

The Future of RACs under the CFP reform proposal (July 13)

a background paper for ExCom, Boulogne, 10-11 Oct 2011

The following description is based on feedback from the Commission to ACFA (6-7 Sep, 2011); it is not a verbatim statement and should not therefore be attributed to the Commission, but rather is based on notes taken by Euan Dunn

The Commission:

- took out the 'R' from RACs to make ACs as it can be misleading for those with strictly no regional dimension, i.e. LDRAC and Pelagic RAC. As such, the Commission see this as a "semantic not a substantive change".
- proposes an Aquaculture RAC and a reflection on a Black Sea RAC.
- intends to move on a number of provisions for the internal functioning of RACs from Council to delegated acts, e.g. on numbers and representation¹. It is very difficult to change these parameters at Council level as they're subject to co-decision. Once these delegated acts are adopted, the Council decision (2004) on RACs² will be repealed and new arrangements can be put in place.
- has also removed the obligation on the Commission that they 'shall' consult the RACs though politically they will still do so. The principles of funding for the RACs remain the same but how much money and under what conditions will be in the new financial instrument (due end November 2011).

The ACs will address issues under the basic regulation but not all, e.g. aquaculture will be covered by the new AC. Horizontal issues such as markets, control, IUU etc will be addressed by 'expert groups' which will replace ACFA after 2012.

¹ This relates to a question which the RSPB put to the Director-General Lowri Evans at a meeting in Defra on 22 July. The question noted that in the run-up to the CFP proposals, there was much talk from the Commission of strengthening the existing RACs but there is no indication in the proposal of any such enhancement. What does the Commission have in mind, given that the RACs/ ACs cannot improve and fulfil their advisory function without better resources including dedicated scientific support?

DG Mare replied, in writing: *'Existing RACs will be maintained and will de facto play an increased role in advising the Commission and the Member States on conservation policy under the regionalisation model that we propose. Their increased responsibility will go hand in hand with improved internal governance and representativeness. We will make specific proposals in these two areas in the form of draft delegated acts as foreseen in our proposal for a new basic regulation.'*

² 2004/585/EC: Council Decision of 19 July 2004 establishing Regional Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy