



## **Meeting Report**

**ACFA/RAC's and European Commission,  
Brussels, 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

### **Fishing Opportunities for 2010**

#### **Introduction**

This now customary meeting which gives the Industry an opportunity to respond to the European Commission's (Cion) proposals for fishing opportunities in 2010 gives a first real glimpse of the Cion's opening position. The Cion provide the relevant information only minutes before the meeting which gives very little time for detailed scrutiny nevertheless, the important issues were covered during a lengthy question and answer session. The threat of co-decision with the European Parliament (Dependent of the outcome of the Irish referendum) is driving much of the timetable. Issues such as the new Control and Tech Con regulations, which ideally the Cion would enter into the mix of the December Quota talks, are now being front loaded to the October Council to avoid the Parliaments influence which, if nothing else, would slow the whole process to a snail's pace. The timing of the meeting which is earlier than the previous year is to accommodate this timing issue.

#### **Meeting Remarks**

Rheine Priebe, Chair of the meeting, remarked that in future it would be impossible to attach technical regulations as an Annex to the TAC and Quota Regulation although he mentioned that references to effort would still be included. Rheine also gave forewarn that reform of the CFP would be a long drawn out process. A re-evaluation by STECF of those categories/sectors to which effort limitations apply (Regulated gear V's unregulated gears) is scheduled to place shortly. The main points raised and discussed (of relevance) were, amongst others:

- 1) TAC's will follow the advice of ICES unless there was good reason to deviate (such as TAC constraints).

- 2) In addition, most decisions would follow stringently the policy statement categories (1 - 12).
- 3) Effort reductions in the North Sea for 2010 would fall between 10% and 13% depending on gear category.
- 4) Advice would be produced in the autumn with regard to how they carry out the midyear review on the Sandeel.
- 5) Notwithstanding, the review would look at ways in which to protect local aggregations.
- 6) Nephrops on the Porcupine Bank was showing signs of depletion and was in need of some form of protection. The Cion is to write to the NWWRAC asking for advice as to how that should be carried out. I suggested the Cion be careful with regards to prejudicing future Long Term Management Plans (LTMP's) for the stock.
- 7) Quite bizarrely, the Cion suggested that the NWWRAC had suggested a management of Nephrops at functional unit level. (I had raised this particular point with Bertie Armstrong (SFF) last week as a communication from the NWWRAC to the Cion didn't oppose such a move and I was astonished it went through in its current format).
- 8) I questioned the Cion's approach to the whiting issue suggesting that while I understood a proposed reduction of 15% was well below the science, which suggested a reduction of 61%, it would nevertheless only lead to an increase in discards and do nothing to reduce mortality on the stock, thus questioning the wisdom of such a move was valid. The Cion responded by relating to the high abundance of whiting off the Cumbrian coast which was causing a localised problem yet stocks had declined significantly overall. They conceded it was a difficult issue to resolve (Privately they referred to problems with Norway over the whiting TAC).
- 9) The TAC of Spurdog is reduced by 90% as a result of a commitment made during December 2008 Fisheries Council.

### **Summary**

A now customary meeting which allows the Cion to tick the box of having fulfilled the good governance element called participatory consultation. There are two weaknesses to the meetings as far as I see it. The first, the short timescale we have to analyse the detail before firing the questions; the second, is the structure upon which they gauge movement of quotas

(Policy statement). Having a set of principles which determines response does, to large extent, soak up any good argument or discussion points industry reps may have. A pointless exercise to a large extent!