1,2</b>
	VIa South	9.314	9.314	3	3	A	1
	VIa North	21.760	21.760	7	7	A	1
	Irish Sea	4.800	4.800	2	2	A	1
	Celtic Sea	5.918	5.918	2	2	A	1
<b>NEA mackerel</b>		<b>605.000</b>	<b>385.803</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>1,2,3</b>
Horse mackerel	<b>Western Stock</b>	<b>170.000</b>	<b>170.000</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>A/S*</b>	<b>1,2</b>
	North sea	39.309	39.309	6	6	A	1
	Southern Stock	57.750	57.750	9	9	A	1
<b>Blue whiting</b>		<b>606.237</b>	<b>162.913</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>1,2,3,4</b>
North sea sprat		170.000	170.000	26	26	A	1



**Figure 1a:** The development of SSB for the five major stocks over the last 25 years. The striped lines indicate the levels of Bpa; the arrows indicate the moment of implementation of a LTM plan.

**Figure 1b:** Kobe plot showing current exploitation rates and stock statuses in relation to precautionary reference points, based on most recent estimations by ICES. Note that we assumed that fishing mortality is at or below Fpa for the Western horse mackerel stock. For this stock no F reference point is defined, but considering that SSB has been around Bpa since the mid nineties (with exception of the year 2001) and well above Bpa during recent years with stable catches, there is no reason to assume that F is currently above Fpa.

pelagic fishing. Because of this unclear relationship, pelagic fisheries thus cannot be managed with an effort regime.

**3.2. Economic importance of the pelagic fleet**

The stocks in the remit of the PRAC can be divided into two groups: (1) the five major, widely distributed stocks and (2) the seven relatively small stocks (see table 1). The five largest stocks, are likely among the most elaborately researched stocks for which ICES provides advice. The data

are comparatively certain and long time series on stock performance are available. The stocks in the second group are relatively data poor.

This difference has undoubtedly to do with sheer volume of the stocks and the number of stakeholders profiting from them. The first group represents 93% of the pelagic quota (of the stocks within the remit of the PRAC) in terms of quantitative outtake and approximately 97% in terms of first hand sale economic value.

Another important difference between these two groups in terms of stock management



is that the former are all stocks which are jointly exploited with non-EU countries while the latter are mostly autonomous stocks, solely exploited by EU countries (the only exception being the small Western Baltic herring stock, which is jointly exploited with Norway). When we only consider the EU owned quota, the first group still represents  $\pm 80\%$  and  $93\%$  of the caught quantity and first hand sale value respectively.

The PRAC deplors that the Commission's Green paper mainly focuses on the Southern third country agreement, since it is clear that the Northern third country agreements are an extremely important aspect for the PRAC.

### 3.3. The current biological state of the pelagic stocks

Figure 1 shows that the five major stocks in the remit of the PRAC are currently in reasonably good shape. The graphs on the left show the developments of SSB in relation to the precautionary reference point  $B_{pa}$  as it is currently defined by ICES. It is clear that there have been major variations in stock size during the last 25 years, but the stocks have been inside safe biological limits a large part of the time.

Note that the recent decline in the size of the North Sea herring stock was caused by reduced recruitment of the stock, due to unknown reasons. At the time that the recruitment first showed signs of impairment, in 2002, the stock

size was larger than it had been in decades and fishing mortality was relatively low. The decline thus most certainly was unrelated to overfishing or any lack of management effort whatsoever. One might even argue that variations in stock size (and consequently in TACs) in general can often be ascribed to variations in recruitment or other natural phenomena. This is one of the main challenges in pelagic fisheries management: dealing with these variations and with uncertainties in science and fine tuning the LTM plans accordingly.

Another aspect worth mentioning is that for the five stocks long term management (LTM) plans are already in place. Out of the five, North Sea herring was the first stock for which a LTM plan was developed and implemented in 1995. Atlanto-Scandian herring, North East Atlantic mackerel and blue whiting followed in 1999 (former two) and 2005 respectively. For Western horse mackerel, a LTM plan is currently under consideration, but de facto in force since 2008. The arrows in the graphs on the left in figure 1 indicate the years of implementation of the plans. was developed and implemented in 1995. Atlanto-Scandian herring, North East Atlantic mackerel and blue whiting followed in 1999 (former two) and 2005 respectively. For Western horse mackerel, a LTM plan is currently under consideration, but de facto in force since 2008. The arrows in the graphs on the left in figure 1 indicate the years of implementation of the plans.



## 4. Governance structures and the stakeholder role

Currently, the European Commission (in practice DG Mare), the European Council of Ministers and, with the Lisbon Treaty implemented, the European Parliament are the main receivers of RAC advice. The effectiveness of the PRAC as an advisory body is as much dependent on its own capabilities and the quality of its advice as the willingness and possibilities of the receivers to follow it. It is thus very relevant to the PRAC how the EU organises its governance system. This section explores four possible changes to the system, and their consequential implications for the PRAC.

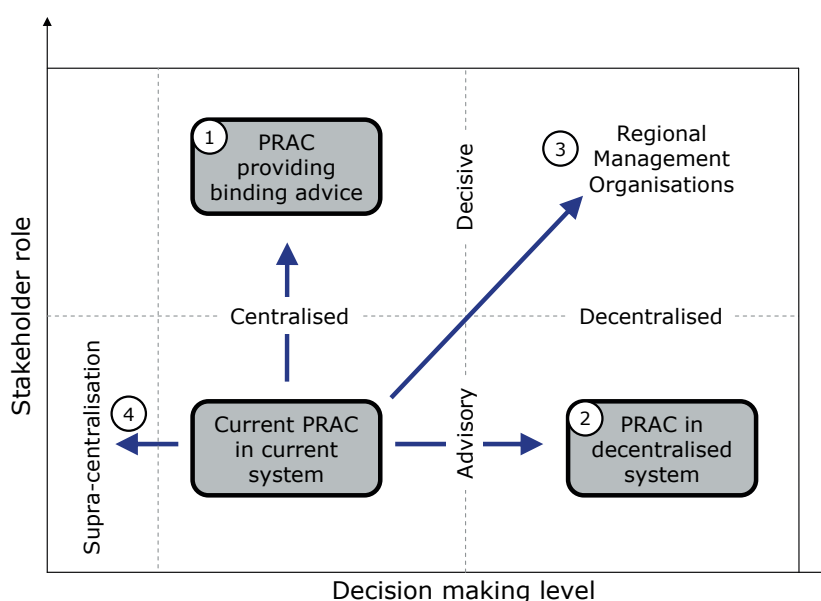
Figure 2 below, shows, from a PRAC perspective, how these changes could be operationalised. The first two changes are inspired by suggestions in the Commission’s Green paper, i.e. (1) the devolution of management responsibilities to stakeholders and (2) a decentralisation of the management system. Furthermore a third option is explored: (3) a combination of the previous two suggested changes, which could most likely be realised through the establishment of Regional Management Organisations, incorporating stakeholders. And finally a fourth option: (4) a supra-centralisation of the stakeholder advisory role in pelagics, through the establishment of a stakeholder lead advisory body under the auspices of a ‘neutral’ organisation such as NEAFC.

To clarify the discussion, the paper distinguishes among four levels in fisheries management: (A) setting management objectives, (B) defining and

providing the knowledge base, (C) deciding upon management measures and (D) ensuring the practical implementation of management decisions. This nomenclature will be used here, with reference to levels A, B, C and D. When discussing the four changes to the governance system, these levels are important to keep in mind, because they likely require to be dealt with at different governance levels or with different priorities in the involvement of certain groups (managers, industry, NGOs, scientists, etc).

### 4.1. Devolution of management responsibilities

In the section on the five structural failings of the CFP, the Green paper speaks of encouraging the industry to take responsibility and of implementing a Results Based Management system. Although the Green paper focuses on the role of the POs, some have suggested a role for the RACs. To envisage an enhanced role for the RACs in terms of becoming directly engaged in management decisions is difficult, but through a creative thought experiment, it is not impossible. Imagine that, the RAC’s composition stays as it is, but when the RAC gives advice in consensus on behalf of both the 1/3 and the 2/3 groups, its advice is binding to managers to follow up on one way or another. This would imply that in certain cases, stakeholders could fully determine which measures would be decided upon (level C) in order to reach certain management objectives, which would likely still be set by managers (level A). In theory, the PRAC would be supportive of this, because it could impose taking a tailor-made approach more often in issues



**Figure 2:** Four possible changes in the governance system of the CFP. One and two discuss the position of the PRAC itself, while three and four discuss possible changes outside of the RAC framework, but relevant to the pelagic stakeholders still<sup>5</sup>.

that need it. Designing Technical Conservation Measures forms a very suitable example. However, at the same time, the PRAC sees major obstacles to how this could work in practice.

#### **4.1.1. The composition and operation of the PRAC**

The PRAC reiterates that it feels that it is well-functioning within the present organisational set-up<sup>6</sup>. One of its strengths is considered to be the possibility for all EU stakeholders to become member and have an active role in the discussions. In the Executive Committee many stakeholder groups are represented. This might be different if the PRAC were to obtain decisive power. Member States might demand to be able to determine the membership composition in order to secure representation and large stakeholder groups might argue for an allocation of seats, differentiated based on the level of interests in a certain fishery. In short, the issue of representation and participation, including the 1/3 – 2/3 rule, might be re-addressed such that a power struggle arose over the membership seats; while at present the composition of the RAC is rather elegantly being decided upon by the RAC itself. Also, when the RAC would be given decisive power, this would give more power to the individual member, which might sooner persuade a member that is not fully dedicated to the RAC to veto a decision and thereby undermine the entire operating process. In general, the RAC is of the opinion that working on a basis of unanimous consensus is an important strength in its current operation, especially considering that participation by NGOs in the PRAC is on a somewhat fragile basis, due to limitations of time and resources on their behalf.

#### **4.1.2. Joint stock management**

Most importantly, the PRAC cannot see how the word 'binding' can have a meaning in a context where management decisions are being decided upon in collaboration with non-EU countries. As observed earlier, all major pelagic stocks are joint stocks, and such a system could thus not work for the majority of the work of the PRAC. Indeed, it might even weaken the position of EU negotiators, if RACs would have the opportunity to provide binding advice, because it would leave them less scope for manoeuvring in negotiations when bound by advice from the PRAC, or any other RAC. The PRAC is therefore of the opinion that it could not have a formal role in the decision making process on management measures (level C), and should be maintained as it is, in terms of its advisory role. When it comes to the practical implementation of management (level D), the RAC as an organisation

is not suitable to carry out such tasks and the Commission should continue to focus on the POs. In this context, it is also worth noting that almost all pelagic fisheries are de facto managed through ITQ schemes, partly managed by the POs, so that the implementation of a major management task is already directly devolved to the fishing industry.

#### **4.1.3. Devolving decisive power on the research agenda**

Notwithstanding the argumentation above, the PRAC feels that there is potential to strengthen the effectiveness of the RAC by being given more responsibility in relation to defining and providing the scientific knowledge base (level B). With reference to the self-evaluation that the RAC submitted in February, the RAC reiterates that it is inhibited in liaising with independent scientific experts on a continuous basis, primarily due to budgetary constraints. Momentarily, the PRAC is dependent on the willingness of scientists to work with the RAC on an ad hoc and voluntary basis. This makes the basis for collaborations vulnerable and frustrates continuity and long-term planning, and thus the quality of the RAC's advice.

In addition, the RAC is very eager to be able to independently task scientific experts (biological, economic or social) to carry out (pilot) studies that are of specific interest to the pelagic stakeholders. In other words, the RAC strongly advocates to be given responsibility to decide on (part of) the fisheries research agenda. Access to funding specially allocated to this purpose is essential for realising this.

#### **4.2. Decentralisation of management system**

Another possible way forward for the governance of the CFP as suggested in the Green paper is to move away from a system where all management decisions are taken at the highest, most central political level. First of all, it has been discussed whether the word *regionalisation*, which is most often used in this debate, is the correct one. But considering that pelagic fisheries cannot be regionalised, as most of the stocks are highly migratory and their distribution areas span huge areas (making the operational region: Europe), the PRAC agrees that it is more appropriate to speak of a possible *decentralisation*. At this point of juncture the PRAC stresses that a decentralisation, to all appearances, will not serve the pelagic sector and the PRAC would prefer to maintain its role in advising the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, i.e. to maintain a status quo. However, should the decision be to include pelagic stocks in a decentralisation, then it





is imperative to keep the pelagic stocks together. In that case a separate entity should be created, to specifically deal with pelagic issues, to which the PRAC would be providing its advice. In this case, sensibly, also a dedicated unit on pelagics should be established within DG Mare.

In the next three paragraphs, three scenarios are explored. In them, a recent presentation by David Symes at a Nordic Council of Ministers' Conference, titled "Regionalising the Common Fisheries Policy: What kind of Institutional Solution?", and his equally titled paper<sup>7</sup>, are used as a reference to provide a framework for the discussion.

#### **4.2.1. Scenario 1: excluding pelagics**

The PRAC can relate to the idea that for some fisheries, which have a regional focus, e.g. demersal fisheries in the North Sea or the Baltic Sea, it could be beneficial to have a dedicated forum for authorities to focus on their targeted fish stocks. But considering that the majority of the pelagic stocks are so widely distributed, and are jointly exploited by a great number of stakeholders from many countries, the PRAC cannot envisage how that could work for the pelagic sector. Therefore the PRAC prefers that the Commission would exclude pelagics from a decentralisation.

#### **4.2.2. Scenario 2: including pelagics**

If the commission would be determined to realise a decentralisation in general, then most likely, Symes' model C, the administrative solution would be opted for: Establishing a standing conference of MS administrators meeting at regular intervals with their advisers to interpret and implement Community policy, without intervention from Commission or Council. In that case, the RACs would be maintained and would be advising these decentralised entities rather than the centralised EU institutions. This scenario, with a dedicated pelagic entity established, could only be beneficial when:

1. Such a decentralised entity has devolved powers from the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Otherwise, the decentralised entity only adds another bureaucratic layer to the decisions making process, which is already very complex in the pelagic sector, considering the joint management with non-EU countries. For example, the pelagic entity should be made responsible for the negotiations with third countries. To remain within the legal framework of the Treaties the PRAC is conscious that devolving powers to such an entity will require considerable skilfulness on behalf of

those tasked to design the legal framework which should enable this.

2. The PRAC could be renamed as Pelagic Advisory Council (PAC) to reflect that it is not providing advice on a regional basis (in order to more clearly distinguish its function in comparison to other RACs), but at all times it should be maintained in its current organisational set-up and function.

In this scenario, the PRAC foresees a closer cooperation between stakeholders and managers which would strengthen the role of the stakeholders. And despite the fact that the major stocks are joint stocks, the PRAC sees potential in this scenario, because some examples can be thought of that could greatly benefit from being able to take a tailor-made approach more often (e.g. Technical Conservation Measures). However, the PRAC feels that this should be seen as a package deal, and if the two conditions cannot be met, from a pelagic point of view, the PRAC would favour a status quo situation and would urge the Commission to focus on other ways of improving the governance system.

#### **4.2.3. Scenario 3: incorporating stakeholders in decentralised entities**

The option of establishing dedicated RMOs with a permanent secretariat (after the American model) which would incorporate the function of stakeholder involvement into a decentralised entity is also addressed, because it is put forward by David Symes as the most beneficial form of a decentralisation (model D). However, because the consequence would likely be that the RACs are dismantled and (some) stakeholders are amalgamated into the Regional Management Committees, the PRAC is not in favour of this. In any case, a situation should be avoided where only a very limited number of seats for stakeholders are available and not the broad membership as the RAC currently has.

#### **4.3. Supra-centralisation of stakeholder advice**

The PRAC has been in existence for four years. During those four years, the PRAC experienced that the Commission and the Member States are generally positive about the recommendations given. However, the end result was not always in line with what the PRAC advised, mostly when decisions were not an exclusive EU competence, but had to be negotiated with 3<sup>rd</sup> country administrations, because they related to jointly exploited (and managed) stocks. Third country administrations are likely not to regard the advice from the PRAC

as the EU does. The first and foremost reason for this is likely to do with not feeling 'ownership' of the process of preparing that advice. Since the RAC is an EU-based body, 3<sup>rd</sup> countries are not inclined to accept the advice, as would probably also be the case if, the other way around, a 3<sup>rd</sup> country based stakeholder advisory body gave an advice based on experience and views solely of 3<sup>rd</sup> country stakeholders: the EU would not feel inclined to pay much attention to it.

It is the view of the PRAC that this situation will not change as a result of the reform of the CFP. This problem needs to be resolved in an international context. Since four of the five major stocks in the remit of the PRAC are jointly management with 3<sup>rd</sup> countries that are contracting parties to NEAFC, establishing a stakeholder lead advisory body under the auspices of NEAFC would have great potential. The PRAC sees this as a major step forward in bridging the gap of trust between the parties. Considering the good experience of its internal functioning, the PRAC feels that the composition could be following the template of the RACs. It would be open for membership for representatives from stakeholders of all the contracting parties, so that hopefully all contracting parties would feel an ownership in the process of preparing advice, and would thus feel more inclined to accept it.

## 5. Collaboration with scientific experts

If stakeholders are to do a good job in their advisory role in the RAC, it is extremely important to have easy access to expert advice of all sorts (from economic, social and ecological experts). This access, or involvement, should go further than having experts come to RAC meetings to explain the outcomes of their scientific process. Maybe even more importantly so, the stakeholders should be involved as early as possible in the process of formulating research questions. Asking the RACs to provide input on what ICES is to evaluate is an important example of this. The Commission should furthermore, in relation to all expert bodies, consider how they can be better structured and coordinated in order to be most effective. The role of STECF should, for example, be specifically evaluated as its work seems to overlap much with the work of ICES. When it comes to advice from economic experts, the PRAC feels that more attention should be given to business economics approaches, rather than focussing entirely on bio-economics as presently done.

### 5.1. Collaboration with fisheries biologists

The PRAC feels that the collaboration between the RAC members and biology experts can and should be strengthened still. Moving beyond the implementation of a simple and crude LTM plan that purely aims at protecting the survival of the stock, towards one that also optimally performs from a social and economic point of view will profit from a thorough participatory modelling process between scientists and stakeholders. The development of the Western horse mackerel plan and the preparation for a proposed amendment to the mackerel plan<sup>8</sup> are two examples of how the PRAC successfully did this. Such an approach, where scientists are asked to evaluate a set of different Harvest Control Rules, should be the standard approach.

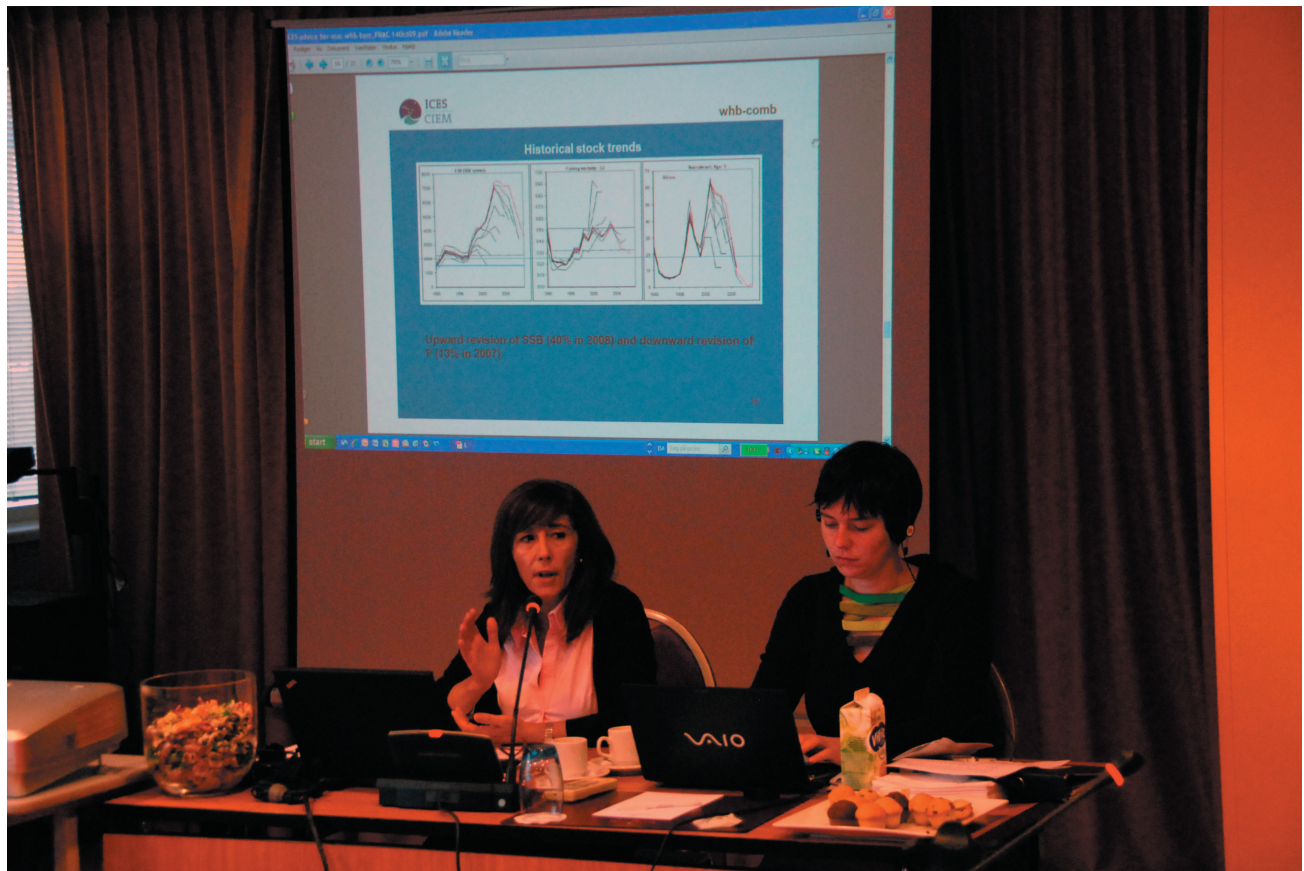
Having LTM plans in place should, at least partly, make the annual political hassle of setting a TAC redundant. The PRAC advocates that when LTM plans are in place they should be used to set the TAC, and suggests that management should altogether move towards setting TACs for more than one year, so that any required discussions should only take place bi- or tri-annually. This of course needs to be built into the scientific process, because rather than making a projection for one year, scientists would need to consider a longer period. To the PRAC stakeholders, this would be genuine long term management, in contrast to the current situation, where long term predictions are considered only once: at the time of developing a LTM plan. A huge benefit of being able to set the TAC for several years is that the catching sector and even more the processing industry is provided with some much wanted certainty and stability, at least within those years. It is clear to the PRAC stakeholders that it is feasible to apply this principle, as the horse mackerel management plan forms an excellent example. Currently, the PRAC, together with the Baltic Sea RAC, is also considering this approach in the development of a LTM plan for Western Baltic herring.

Another priority issue, in the view of the PRAC, is to make more effort to find ways of incorporating all available data in the assessments. With regard to data collected by Member States under the Data Collection Regulation, all data should be compatible by ensuring that the same methodologies are used across different Member States. In addition, data collected by fishermen should be used in the assessment process as well. Especially with smaller, data poor stocks, there is a great potential for improving the quality of assessments in that way. In order to incorporate such data, the development of more novel modelling tools are needed, because currently this is often inhibiting



scientists from using that information. In fact, in general, the PRAC feels that the EU, in comparison with Australia and the USA for example, is relatively 'old-fashioned' when it comes to the models that are used in many stock assessments. The PRAC urges the Commission to be more innovative in the tools used by scientists and development of participatory modelling should be given high priority on the research agenda. Finally, the PRAC would like to make some general comments in relation to the much advocated

'ecosystem approach'. The PRAC acknowledges that trying to apply this approach to pelagic fishes is more complicated than applying it to localised, non-migrating species, because the latter form key components of more 'closed', and thus simpler, systems. The PRAC finds it difficult to define what it comprises. Therefore, momentarily, the PRAC does not have a strong position on the issue, but it is currently contemplating how to address it (possibly by organising a dedicated seminar in the course of 2010).



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**PART TWO:**

**The functioning of the  
Pelagic RAC**

## **1. Introduction**

The Pelagic RAC takes note of the Commission's communication on the functioning of the RACs and would like to provide the Commission with its own views regarding the functioning of the Pelagic RAC in particular. In addition it will take the opportunity to respond to some specific issues put forward in the Commission's document. The P-RAC furthermore takes note of the ACFA evaluation report, which it takes into account to a certain extent here as well. It should be noted that this paper is limited to the evaluation of the functioning of the P-RAC so far and does not go into future roles and possibilities for the RAC(s) after the CFP reform. The P-RAC will take the opportunity to address the latter issue at a later stage.

## **2. The Commission's document**

The P-RAC is of the opinion that the Commission's document altogether is clear and correct, although it at the same time does not go into much detail and it has a limited coverage of topics. The P-RAC acknowledges that the Commission intended to review all RACs at once with this paper, and hereby limited herself in being able to make RAC-specific statements. For instance, the document does not provide much insight into the actual work that has been done by the RACs so far, in terms of recommendations that were provided and how these were dealt with by the Commission.

In relation to the Commission's request to provide input for improvement or clarification of certain provisions of the Council Decision establishing the RACs, the P-RAC would like to make a few suggestions, which are provided in annex 3. The P-RAC furthermore appreciates and fully concurs with the other concluding suggestions on a number of actions to be implemented in the short term to improve the RACs' functioning.

## **3. Membership**

Since the establishment of the P-RAC, the membership of the General Assembly (GA) has decreased significantly in terms of the number of member organisations. Approximately 60 organisations initially signed up for membership at the first GA meeting, probably partly due to the fact that no fees were raised during the first year. When fees were introduced in the second year, quite a number of members withdrew. Then, when over the next few years the members

became more acquainted with the way the RAC operated, more and more organisations trusted to be represented by umbrella organisations where they held membership. Currently, the P-RAC has 39 members in the GA. The membership in the Executive Committee and the Working Groups has been stable with around 18 and 20 members respectively. Since the start, the P-RAC has had four NGO members, of which WWF and Seas at Risk have been, and currently still are, the most active ones in the Working Groups.

## **4. Transparency**

The P-RAC has had an open and transparent way of working. Meetings have all been open to observers and (meeting) documents have been available to all that requested them. The P-RAC has had a website from the beginning, on which agendas and minutes of meetings, as well as yearly reports could be found. The renewed website that was launched in January 2009 also provides a section on the recommendations by the P-RAC.

## **5. Financial management**

The P-RAC was very happy to see the RACs becoming bodies pursuing a public interest in 2006, giving them more financial stability. Then, during 2008, many changes were implemented, regarding the practical management of the finances as well as legal requirements. This had not been a smooth ride. For instance, the last conclusion in the Commission's document suggests that the RACs would be given the opportunity to work together with the Commission on guidelines for the financial management (since the Commission would be making a proposal). In reality, however, the secretariats of the RACs have experienced this process as an extremely strenuous one, and not one of open and equal dialogue. In addition, many changes were put in effect halfway into contract years, making it impossible for the RACs to take them into account and avoid problems. (It is very likely that the P-RAC will be left with a deficit of around 13.000€ after closing the account for its third year, due to the fact that the secretariat was not aware of the rules that would apply on deficits of income from members, at the time that the contract was signed.) The difficulty the secretariat has experienced in finding out exactly which rules apply in what order and how they should be interpreted has led to much correspondence between the P-RAC secretariat and the Commission that could possibly have been





prevented. This burden weighed heavy on the P-RAC secretariat (as it has similarly on other RAC secretariats). In 2008, much more time was spent on these administrative matters than ever before, which could consequently not be spent on other matters, such as preparing for meetings. Lastly, the P-RAC secretariat feels that there is room for improvement on the provision of information on these kinds of matters. No doubt, through that, much time and effort could be spared for both the secretariats as well as for the services of the financial unit of DG Mare.

## 6. Output during the first three years

The P-RAC was inaugurated on 16 August 2005 and in effect is now operating in its fourth operational year. On 4 September 2008, the fourth General Assembly meeting was held and the opportunity was taken to look back on the first three years to discuss the functioning of the P-RAC. The information provided in this section provided on the output of the P-RAC, cover that first three year period, until 16 August 2008.

### 6.1 Output in terms of meetings held

Altogether, the P-RAC held 41 meetings of its own in its first three years (see annex 1). Without exception, the 23 Working Groups meetings, during which the core work of the P-RAC was done, were well attended by an average of approximately 33 participants. NGO's have participated in almost all meetings and scientific experts have provided presentations many times. In addition, DG Mare

representatives have attended many of the WG meetings as well. The 11 Executive Committee meetings held have been attended by 27 participants on average. They have been relative short and efficient meetings, mainly due to the fact that consensus could be reached during the Working groups meetings.

### 6.2 Output in terms of recommendations made

On 16 August 2008, the total output of the Pelagic RAC stood at 102 recommendations<sup>(A)</sup>, of which 80 had been stock specific (see figure 1) and 22 had been on horizontal issues.

Only once, namely when making a recommendation on the North Sea herring TAC for 2007, a majority and minority advice was provided on behalf of the industry and other interest groups respectively. On the 101 other decisions on recommendations, unanimity had been reached. It shows from figure 1 that North Sea herring (12), blue whiting (11) and West of Scotland herring (10) have received most attention in terms of number of recommendations made, specific to these stocks.

Figure 2 shows the number of recommendations provided per RAC year. It can be seen that the number of recommendations first increased from the first to the second year and then decreased again in the third year. This can be put in better perspective when zooming in and looking at the 'type' of recommendations. The number of recommendations exclusively commenting on the next year's TAC decreased from 13 to 3

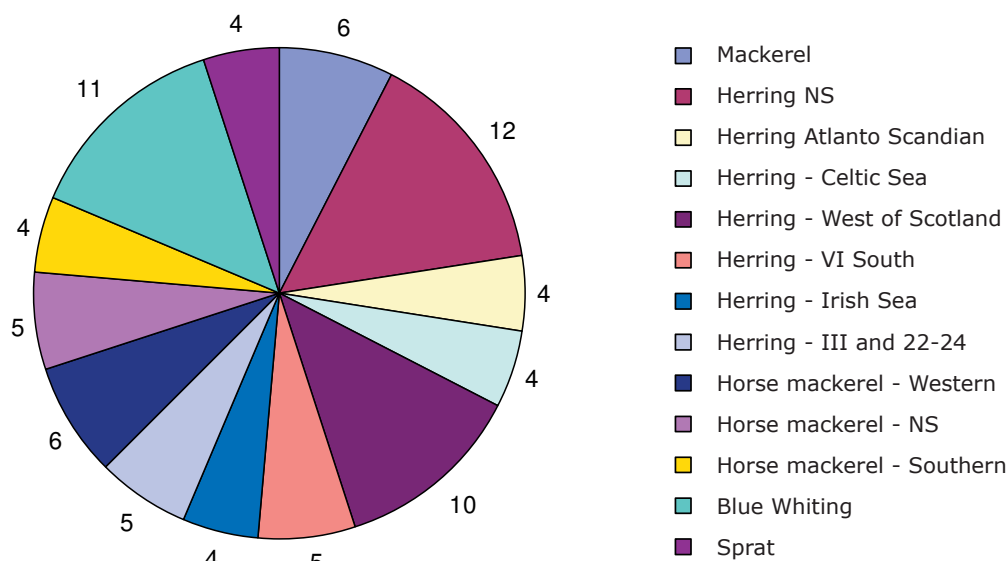


Figure 1: Number of recommendations per stock.

<sup>(A)</sup> Note that one could count the number of recommendations in a number of ways. In this case, recommendations on several stocks, provided to the Commission in one letter, were counted separately. In contrast, annex 2 only provides an overview of all the letters sent (which thus groups the recommendations).

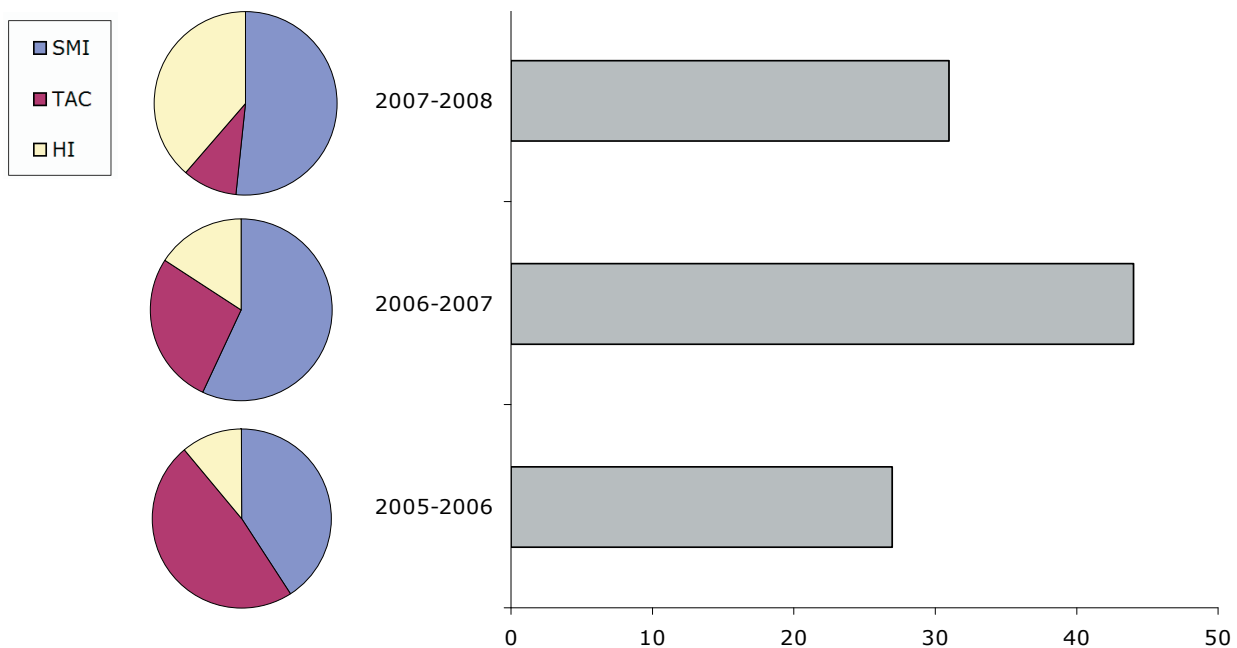


Figure 2: Number of recommendations per year and per type

over the three years, whereas the number of recommendations on stock management issues (SMI), incorporating all recommendations that were more elaborate than solely providing a TAC advice, increased from 11 to 16 recommendations. The number of times recommendations were provided on horizontal issues (HI) increased from 3 to 12. Note that specifically these horizontal issues generally incorporated elaborate recommendation papers (e.g. responses to consultations on the discards regulation, the control regulation, and Natura 2000 plans).

## 7. Recommendations made

The P-RAC has provided input in response to most consultations by the Commission, Member States or other parties. Occasionally, it has decided not to provide input. Two examples of such occasions were:

- When MSC made a request for input during a certification process. The P-RAC declined, because there was a conflict of interest.
- When the Scottish 'House of Lords European Union Committee' made a request for input for their review of the progress of the Common Fisheries Policy since it was reformed in 2002, the P-RAC decided not to provide input, since there was only one month to respond and this was a topic too vast, making this task unfeasible.

In addition, so far, the P-RAC has not dealt with market mechanisms as such, but instead has kept a focus on stock management issues taking both a short-term and long-term approach. The Commission states in its document that RAC's "should, rather than to engage in a discussion on TAC figures for individual stocks, have a systematic discussion concerning the principles contained in its annual Policy Statement on fishing possibilities, [...] because this would only divide RAC members and undermine their legitimacy". At the same time, however, the Commission has repeatedly urged the P-RAC to provide input on the quota allocation for horse mackerel stocks, which would very likely result in exactly that. (The P-RAC therefore declined the invitation to provide input, because it regards that purely political issues like these do not have a place in a RAC.) In conclusion, it seems that the scope of the RACs is not always altogether clear.

### 7.1 Recommendations on Short-term management

The P-RAC has provided advice on the TACs and quota each year, because it feels that taking short-term decisions are important in addition to making long-term plans, since the former are likely to have implications in the long-term as well. In addition they are important in periods of transition from a year-to-year management situation into a long term management regime. And even after the implementation of long term management plans, year-to-year decisions still need to be made, and



this will therefore remain an important and relevant part of the management always.

## 7.2 Recommendations on Long-term management

The P-RAC has invested much of its time and effort in considering long-term management issues<sup>(B)</sup>. While doing this, it has received much needed help from the scientific community. ICES representatives have provided presentations at P-RAC meetings numerous times to explain the ICES advice and have been very willing to join in debates in order to come to a thorough understanding of difficult issues. The P-RAC has also been blessed on numerous occasions when scientific experts from national institutes on a voluntary basis attended meetings to make valuable contributions during discussions of often complex nature. Especially the iterative process of developing a management plan for Western horse mackerel, where stakeholders of the P-RAC worked together with a group of scientists from four different research institutes<sup>(C)</sup>, was an extremely positive one. Even though the Commission expresses repeatedly that RACs should focus on the development of long term management plans, the Commission's communication does not go into this issue much. It mentions that "*Some RACs have submitted particularly well-grounded advice on long-term management plans, and the Commission has taken these recommendations into account*", but the latter has not always been the case in the eyes of the P-RAC. This was particularly true for a number of recommendations made on the West of Scotland herring management plan.

## 7.3 Recommendations on horizontal issues

The number of recommendations on horizontal issues, such as discards or technical measures, in response to a consultation by, amongst others, the Commission have increased significantly over the three operational years (from 3 to 7 to 12, see figure 2). The P-RAC has tried to make thorough, detailed recommendations as often as it could, sometimes prepared by a focus group. The increased number of these consultations has had a major influence on the workload of the Working Groups. The P-RAC feels that it is therefore becoming increasingly important to consider the scope and workload of the RACs in relation to the resources provided.

## 7.4 Data collection issues

The P-RAC has made a number of attempts to address data collection issues. The members have

experienced in the past years that for several stocks, but especially for the NEA mackerel stock, different perceptions of the stock status exist. For NEA mackerel this regarded the perceived development of the SSB as well as the height of unaccounted mortality. The P-RAC has addressed this problem, by trying to come up with ideas for the way that fishermen's data could be incorporated into the assessment. So far these attempts have failed, mainly due to the fact that no clear consensus (between stakeholders and scientists) was reached on the format in which data should be delivered. In addition, arrangement based on which the P-RAC collaborates with scientists has its limitations, because as soon as some in-depth work needs to be done by the scientists to bring the discussion forward, the P-RAC has no means to make this happen and is thus completely dependent on the initiative of a third party to finance this. The P-RAC furthermore would like to note that it finds the fact that ICES has opened up its benchmark process to stakeholders, a very positive development. It is worried, however, that problems as described above may prevent this from being actually effective. Initiatives such as having scientists analyse commercial fleet data, in order to determine the information that can be retrieved from this, are deemed very important<sup>(D)</sup>. In cases where scientific data from surveys are scarce, which is the case with several small, but not less important, pelagic stocks, this might be a novel means approach for solving a problem in the situation where available resources are scarce. Currently, however, the resources of the RACs do not allow them to play a more prominent role in this.

## 7.5 Socio-economics

Up until now, the P-RAC has neither separately addressed, nor integrally incorporated, socio-economics in its recommendations. Considering that the basis for establishing regional councils was to enable an ecosystem approach while taking into account the three P's of sustainability, people, planet, profit, the P-RAC feels that it is, so far, not succeeding in this. The question of how to incorporate a socio-economic angle, has lingered above the heads of the members for long. Unfortunately, the Commission has not been able to provide some structured guidance on this, despite several requests. The P-RAC has recently been seeking the advice from experts in order to come to a solution to this problem.

<sup>(B)</sup> Most prominently time was invested in: Blue Whiting (revision mp), NEA Mackerel (revision mp), Western Horse Mackerel (development mp), Herring - North Sea (revision mp), Herring - VIa North (development mp).

<sup>(C)</sup> See: A new scientific initiative with the Pelagic RAC to develop a management plan for western horse mackerel (ICES CM 2007/O:20)

<sup>(D)</sup> Possibly, the fact that the RACs have recently been made aware of the possibility to make recommendations on research priorities for specific studies to be financed under the DCR, could form part of the solution for this.

## 8. ACFA and the RACs

The P-RAC would like to note a few recommendations from the ACFA evaluation report<sup>(E)</sup>, that are relevant in the context of the functioning of the RACs as well. The first recommendation in the report states that a clear definition of the role and objective(s) of ACFA is much needed. The P-RAC feels that the same may be true for the RACs. The increasing workload may eventually limit the quality of advice by the RACs. Providing detailed, well based recommendations (both taking into account scientific biological as well as socio-economic data) on stock specific as well as horizontal management matters seems unfeasible for the RACs in their current form, with their current resources. The P-RAC requests the Commission to thoroughly consider the roles, objectives and scope of ACFA and the RACs in relation to each other.

## 9. Cooperation with stakeholders from third countries

In general, the members of the P-RAC feel that being inclusive, by involving all relevant stakeholders is an important ingredient for successful management. The RACs being EU bodies brings about a major limitation, namely that stakeholders from third countries (i.e. coastal states) do not have a formal status in the RAC. The P-RAC has taken several initiatives in order to strengthen the collaboration with these stakeholders, but so far, this has not yet led to the desired results, which has caused the Working Groups to be left with a fair amount of frustration from time to time. The P-RAC will continue to welcome representatives to participate as observers in its meetings, but fears that this problem will remain as long as these stakeholders cannot have a formal status in the RAC as a full member.





## 10. Conclusions

The first three years of the P-RAC's existence have been dynamic in the sense that the RAC has had to deal with many changes (e.g. changes in the legal and financial framework and changing membership). At the same time, the work load for the RAC in terms of the number of times that the RAC was consulted increased significantly and also covered an increasing range of topics. Up until now, the P-RAC prioritised in favour of dealing with the biological side of stock management issues, the development of long term management plans and detailed responses to a number of horizontal issues such as control and technical conservation measures.

Overall, the P-RAC has been rather productive in providing thoroughly considered, science based, unanimous recommendations. The recommendations as such have not always been effective in terms of obtaining the desired result, however. Negotiations on a political level have lead to the occurrence of the P-RAC advice not being (fully) taken on board (sometimes despite the Commission being supportive of the views of the P-RAC), e.g. with the RACs recommendation on the revision of the long term management plan for NEA mackerel. Occasionally, access to the process was problematic, because of the lack of a legal framework providing the possibility to formally cooperate with the relevant parties (e.g. the near impossibility to be involved in the process of revising the long term management plan for blue whiting).

Up until now, the P-RAC did not achieve to incorporate socio-economic considerations in a quantitative way in its recommendations. Decisions on the incorporation of a 15% or 20% IAV restriction rule in a management plan, were based on gut-feelings rather than scientific data providing insight in the social or economic consequences. It is the RAC's understanding that STECF, constrained by time and resources and because of the lack of available tools (models) to make proper analyses, finds the integration of biological and socio-economic assessments unfeasible. The P-RAC hopes to be able to start some case studies on this in order to learn about possibilities to change the way socio-economics are being dealt with.

The P-RAC furthermore sees challenges in finding creative solutions for long-term management of stocks where (very) limited scientific data are available. The RAC believes this can be done, mainly by trying to facilitate a role for the industry to collect and provide useful commercial data for incorporation in the stock assessment and by 'thinking outside the box', as was done with the development of the horse mackerel management plan.



### Annex 1: Overview of meetings

Meeting	Location	Date	Participants
General Assembly	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	5 Sep 2005 (half day)	53 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Belgium, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive Committee	Hotel Schiphol Amsterdam, Netherlands	5 Sep 2005 (half day)	53 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Belgium, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group I	Dorint Novotel Hotel, Badhoevedorp, Netherlands	4 Nov 2005 (half day)	34 participants (including 3 scientists from ICES) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group II	Dorint Novotel Hotel, Badhoevedorp, Netherlands	4 Nov 2005 (half day)	34 participants (including 3 scientists from ICES) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group I	Hotel Eurovillage, Brussels, Belgium	13 Feb 2006 (half day)	43 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group II	Hotel Eurovillage, Brussels, Belgium	13 Feb 2006 (half day)	43 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive Committee	Hotel Eurovillage, Brussels, Belgium	14 Feb 2006	18 participants (plus observers): Netherlands, Denmark, France, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive Committee	MAPA (Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación), Madrid, Spain	13 March 2006	26 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group I	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	21 June 2006 (half day)	32 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Poland, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group II	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	21 June 2006 (half day)	32 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Poland, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive committee	Scotland House, Brussels, Belgium	5 July 2006 (half day)	29 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group I	Hotel Eurovillage, Brussels, Belgium	12 Sep 2006	30 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, UK, Norway, EC (and international organisations).
General Assembly	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	18 Sep 2006 (half day)	24 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive Committee	Hotel Schiphol Amsterdam, Netherlands	18 Sep 2006 (half day)	27 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group I	Scotland House, Brussels, Belgium	3 Nov 2006 (half day)	29 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, EC, (and international organisations).
Working Group II	Scotland House, Brussels, Belgium	3 Nov 2006 (half day)	29 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, EC, (and international organisations).



Executive Committee	London, UK	15 Nov 2006 (half day)	33 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Sweden, Spain, UK, EC, Norway, Iceland (and international org's).
Working Groups & SAFMAMS	Edinburgh, UK	6 Feb 2007	33 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, EC, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group I	Edinburgh, UK	7 Feb 2007 (half day)	32 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, EC, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group II	Edinburgh, UK	7 Feb 2007 (half day)	32 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, EC, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive Committee	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	21 Feb 2007 (half day)	25 participants from: Netherlands, UK, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, Norway, and international organisations.
Focus Group	Radisson SAS Hotel, Dublin, Ireland	20 April 2007	12 participants from: Netherlands, Ireland, Denmark, France, UK.
Working Group I	Renaissance Hotel, Brussels, Belgium	16 May 2007 (half day)	36 participants from: Netherlands, UK, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, EC, and international organisations.
Working Group II	Renaissance Hotel, Brussels, Belgium	16 May 2007 (half day)	36 participants from: Netherlands, UK, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, EC, and international organisations.
Working Group I	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	27 June 2007 (half day)	32 participants from: Netherlands, UK, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, Norway, EC, and international organisations.
Working Group II	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	27 June 2007 (half day)	32 participants from: Netherlands, UK, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, Norway, EC, and international organisations.
Executive Committee	Scotland House, Brussels, Belgium	13 July 2007 (half day)	13 participants from: Netherlands, UK, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, EC.
Working Group I	ICES headquarters, Copenhagen, Denmark	03 Sep 2007	[Morning - herring] 32 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, UK, Norway, EC (and international organizations). [Afternoon - mackerel] 12 participants from: Netherlands, UK, Denmark (and international organizations).
General Assembly	Hotel Schiphol A4, Hoofddorp, Netherlands	25 Sep 2007 (half day)	29 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, UK, Norway, Spain, Poland, EC (and international organizations).
Executive Committee	Hotel Schiphol A4, Hoofddorp, Netherlands	25 Sep 2007 (half day)	29 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, UK, Norway, Spain, Poland, EC (and international organizations).
Working Group I	Mayfair Cavendish Conference Centre, London, UK	24 Oct 2007 (half day)	29 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Ireland, Sweden, UK, Norway, Spain (and international organizations).
Working Group II	Mayfair Cavendish Conference Centre, London, UK	24 Oct 2007 (half day)	29 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Ireland, Sweden, UK, Norway, Spain (and international organizations).
Executive Committee	Selfridges Hotel, London, UK	14 Nov 2007 (half day)	30 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, UK, Norway, Spain, Poland, EC (and international organizations).

Focus Group	Hotel Schiphol A4, Hoofddorp, Netherlands	31 Jan 2008	10 participants from: Denmark, Ireland, UK, Netherlands (and international organizations).
Working Group I	Hotel Schiphol A4, Hoofddorp, Netherlands	12 Feb 2008 (half day)	26 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, UK, Spain, Sweden, Ireland (and international organizations).
Working Group II	Hotel Schiphol A4, Hoofddorp, Netherlands	12 Feb 2008 (half day)	26 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, UK, Spain, Sweden, Ireland (and international organizations).
Working Group I	Hotel Schiphol A4, Hoofddorp, Netherlands	29 April 2008 (half day)	37 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, UK, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, Germany, EC, Norway (and international organizations).
Working Group II	Hotel Schiphol A4, Hoofddorp, Netherlands	29 April 2008 (half day)	37 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, UK, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, Germany, EC, Norway (and international organizations).
Working Group I	Hotel Euroflat, Brussels, Belgium	30 June 2008 (half day)	32 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, UK, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, EC, (and international organizations).
Working Group II	Hotel Euroflat, Brussels, Belgium	30 June 2008 (half day)	32 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, UK, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, EC, (and international organizations).
Executive Committee	Hotel Schiphol A4, Hoofddorp, Netherlands	14 July 2008 (half day)	18 participants (including invited and observing organizations) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, UK, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, Germany, Poland, EC, (and international organizations).





**Annex 2:**  
**Overview of recommendations letters provided by the P-RAC**  
 (available at [www.pelagic-rac.org/recommendations](http://www.pelagic-rac.org/recommendations))

2005-2006:

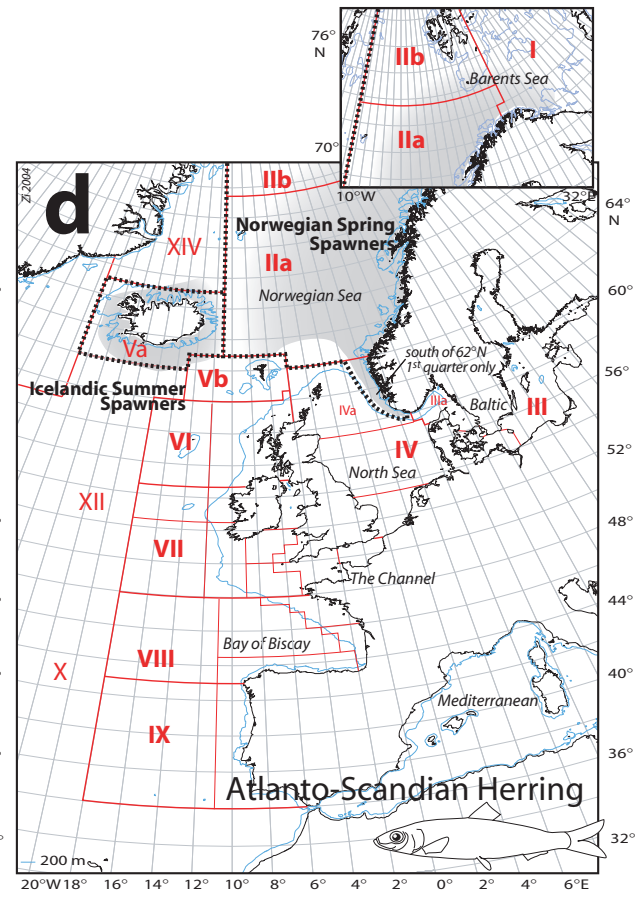
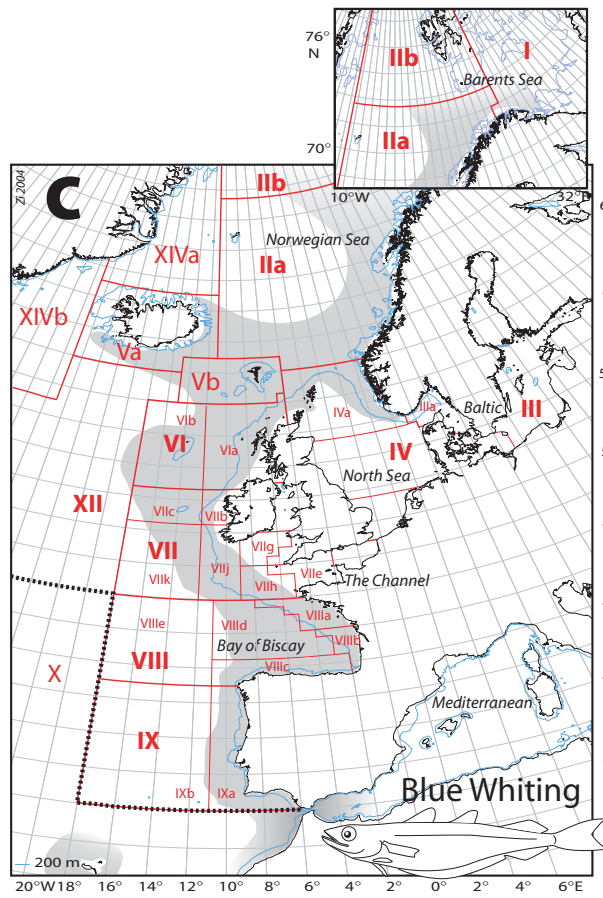
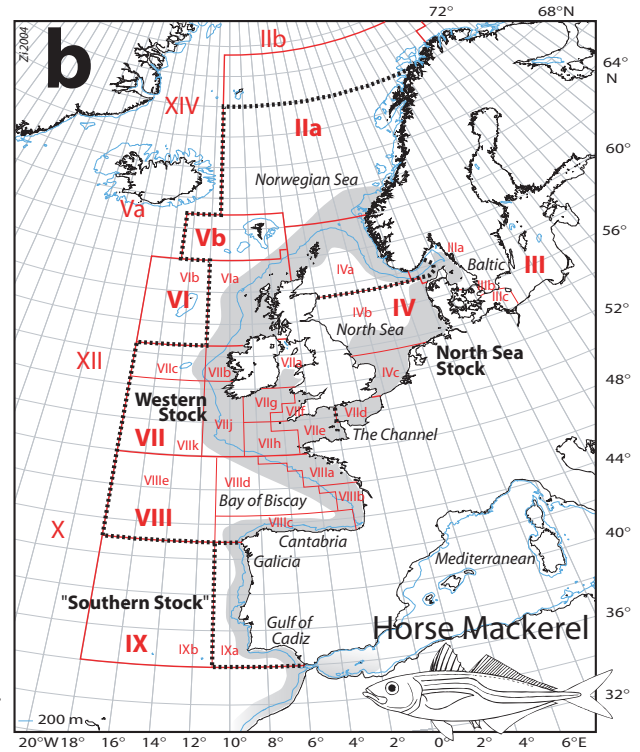
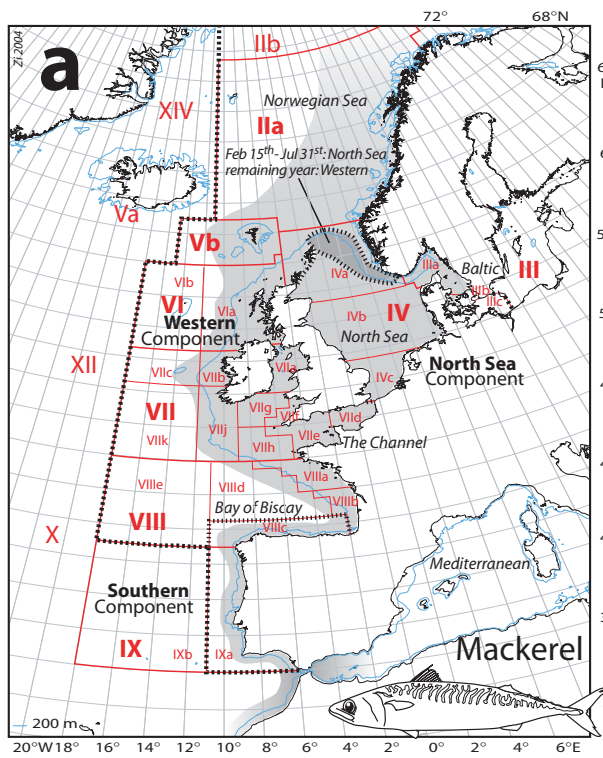
Date	To	Recommendation	Response	Consultation
21-10-2005	EC	Pelagic trawl cod-ends	22-02-2006	31-08-2005
25-11-2005	EC	TACs and quota 2006	-	-
30-03-2006	EC	Scientific issues - all stocks	24-04-2006 29-06-2006	- -
06-04-2006	EC	Dioxin and dl-PCB regulation	01-06-2006	-
26-04-2006	EC	MoU between EC & ICES	15-06-2006	-
14-07-2006	EC	Scenarios North Sea herring	07-09-2006 18-09-2006	-
24-07-2006	EC	MoU between EC & ICES	30-10-2006	-
01-08-2006	EC	LTMP - herring VIa North	-	-
10-08-2006	EC	Consultation procedure	-	31-05-2006

2006-2007:

Date	To	Recommendation	Response	Consultation document
25-09-2006	EC	Stock-recruitment - NS herring	-	-
25-09-2006	ICES	Stock-recruitment - NS herring	06-10-2006	-
25-09-2006	Ministry Norway	Stock-recruitment - NS herring	-	-
11-10-2006	EC	TACs and quota 2007 & MSY	30-11-2006 22-02-2007	- -
17-11-2006	EC	TACs and Quota 2007 & MSY	30-11-2006	-
20-11-2006	EC	Technical conservation measures	22-05-2007	21-07-2006
22-02-2007	EC	Removal Butt of Lewis Box	15-03-2007	-
22-02-2007	EC	Blue whiting & Timing Coastal States	15-03-2007 19-04-2007	- -
22-02-2007	EC	LTMP - NEA mackerel	15-03-2007	-
22-02-2007	EC	Questions to ICES - NS herring	-	-
27-04-2007	EC	Questions to ICES - NS herring	25-05-2007	-
06-06-2007	ICES	Reference points - NS herring	06-07-2007	-
06-07-2007	EC	Sprat	19-07-2007	-
16-07-2007	EC	Discards	23-07-2007	28-03-2007
16-07-2007	EC	Irish SACs	14-09-2007	-
23-07-2007	ICES	Blue whiting	07-08-2007	-
24-07-2007	EC	LTMP - Western horse mackerel	16-08-2007	-
06-08-2007	EC	Rights-Based Management	07-09-2007	-

2007-2008:

Date	To	Recommendation	Response	Consultation
26-09-2007	EC	Policy statement 2008	06-11-2007	-
08-10-2007	EC	TACs and quota 2008 - herring stocks	18-12-2007	-
26-10-2007	EC	TAC 2008 - mackerel	06-12-2007 18-12-2007	- -
06-11-2007	EC	SACs	20-12-2007	-
21-11-2007	EC	TACs and quota 2008	-	-
03-12-2007	DEFRA	Biodiversity in Lyme Bay	-	-
13-02-2008	House of Lords	Review CFP	-	18-01-2008
19-02-2008	EC	Action Plan for Sharks	06-03-2008	11-12-2007
19-02-2008	EC	LTMP Blue whiting	10-03-2008	-
12-03-2008	JNCC	SACs UK	05-09-2008	20-12-2007
06-05-2008	EC	Reform control regulation	06-06-2008	20-02-2008
14-05-2008	Morten Vinther	Blue whiting juvenile protection	-	-
03-07-2008	EC	Discards	21-02-2008 29-08-2008	23-04-2008 23-04-2008
03-07-2008	EC	LTMP - blue whiting	10-07-2008	-
16-07-2008	EC	LTMP - herring VIa North	28-07-2008	-
16-07-2008	Member states	LTMP - herring VIa North	-	-
16-07-2008	French Presidency	LTMP - herring VIa North	-	-
23-07-2008	French Presidency	MPAs in French waters	-	29-04-2008
23-07-2008	French Ministry	MPAs in French waters	-	-
13-08-2008	EC	TACs and quota 2009	21-10-2008	-



Maps of distribution areas of four widely distributed stocks. Courtesy by Christopher Zimmermann.

