REPORT

Meeting: **CIBBRiNA Kick Off Event**
Parties: **Stakeholders**
Date: **7 and 8 September 2023**
Location: **Amsterdam**
Chairs: **Anne-Marie Svoboda (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality), Graham Pierce (IIM CSIC) Martin Pastoors (Martin Pastoors F&F) and Marije Siemensma (Marine Science & Communication)**
Rapporteur: **Kateryna Urbanovych**

The CIBBRiNA kick-off event was held to inaugurate the official start of the LIFE CIBBRiNA (**Coordinated Development and Implementation Of Best Practice In Bycatch Reduction in the North Atlantic, Baltic and Mediterranean Regions**) project. The primary objective of the CIBBRiNA project is to **effectively address the issue of incidental bycatch** in fisheries through the collaboration of a wide group of stakeholders, including fishers, scientists, representatives from fisheries and environmental ministries, as well as NGOs. The kick-off event had the purpose of bringing together all participants, and affiliated parties of the project. Its central purpose was to provide a concise overview of the 10 distinct Work Packages that constitute the project's framework, along with an examination of the 8 Case Studies that will feed into its progression. Most relevant moments at the event were also inspirational speeches from representatives of various organizations (Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association, ProSea, Mindfully Wired Communications, Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association, etc.), that highlighted instances of collaboration between science and the fishing industry, stressing how critical such collaborations are for the impactful outcomes of projects such as CIBBRiNA. NSAC's primary role in CIBBRiNA will involve facilitating communication and disseminating information, particularly project findings, given that NSAC members represent a diverse pool of mainly industry, but also other interest organizations.

1. First day

Welcome Address

Graham Pierce (IIM CSIC), one of the main cofounders of the project, welcomed all in person and online participants to the CIBBRiNA kick-off event and introduced the first speaker of the morning, **Marissa Giesen** (Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality).

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Giesen, officially launched this flagship European project, backed also by the Dutch ministers. Addressing the long-standing issue of bycatch of protected species, the project signifies a momentum for proactive solutions. Its primary goal is international collaboration with fishers, demonstrated by the broad proposal submission. The Dutch Ministry partners with fishers to pioneer innovative, selective fishing methods in these challenging times. The project unites stakeholders in a common cause, as no fisher desires accidental catches of dolphins or birds. It also aligns with EU Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius's 2019 call for enhanced monitoring and mitigation of bycatch. Collaboration with DG ENV and DG MARE ensures CIBBRiNA's relevance to the EU process and the long-term implementation of effective solutions.

Anne-Marie Svoboda from the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality proceeded to take the stage to provide insights into the CIBBRiNA's process. It took off in 2019 during an OSPAR workshop focused on bycatch. Subsequent discussions with the European Commission and extensive lobbying efforts resulted in the formation of a consortium comprising 65 partners paired with a budget of 25 million EUR. In March 2022, the project encountered a setback because of the rejection of the proposal. Undiscouraged, the project team adapted and improved the proposal, leading to the approval of a revised second edition in March 2023. With this approval, the project is officially launched, spanning a six-year duration, with 35 beneficiary and 10 associated partners.

Success for CIBBRiNA would be defined by the development of practical solutions that directly benefit fishers, as well as the fostering of meaningful dialogues among stakeholders, which is a fundamental element in effectively addressing the bycatch issue.

At the end of her presentation, Svoboda also unveiled the official new logo of the project.

Inspirational Talks

Steve Mackinson from the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association (SPFA) presented an example of fruitful collaboration between industry and science. He stressed the significance of collaboration between the scientific community and the fishing industry. While the SPFA has limited direct experience with bycatch, Mackinson's primary objective within CIBBRiNA is to introduce the scientific project to the fishing industry with the aim to demonstrate the sincere commitment of fishermen to meaningful collaborations.

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In Mackinson's view, the ultimate success of CIBBRiNA hinges on the promotion of open discussions about the pressing issue of bycatch. This success entails **reducing fishers' concerns related to potential criminalization and demonization of the fishing industry**. Key components of this accomplishment include gaining a **comprehensive understanding of the bycatch situation** through regular monitoring and reporting and the transparent sharing of information and policies with the wider public.

The SFPO was initially reluctant to join CIBBRiNA. However, they recognized the importance of actively participating in finding solutions to the bycatch problem. Progress within the collaboration may be gradual and take time due to the inherent **distrust between stakeholders**. Nevertheless, all parties involved share a common perception of the gravity of the bycatch issue. In the spirit of fostering effective collaboration, especially within large scale European projects such as CIBBRiNA Mackinson highlighted the importance of promoting **mutual respect and nurturing self-worth among participants**, as well as being attentive to each participant's needs. Flexibility, clear and consistent communication, adherence to established procedures, regular evaluations, and transparency about project progress were also mentioned as crucial points in order to guarantee the success of the project. While technology, such as cameras at sea, has its place, Mackinson stressed that it should not be confused with effective engagement between stakeholders.

Concluding his presentation, Mackinson also stressed that, in the context of CIBBRiNA, the **choice of language** (i.e. the use words such as endangered, protected, threatened, etc. while in talks with fishers) should be considered, as different contexts call for different types of language and behavior.

Tim Haasnoot (ProSea) took the stage with another inspiring talk regarding science-industry collaboration. ProSea is an organization dedicated to providing education for maritime professionals, encompassing shipping, maritime services, and fishing. Since 2004, their mission has revolved around inspiring individuals through education to make the industry more sustainable. Haasnoot highlighted the evolving role of fishermen, emphasizing how their responsibilities now extend beyond practical fishing skills to encompass a broad range of knowledge areas, including marine ecology, economics, environmental science, spatial planning, law, politics, and social sciences.

In the pursuit of sustainable fisheries, Haasnoot stressed that while rules, regulations, and technological innovations are crucial, the key to achieving sustainability lies with the fishers taking in the knowledge developed by science. ProSea training programs focus on encouraging proactive problem-solving through awareness-building activities and small steps. Notably, there are currently no mandatory training requirements in the areas of sustainability, ecology, or similar subjects for fishermen. ProSea aims to address this gap by establishing standardized training for fishers, partnering with various countries and organizations to create a European standard.

Through their initiatives, ProSea established that trust is crucial, and training programs must be tailored to suit the specific needs of diverse groups and countries. The creation of a network

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of trained educators across countries was an essential outcome of their work, emphasizing the importance of building connections.

Haasnoot identified opportunities for collaboration between CIBBRiNA and the ProSea network, emphasizing the importance of **using local networks, sharing experiences**, and integrating CIBBRiNA into their training programs. He also highlighted best practices for effective communication with fishermen, emphasizing, similarly to Mackinson, the importance of **choosing words carefully**, **understanding differing perspectives, practicing curiosity**, and **asking questions** rather than accusing.

Work Packages Introduction

A detailed description of all 10 Work Packages (WPs)constituting the framework of the project, was provided by the package leads, who afterwards enraged in a panel discussion to better understand the interconnection between all WPs. Below a brief description of each WP:

WP1 – Project management, led by Anne-Marie Svoboda & Graham Pierce

> WP1 manages project coordination, technical and financial progress, communication, data, risks, and legal aspects according to the partnership agreement. Additionally, WP1 plays a pivotal role in communication, dissemination, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement, working closely with WP2 and WP10.

WP2 – Fisheries perspective: stakeholder engagement, led by Marije Siemensma (Marine Science & Communication) & Steve Mackinson

> WP2 oversees stakeholder participation and engagement, adhering to the responsible research and innovation (RRI) principles. It aims to foster strong inter-sector relationships, particularly at the case study level, to enhance co-development, co-ownership of tasks, and acceptance of project outcomes.

WP3 – Incentives, perceptions & socio-economics, led by Arantza Murillas (AZTI) & Sebastian Villasante (University of Santiago de Compostela)

> WP3 aims to provide a full cost-benefit analysis of mitigation measures across the seafood value chain. It considers broader social, cultural, and environmental impacts using an ecosystem services framework to aid decision-makers. Additionally, it assesses stakeholder and public attitudes to garner support for sustainable fishing practices and assesses potential market benefits.

WP4 – Bycatch mitigation toolkit, led by Wouter Jan Strietman (Wageningen Economic Research) & Gudjon Sigurdsson (Marine and Freshwater Research Institute)

> WP4 aims to assess relevant bycatch mitigation measures within the scope of CIBBRiNA's focus on priority ETP species, fisheries, and geographical areas. It also evaluates the suitability of these measures for case studies in WP7. The outcomes of

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WP4, along with insights from other WPs and projects, will be consolidated into a decision tree, creating a Mitigation Toolkit. This toolkit will assist managers and industry stakeholders in selecting the most suitable bycatch mitigation approaches, enhancing sustainability, replication, and exploitation.

WP5 – Data collection toolkit, led by Lisa Borges (FishFix) & Lotte Kindt-Larsen (DTU Aqua)

WP5 focuses on enhancing data collection to estimate bycatch rates of priority ETP species in case studies and assess the effectiveness of mitigation efforts. It aims to develop improved monitoring approaches that can be applied across all relevant fleets. The impact of WP5 will be measured by the adoption of these new approaches across fleets and countries, resulting in improved data on ETP species for better-informed management decisions.

WP6 – Bycatch assessment toolkit, led by David Lusseau (DTU Aqua)

WP6 seeks to create a framework for evaluating the conservation and socio-economic impacts of bycatch through building upon existing work by organizations like ICES, OSPAR, HELCOM, ASCOBANS, and STECF. This framework will assist Member States in meeting requirements related to bycatch of sensitive species. It will also aid the private sector, including fishing companies, in complying with reporting requirements and support financial institutions in making investment decisions in line with the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation.

WP7 – Case studies, led by Niels van Houten (Ministry of Agriculture, Narue and Food Quality) & Martin Pastoors (Martin Pastoors F&F)

WP7 will apply findings from various WPsto practical fisheries cases. These case studies will provide valuable feedback to other work packages. The goal is to develop, test, and implement effective measures for reducing incidental capture of ETP marine species in gear types and areas with moderate to high bycatch risk in the North-East Atlantic.

WP8 – Monitoring and evaluation of impacts, led by Jan Peter Oelen (RVO)

WP8 oversees the monitoring and reporting of CIBBRiNA's progress using an evaluation framework. This framework will serve as the basis for monitoring objectives, milestones, deliverables, and expected impacts, including long-term sustainability.

WP9 – Sustainability, replication and exploitation, led by Els Torreele (ILVO) & Anne-Marie Svoboda

WP9 strives to secure the project's long-term legacy and afterlife by focusing on implementing project tools and recommendations. Its success depends on the suitability of these approaches for scaling up and their widespread acceptance among stakeholders.

WP10 – Communication and education, led by Merel den Held (North Sea Foundation) & Rosa Fernandes

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WP10 supports project goals through internal and external communication and education efforts. It aims to convey project outcomes to those engaged in the project and relevant end-users.

Ways of Working in CIBBRiNA

Following a brief overview of the project's administrative and financial matters, Svoboda and Pierce took the stage to inform the attendees of the operational procedures of CIBBRiNA. Particularly, it is fundamental that within the project, the ways of working are guided by fundamental principles such as **building trust, mutual respect, and understanding** among partners. CIBBRiNA aims to promote a safe environment for collaboration between all involved parties. Key values include **openness to possible solutions** and a focus on creating practical solutions for fishers.

The project's organizational structure involves a consortium with high-level responsibilities, working groups which may be established to address overarching themes by bringing together multiple work packages and a **Stakeholder Advisory Board** that will meet annually, either in-person or virtually. Collaboration opportunities with other projects, such as Horizon and LIFE projects, will be actively sought.

2. Second day

The second day of the kick-off event focused mainly on the exploration of the case studies (CS) that will be feeding into the project, as well as inspirational speeches from several industry and science representatives.

Inspirational Talks

Rikus De Joung, a design engineer specialized in 3D modelling and printing presented to the audience his project, the **Trawl Viewer**, developed together with **Leendert Baarssen**, a fleet manager in Urk, which consists in systems to observe fishing activities. The Trawl Viewer kit is specifically developed for the fishing industry with the goal of visualizing fish behaviour inside the net. The aim was to optimize trawl net settings, reduce unwanted bycatch, and create a simple, durable, and robust system. The Trawl Viewer consists of a combination of a bigblue divelight and a GoPro. Two cameras were incorporated to capture both forward and backward views.

As second speaker of the morning's Inspirational Talks, **Marije Siemensma** took the floor discussing **bycatch mitigation efforts** within the Dutch **gillnet fishery**. Siemensma recounted how the Dutch gillnet fishers introduced a mitigation device but faced numerous challenges, which nevertheless led to a collaborative development process with industry input.

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Additionally, Siemensma also presented a project focused on bycatch monitoring using **Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM)**, with cameras installed to assess the gillnet fishery. The presentation highlighted challenges, including peer pressure and distrust among fishers, data collection issues, and safety concerns. However, changes in communication, data management, and government attitudes led to a turning point and improved project dynamics. Data confidentiality measures were also emphasized, with lessons to be implemented in CIBBRiNA.

Lastly, **Elle Sibthorpe** from Mindfully Wired Communications (MWC) took the floor to present about the **Clean Catch UK bycatch mitigation hub**. MWC is a specialized communications agency focusing on marine and fisheries projects. Clean Catch UK is a collaborative research program that brings together scientists and fishermen to reduce bycatch. The Bycatch Mitigation Hub is a web platform, created from the recommendations from the fishing industry to serve as a reference point for stakeholders interested in sensitive species bycatch mitigation. It covers UK commercial fisheries and provides access to research supporting various bycatch reduction tools.

The hub's development involved workshops, consultation, and desk-based research. It prioritized accessible design, improved user experience, and simplified language for better understanding.

Case Studies Talks

Each case study (CS) representative took the floor to give a brief presentation of the CS they were responsible for. Each CS focuses on a different fishery, comprised of a variety of different fishing vessels, aiming to mitigate and reduce bycatch of diverse group of species.

1. **Gillnet fisheries in the Baltic Sea, Norway and Iceland**, with the focus on mitigation of bycatches of harbour porpoise, grey seal and several seabird species. Primary attention will be on small scale fisheries in Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Norway and Iceland.
2. **Gillnet fisheries in Spanish Atlantic and Mediterranean** waters will focus on mitigation of bycatch of Iberian harbour porpoise, common dolphin in the Mediterranean area, and several shark and ray species. The fisheries consist of limited number of medium-sized vessels and several hundred small-scale vessels.
3. **Gillnet fisheries in UK waters** will focus on mitigation of bycatch of common dolphin, harbour porpoise, common skate, porbeagle and razorbill. The fisheries consist of around 20 vessels fishing with deep-water gillnets targeting anglerfish, around six medium-sized vessels fishing on the Celtic Sea shelf and around 430 small vessels that carry out large-meshed inshore gillnet fisheries around Cornwall.
4. **Deep-water longlines in Portuguese** waters will focus on mitigation of bycatch of turtles and deep-water sharks. The fishery consists of around 200 vessels with different gear configurations in Madeira, Azores, and mainland Portugal (bottom, drifting or set longlines).

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5. **Surface longlines in Madeira** will focus on mitigation of bycatch of turtles, common dolphins, manta rays, and pelagic sharks. The fisheries consist of a local small-scale fishery and a long-distance fishery for swordfish and bluefin tuna (total of over 50 vessels).
6. **Longlines fisheries in UK** waters will focus on mitigation of bycatch of seabirds and several shark species. The fishery is with long-lines targeting hake, involving around 20 vessels.
7. The **pelagic fisheries** CS will focus on pelagic trawl fisheries around the **British Isles** carried out by fleets from different countries (approx. 80 pelagic trawlers). Primary focus will be on grey seals, harbour seals, common dolphin and several shark species.
8. The CS on **bottom trawl fisheries** will focus on **North Sea and eastern Channel** bottom trawl fisheries. The work will focus on monitoring and bycatch release mechanisms of several shark and ray species for the twin-trawl fisheries in the North Sea and Skagerrak (approximately 100 vessels), and the flyshoot fishery in the southern North Sea and English Channel (around 20 vessels).

Through a carousel session, the representatives from the 8 case studies were able to interact with the 10 work packages leads, to find how they best help each other through the duration of the project in order to obtain effective results. The main takeaway points were:

1. Need for more details on how to interact between WPs and CS. Factsheets detailing WP activities need to be produced.
2. Inter-CS interactions need to be facilitated as there is great possibilities to learn from other CS's results. Regular meetings to foster interactions should be organized.
3. Need for a platform to facilitate content visibility and interrelations among CS and to clarify which data each WP requires for efficient data collection and legacy contributions.
4. Prerequisite to handle sensitive data from fishers responsibly while adhering to data protection regulations. Consideration was also given to data sensitivities among different fisher groups and countries.

Closing remarks

With the event coming to a close, the event organizers called for two more speakers, to give closing keynotes speeches, namely **Rob Stephenson** from the Canadian Fisheries Research Network (CFRN) and **Tim Heddema**, president of the Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association.

Stephenson emphasized yet again the importance of collaboration, especially within large-scale projects like CIBBRiNA, and drawing on his own experience with the CFRN. Particularly, the network was created with the aim to bring industry, academia, and government together for comprehensive projects. The CFRN engaged stakeholders, identified key questions, and facilitated collaboration among these groups, resulting in numerous products and trained students capable of bridging science, government, and industry. The key takeaway was the need to **combine capacities and perspectives across silos** to tackle complex issues effectively.

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Stephenson stressed that collaboration is an ongoing process, requiring effort and organization. Best practices include **trust, respect, meaningful involvement, clear roles and objectives, and straightforward communication**. Bycatch, being a social-ecological system, requires consideration of ecological, economic, social, and governance aspects. To achieve this, a diverse range of expertise and teamwork is essential.

Finally, Heddema highlighted that to reduce bycatch, continuous improvement is essential and that the success of the project depends not only on what is achieved but also on how it's accomplished. It is important to acknowledge that monitoring and mitigation mechanisms are already in place on fishing vessels to address bycatch occurrences, and that the fishing industry is making effort to be more transparent and open. Hence, the CIBBRiNA project is starting from a favourable position. Heddema noted that the main challenge for CIBBRiNA is limited NGO participation, which should be embraced and explored in the future. Once again it was highlighted that with the topic of bycatch, fostering a safe environment for discussion is crucial, in order to get the right information to know where to apply the effort.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In conclusion, Svoboda and Pierce expressed their gratitude to everyone who attend the event and emphasized the key themes echoed throughout the whole event which included respect, trust, collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the legacy of CIBBRiNA. Additionally, they informed that further information about upcoming meetings and other information will be distributed via email. All questions can be addressed to: CIBBRiNA@minlnv.nl.

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