

**Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Pelagic Issues Group
Held at the Thistle Hotel, Dyce, Aberdeen
On Tuesday 11th March 2014**

1. Present

John Goodlad (JG)	Chairman
Simon Leiper (SL)	
Colin Anderson (CA)	
Jackie Bruce (JB)	
Lynn Forman (LF)	
Robert Duthie (RD)	
Ian McFadden (IMc)	
Andrew Pepper (AP)	
Sinclair Banks (SB)	
Ian Gatt (IG)	
Malcolm Large (ML)	Secretary

2. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Chris Anderson
Brian Isbister
Michael Croan
Alex Wiseman
Emma Hatfield

3. Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held in 1st October 2013 were accepted as a true record.

IMc confirmed that the Scottish Pelagic Processors Association (SPPA) had written to the British Frozen Foods Federation in relation to the concern that Faeroese salmon was being fed on fishmeal made from mackerel caught in contravention to EU agreements.

IG updated the meeting on the progress being made in mackerel negotiations between the EU and Norway on one hand and Faerose and Iceland on the other hand. No agreement has been reached and matters have been complicated by Greenland now taking a quota for mackerel. Genetic tests on the Greenland mackerel have proved inconclusive and as such the unilateral quota should be taken into consideration when setting the TAC.

Because no four party agreement has been reached, Iceland has announced a 130,000 tonne quota and the EU Norway bilateral agreement has been parked due

to the impasse. Further mackerel talks were due to resume on Wednesday, 12 March between EU, Norway and Faroe Islands.

4. Seafish update

ML gave an update on Seafish activity. The main points being:

- A new Corporate Relations Director, Mel Groundsell has been appointed in place of Rob Bruce who left Seafish in the latter part of 2013.
- At the conclusion of the levy consultation, a small majority had been in favour of the Seafish proposal to reduce levy on whitefish and shellfish species by 10%. This recommendation had gone to ministers and to date there has been no sign-off. It is therefore highly unlikely that there will be any change to the levy rates in 2014. Seafish Board is examining options.
- The current Corporate Plan has twelve months to run and ML reported that to date Seafish will meet the outputs and KPIs stipulated in the plan and are more or less exactly on budget.

5. Seafish Corporate Plan 2015-18

ML explained that the next round of Panel meetings starting later in March would provide the opportunity for industry to suggest the direction of work for Seafish over the three year period starting in April 2015. The March panel meetings will be followed by a cross-panel meeting comprising of the Panel Chairs and two representatives from each Panel in April with a view to agreeing workstreams and priorities that can be developed and budgeted by Seafish staff before going to the Board for approval.

JG confirmed that, as Chair of the Domestic Panel he had to be impartial, he suggested that it would be useful if the members of the group who also sit on the Domestic Panel (RD, JB, IG) had a clear mandate from the group as to their priorities.

After much discussion it was agreed that the priorities of the Pelagic Issues Group are:

- Export support in particular for maintaining presence in existing export markets and developing new markets such as Japan.
- Reputational support particularly following the suspension of the mackerel MSC.
- More focus on pelagic issues within expert groups such as the Common Language Group and the MCS Industry Review Group.
- UK pelagic fish to be included in Seafish promotional and educational campaigns.

6. Mackerel Benchmarking

IG reported on an ICES mackerel benchmarking meeting held in Copenhagen in February.

ICES undertake individual stock benchmark exercises usually every 5-6 years. In the case of mackerel the importance of this benchmark has been heightened as the old

assessment had been rejected by ICES and also the change in perception of the stock biomass. A huge amount of work had already been undertaken by key individuals in advance of this meeting which included a series of WebEx meetings from last November to February of this year. TAC advice produced in September last year was provided on the basis of recent catches following the rejection of the old assessment model. Therefore, there has been huge expectation that at the end of the benchmark process a new assessment model would be produced.

A new SAM model has been accepted for use as the basis for future mackerel assessments. If this hadn't been achieved the alternate would have been to develop an option for delivering TAC advice based on ICES data limited stock advice. ICES hope that a much better assessment can be produced in three years time, if improvements are made to the egg survey design, with a longer time series for both the Nordic survey and RFID tagging data, which should all improve the quality of future assessments.

7. Pelagic Export Support

ML confirmed that Seafish will support industry pavilions at World Food Moscow and China Fisheries in 2014. Plans are to continue with the China Fisheries reception as it is proving to be highly popular with buyers and a successful sales tool to enhance the presence at the exhibition.

There was some discussion on how to best get mackerel sourced from Scottish processors listed in Japan. It was agreed that the issue lies with the perception the Japanese consumer has of Norwegian mackerel being a premium quality product. The professional seafood buyers in Japan seem to accept the premise that the Scottish mackerel is of equal quality. It was agreed that the best approach would be for the processors to identify between than how best to use any Seafish and SDI emerging markets budget to address the problem and to channel the funds at the solution through the SPPA.

8. Any other business

IG confirmed that the MSC suspension on mackerel will remain in place until 30th April. There is some doubt whether the suspension will be carried over for a further year.

JB asked why the MMO were insisting on bespoke catch certificates to accompany all export consignments to China. ML confirmed that he had bought the issue up with the MMO which insisted that Catch Certificates are not required for exports to China unless it will be reimported into the EU. That being the case, the MMO apply the letter of the regulation and insist that all relevant catch certificates are attached to the consignment and these state the proportion of the total catch within the consignment.

JG suggested that the exact regulation be found and that the SPPA write to the MMO for an explanation. If the MMO would not cooperate he would bring that the notice of the Seafish Deputy Chair, Jayne Ride who also sits on the Board of the MMO.

9. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held to coincide with the herring stock assessment results. ML will therefore contact Emma Hatfield to get a suggested date.