

## REPORT

Meeting: **Annual Seminar on Fisheries Science**

Parties: **EU stakeholders**

Date: **24 June 2022**

Location: **Brussels/online**

Rapporteur: **Tamara Talevska** (*adapted from notes of Ewa Milewska, BSAC*)

This year's edition of the annual Seminar on Fisheries Science of the DG MARE focused on the implementation of an **Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM)**.

### **Background**

With rapid climate and ocean changes and increasing awareness about a wide range of various human impacts on ecosystems, needs to further take into account ecosystems considerations when managing fisheries are growing. The seminar provided an opportunity to take stock of the most recent developments in implementing an EAFM, and to identify potential areas requiring further actions, as well as the corresponding needs in terms of the scientific advice required for the policy makers.

Commissioner **Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries** opened the seminar.

He noted that climate change is the driving factor of changes in marine ecosystem. It is important to monitor the changes in the ecosystem and take them into account when devising management measures.

Fisheries are considered an important source of information that are crucial for scientific advice. The CFP makes a clear link to the need to use ecosystem-based management. He mentioned that while the CFP is 10 years old, it is still fit for purpose. Nevertheless, some improvements are pending, also with regard to the implementation of EBM approach to fisheries management. A report on the functioning of the CFP to be published at the end of 2022, identifying areas of improvement. He added that there are many ways to achieve effective EBFM and its implementation remains of key importance.

**Charlina Vitcheva, Director General DG MARE**, presented on the context for implementing EAFM.

She referred to sensitive species and habitats, noting that sensitive zones are spreading. A holistic approach and good data collection are needed. We need to move away from single species approach and focus on implementing EAFM to reach healthy stocks and MSY as an indicator. A solid governance framework is crucial. She referred to the trade-offs between impacts, noting that EBFM can address concerns raised by the fisheries sector e.g. the issue that mortality does not always derive from fisheries. EBFM can capture all the arrays of these external drivers, factors and impacts. Holistic approach benefits the management side and

can take on board all relevant policies, such as MSFD, Habitat, Birds Directive etc. Socio-economic impacts are also part of EBM. She stressed that there should be balance between socio-economic and environmental aspects.

**Dr Mark Dickey-Collas, Chair of the Advisory Committee of ICES**, presented on the work by ICES to develop a more holistic advice by incorporating ecosystem-based considerations.

He noted that holistic advice is imperative to account for complex changes affecting marine environment and its resources. However, there are challenges to this, such as reconciling a suite of management objectives such as restoring seabed habitats, build sustainable fishing communities etc. He mentioned FAO EBM implementation tool covering the ability to achieve both, ecological well-being and human well-being.

ICES is incorporating fisheries in the context of other pressures in ecosystem overviews. They contain what ICES considers as the priorities. MSY is a management tool, based on equilibrium assumption. When providing advice, it needs to be recognized that the advice is operating in a socio-ecological system. 73% of data in ICES contains elements of ecosystem variability. Mixed fisheries scenarios are one of the forms provided.

ICES is working with stakeholders on seabed habitats. Participatory development of mapping tools is taking place, such as impact of bottom trawling. We work with plurality of management objectives. ICES is incorporating EBM with robust science.

**Dr Robert L. Stephenson, Research Scientist, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and University of New Brunswick** provided overview of international experiences in implementing an EAFM.

Dr Robert L. Stephenson presented the international experiences in Canada, US and Australia in implementing EAFM. Management of fisheries is now taking into account management of other activities in an integrated management. In Australia, the evolution of EBM to include risk assessment. Ecosystem approach can help overcome current shortcomings.

There are different management plans for different species, with different objectives. There is no structure for evaluation of trade-offs and cumulative effect of management in an area. These are the deficiencies. Ecosystem approach can assist us in solving these deficiencies by identifying the key objectives to be applied in each management plan. Framework for scenario comparison was presented with different management options. There is evolution in ecosystem approach by expanding the scope of considerations (single species, ecological, multispecies, economic, social/cultural and governance).

EAFM will evolve to include ecological, economic, social/cultural and institutional/governance considerations.

**Dr Gerjan Piet, Senior Scientist Marine Ecology at Wageningen Marine Research and Conor O'Kane, IT Director for MRAG**, presented on recent EU studies on the ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

They presented on how different elements of EAFM are implemented. The implementation consists of several steps and occurs in a social and environmental context. EAFM challenges:

mitigate fisheries impacts, improve knowledge base and advisory process and improve decision making process.

### **Panel discussion with stakeholders**

How to make EAFM more operational under the CFP in the future, what possible additional actions should be considered, particularly in the context of climate change, and what type of scientific advice and research this would require?

Panellists:

- Louis Lambrechts, Ocean Policy Officer, WWF
- Els Torreele, National Correspondent DCF Belgium, ILVO Marine
- Brian O’Riordan, Executive Secretary, LIFE Platform

The panel discussion was based on the following questions:

*How to improve the knowledge, what are the indicators, how can we further reduce the impact of fishing and how can the stakeholders have a greater role in the EAFM?*

Brian O’Riordan, Executive Secretary, LIFE Platform referred to the knowledge existing in the fishing communities. Cultural diversity is lacking in the CFP. Social dimension is a big challenge in the CFP. Key factors: selectivity, impact on seabed etc.

Els Torreele, National Correspondent DCF Belgium, ILVO Marine underlined that having the knowledge of fishermen onboard is crucial. Gaps in data and its quality needs to be looked at.

*What are the technological developments that could help to protect the marine environment?*

LIFE: Technology is there, but more important is the process of building trust and human relations. Human dimension and traditional knowledge are the most important. There are no short-cuts by using modern technologies.

WWF: We need the culture of trust. We need to work together.

*What is the eco indicator that will help to understand the ecosystem?*

LIFE: Fishing communities are in decline, also small scale sector, which is a worrying fact. It is difficult for young people to enter the sector.

### Conclusions and closing by **Fabrizio Donatella, Directorate C, DG MARE**

Donatella underlined the opportunities: all efforts are there to improve the science on the side of all stakeholders. Where could we make changes? The Commission have been improving their collaboration with the scientists (ICES). He noted that science could give more when clearer definitions and requests are provided. The CFP clearly defines the goals. MAPs remain important.

Power points are available at: <https://www.fisheriesscienceseminar.eu/>