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Rome, 27 September 2013

**Report  
STECF EWG 13 16 meeting  
Landing Obligation in UE Fisheries**

**Varese 9-13 September 2013**

The meeting was attended by about 20 STECF/JRC experts as well as more than 10 observers, most of the participants were from North Europe. Representatives of Baltic RAC and Atlantic RAC were present. RAC Mediterranean was represented by Roberto D'Ambra.

The meeting agenda covered discussion of several aspects relative to the reform to the CFP.

- survival
- *de minimis* and quota flexibility tool
- catch estimation
- control, monitoring and enforcement
- development discard plans

A series of TORs was formulated on 5 issues:

**1. survival**

- develop guidelines or identification the best practice for undertaking discard-survival studies;
- develop an defective framework to define high survivability which will provide managers with a range of the likely imports of different option depending on the definition used;

**2. *de minimis* and quota flexibility tool**

- explore the potential impact of *de minimis* exemption and inter-quota flexibility provisions through worked examples assuming a range of different interpretation;
- identify appropriate metrics that could be applied to define the two conditionabilities (i.e “improvements in selectivity are considered to be very difficult” or “to avoid disproportionate cost of handling unwanted catches”). Identify appropriate threshold or trigger level based on these metrics;
- consider the potential cumulative impacts on the catches of individual species in excess of TAC allocations of *de minimis* and quota flexibility mechanisms.



### 3. catch estimation

- evaluate the scale of difference in catch estimates used by ICES and STECF and identify the causes for these difference;
- categorise stocks/TACs depending on the availability and quality of discard data based on the analysis above.

### 4. control, monitoring and enforcement

- define what constitutes “detail and accurate documentation” and “adequate capacity and means”;
- provide an insight into the current documentation of catches by comparing the estimates from current scientific observer programmes with EU logbook data;
- describe the pros and cons of relevant control tools and describe how they can contribute to compliance with the landing obligation and the provision of detailed and accurate documentation of catches;
- consider the control and enforcement implications of exemptions for high survivability, *de minimis* and also inter-species quota flexibility;
- consider the implications for current “at-sea” monitoring programmes under the landing obligations.

### 5. development discard plans

- develop guidelines to assist MS in formulating joint recommendations that will form the basis of regional discards plans.

Working groups of STECF experts and observers have been set up on these issues; in some cases these WGs discussed reports already written by the experts.

The WGs met for discussion on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday. On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> two scientific presentations were made.

- a) One presentation concerned the survival percentage in catches of some fish species in the north Atlantic (*cod, eglefin, nephrops*) over recent years. The different techniques used to assess the survival rate of each species (pelagic and demersal) were illustrated. The results proved to be extremely variable according to the species considered, the capture method and the fishing period.
- b) The results of a study relative to the economic impact in Denmark of the introduction of the discards landing obligation were illustrated; this study was carried out in the framework of a wider research programme that covered several issues and which received funds from several sources (national, FP7). The report summarized the results deriving from the hypothetical quantity of 57.000 t of fisheries product landed and an overall cost at national level varying (according to the *de minimis* percentage considered – 5% or 9%) between 6 and 28 million euros where the fleet is concerned, and varying between 6 and 18 million euros for the monitoring activities and the on-board observers. These data were not provided in greater detail so it was not possible to get a clearer picture of which aspects were taken into consideration and how the calculations were carried out. Further information should be available on three reports that were quoted: “ICES WGMIXFISH”, “Irish Discards Atlas” e “French Discard Report”

Contrary to the original plan, in actual fact 3 working groups were set up because the question of “catch estimation” was developed independently by two STECF experts and it was therefore decided that this issue would not be discussed in greater detail. Where “development discard plans” are concerned, here too it was decided not to enter into greater detail because the assessments need to be carried out in the



light of the results of the evaluation of the issues: high catch survival rates, the applicability of the “de minimis”, flexible quotas and monitoring and control. The discussion did not really take place, reference was made to the Local Management Plans as the model to be followed.

The RAC MED representative participated in the Working Group “*control, monitoring and enforcement*”.

The results were rapidly illustrated on Thursday afternoon and Friday.

1. “**survival**”: after lengthy discussion on the characteristics of the studies already carried out and on the analysis methods implemented, the conclusion was reached that it is not currently possible to provide scientific support to the CFP reform process where discards of species with high survival rates are concerned.

2. “**de minimis and quota flexibility tool**”: some forecasts were given on the effects of the application of *de minimis* at 5 % and at 9 % and on the adoption of flexible quota systems. No definite conclusions arose, the initial terms of reference were not fully accomplished.

3. “**catch estimation**”: the results of a study carried out by CSTEF experts were presented, it was underlined that ICES should establish a database on catches relative to the different landings, this should be a rigorous study, similar to that proposed by STECF.

4. “**control, monitoring and enforcement**”: final decisions were not taken on the various ToRs dealt with. The Working Group discussion and the final presentation concentrated above all on the need to implement a careful system of monitoring and control in the sector, in order to make sure that the application of the new regulation is effective. The discussion and analysis only covered the aspects (that are sometimes exasperating) concerning the controls carried out on the declarations made by all the vessels, and the need to widen the controls carried out by on-board observers, as well as casual controls on vessels whose quantity of discards proves to differ substantially from that forecast in theory. The technical difficulties involved in the adoption of this measure were not taken into consideration, neither was discussion held on the increased work load and costs involved for the fishery operators.

5. “**development discard plans**”: there was no discussion on this matter.

It was underlined that the final report should be ready soon, this document will provide in-depth, detailed conclusions on the matters that were discussed.

Roberto D’Ambra

