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Common Language Group e-alert
(amalgamation of adhoc news alerts issued to CLG circulation list by email in June/July 2017)

Common Language Group
http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-common-language-group

Seafish
Seafood is highly perishable, this means that unless there has been an intervention which changes the physical nature of the product, such as freezing, cooking, drying, smoking or canning, fresh seafood products will continually deteriorate in quality over time. Visual and physical changes effect the consumer’s perception of the product to the eventual point where it would be considered unappealing or even inedible. This briefing note is aimed at businesses that catch, process, buy, sell or trade fresh seafood products; it seeks to improve the understanding of those factors that cause the natural deterioration of seafood products due to spoilage, and to ensure that businesses are able to mitigate and remediate those changes as far as possible to ensure that the maximum storage lives for their products are achieved.

Fish stock status
North Sea cod certified as sustainable. 19 July 2017.
Over a decade since North Sea cod stocks came close to collapse, shoppers and diners can finally buy the popular fish with a clear conscience following the announcement that Scottish and English cod boats, which are members of the Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group, are now MSC certified. Thanks to the enormous efforts of a coalition of fishing organisations with support from supermarkets, seafood brands and the industry body, Seafish, North Sea cod has passed an independent assessment against the MSC’s strict standard. The news means that – subject to strict traceability requirements – North Sea cod can now be sold in supermarkets and restaurants bearing the MSC ‘blue tick’ label, indicating that it is sustainable and fully traceable. Toby Middleton, MSC Programme Director, North East Atlantic explains: “Today’s certification marks the end of the cod confusion. If you can see the MSC label on your cod, you know that it has come from a sustainable source. By choosing fish with that label, you will be helping to protect stocks long into the future.”

Seafish: Hurrah! Fish and chips for tea - North Sea cod is back on the menu. 19 July 2017
Seafish welcomed the award of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for North Sea cod, proving that stocks are at a sustainable level. The application for this certification was supported by funding from the Seafish Strategic Investment Programme (SIP), in partnership with major retailers, seafood processors namely Icelandic Seachill and Youngs, the National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations (NFFO) and the Scottish Fishermen’s Sustainability Accreditation Group (SFSAG). Achieving MSC certification is the culmination of many years’ work which has involved collaboration across all sectors of the industry.
WWF: If we’re to get North Sea cod back on British plates for good, it’s vital that we don’t lose focus on sustainably managing fish stocks and ensuring the protection of the marine wildlife and habitats as the UK develops its post-Brexit fisheries policy. Embracing new technology and installing cameras on the UK fleet would be a highly cost-effective and efficient way to help manage and monitor cod catches, as well as the range of other fish also caught by these boats.
It reports on progress in achieving sustainable fisheries, and especially in ensuring that the exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield, which will also contribute to achieving good environmental status in European seas by 2020.1 It looks at changes in the state of stocks, the state of the EU fleet, the phasing-in of the landing obligation and progress with decentralisation2. It also sets out the principles underpinning the Commission proposals for fishing opportunities for 2018. The document reflects an annual improvement in the number of TACs set at levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY), which represent now 61% of the total catches in the North-East Atlantic (44 stocks). The analysis also shows the recovery of many stocks, since the average biomass in the North-East Atlantic was 35 % higher in 2015 than in 2003. It also reflects a better balance between fishing opportunities and fishing capacity since between 2007 and 2015 the capacity fell steadily, with the number of fishing vessels decreasing by 6 %, engine power by 14 % and tonnage by 24 %. The Communication also confirms the overall improved economic performance of the EU’s fishing fleet, registering an unprecedented net profit of € 770 million in 2014 (50 % increase over 2013). The sector contributed to the EU economy € 3.7 billion in 2014.

DG MARE consultation on fishing opportunities for 2018 under the Common Fisheries Policy. 6 July 2017.  
Open until 15 September 2017.  
Member States, Advisory Councils (ACs), other stakeholders and the public are invited to provide suggestions on these policy directions. Consultation document and annex

New ICES advice on Arctic and North-Western, Bay of Biscay, Celtic Sea and North Sea fish stocks. 30 June 2017.  
The annual advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) helps to inform the fisheries negotiations that take place in the autumn to decide how much quota fishermen will receive in the coming year. This year’s advice takes into account changes to discard levels resulting from the phasing in of the landing obligation over the past two years. Some stocks like Norway Lobster and haddock are already fully phased; some like North Sea cod and whiting are partially phased; and others like saithe will be increasingly incorporated in 2018. The latest science includes advised increases for North sea cod (27%), whiting (34%), Norway Lobster (7%), saithe (7%) and haddock (30%), while there are advised reductions for other stocks such as hake (-4%).

Iceland raises cod and haddock catch quotas. 26 June 2017.  
Iceland has significantly raised its cod and haddock quotas for the new fishing year which begins on 1 September. The Minister of Fisheries has raised the catch quota for cod to 255,172 metric tons, up by around 11,000 tons on the current fishing year. The figure is slightly less than the 257,572 tons recommended by Iceland’s Marine Research Institute. The haddock quota goes up by over 5,000 tons to 39,890 tons. This is the first significant haddock increase for some time and shows that the stock, which was causing some concern not so long ago, is now making a sustained recovery. According to a recent report from the Marine Research Institute, the position of many of Iceland’s fish stocks is strong. It is not such good news for the Barents Sea, which is shared jointly by Norway and Russia, and is the largest source of northern hemisphere cod and haddock. ICES has just issued several recommendations concerning the proposed 2018 total allowable catch (TAC). The ICES scientists are advising a 20% cut in the cod quota down from 890,000 tons to 712,000 tons.

Summary of ICES advice on the exploitation of Baltic Sea fish stocks in 2018. 1 June 2017.  
Environmental impacts

Summary of responses to consultation on proposals to ban the use of plastic microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products in the UK. 21 July 2017.
The consultation asked for comments on proposals for the UK’s implementation of a ban on the manufacture and sale of cosmetics and personal care products containing microbeads which may harm the marine environment. The consultation also sought to gather evidence on the extent of the environmental impacts of further sources of potential marine plastic pollution, to inform future UK actions to protect the marine environment.

The true extent of trawl damage revealed. 19 July 2017.
Benthic communities can take more than 6 years to recover from a single pass by a hydraulic dredger, according to the results of a new international study into the impacts of various trawl systems. An international collaboration of scientists conducted a global meta-analysis of 70 comparative and experimental studies on the effects of bottom trawling, to estimate the rates of depletion and recovery of seabed biota following bottom trawling. The researchers were able to quantify the relationship between the reduction of seabed animals and penetration of the fishing equipment into the seabed. Paper: Depletion and recovery of seabed biota following bottom trawling disturbance

New marine science review shows significant increase in understanding of ocean function and anthropogenic impacts. 12 July 2017.
A new scientific review of recent ocean research shows more clearly than ever the importance of ocean services, its critical role to humankind and the rate and scale of the changes occurring due to climate change and other human impacts. Marine scientists from Oxford University's Zoological Department have reviewed and synthesised findings from 271 research papers relevant to the functions of the ocean. The report gives a compellingly rich overview of the latest knowledge about the ocean and its vast complex web of functions and systems. It also summarises the latest research on anthropogenic impacts from climate change and other human pressures such as industrial fishing and fertiliser pollution, and how they interact.

More than half the world’s FIPs are now on FisheryProgress
FisheryProgress.org is a one-stop shop for information on the progress of global fishery improvement projects. Recently, FisheryProgress hit the milestone of having 50 FIP profiles. This is critical because it means that more than half of the FIPs worldwide are now using FisheryProgress, making it truly a one-stop shop for reliable information about FIP progress. FishChoice invites you to come and learn about FisheryProgress.org. There are three webinars currently scheduled. Please choose the session that works best for you.

Seafish funded project outlines the future of collaboration between fishermen & science on data collection. 12 July 2017
A new breed of fishermen and scientist are looking to improve the way the industry contributes to data collection at sea. Fishing into the Future, along with partners the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen’s Association (SFPA) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) have published guidelines on data collection that describe a ‘recipe for success’ to help these groups work more closely together. This new tool has been produced as part of the broader Fishermen-Science Interface Programme, which was supported entirely by Seafish through their Strategic Investment Programme (SIP). The Guidelines for Industry-Science Data Collection provide a step-by-step framework - presented as a series of key questions to consider - which will support more effective data collection by the fishing industry as a whole. They provide added context through relevant case studies where fishermen and scientists have worked together successfully.
BirdLife - Towards seabird-safe fisheries, global efforts and solutions. 30 June 2017.
The RSPB and BirdLife International have produced a new publication that presents some of the remarkable efforts fisheries have made on a global scale to tackle seabird bycatch, from saving turtles in Peru to Black-browed Albatross in Namibia. These stories demonstrate that collaboration between fishers, scientists and decision makers can lead to practical solutions.

Cornish dolphin population at risk of being wiped out following fishing net deaths. 18 June 2017.
As many as 4000 Cornish dolphins could have been killed by fishing nets, putting the region’s famous dolphin population at risk of being wiped out. Fatal injuries According to scientists investigating the discovery of 1000 dead animals on British and French beaches this spring, the majority of the dead dolphins suffered fatal injuries inflicted by fishing gear. It is estimated that the bodies of 3000 more dolphins did not reach the shore – bringing the death toll to 4000.

Report: Wild-caught tropical shrimp imports into the EU & associated impacts on marine turtle populations: the need for EU import restrictions. French Guiana Fisheries Committee (CRPMEM)with the support of WWF. 16 June 2017.
This report reveals than an estimated 29,000 marine turtles are killed each year in tropical prawn trawls that export to the EU, with the UK being the biggest market. Yet a simple and effective solution – Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) – can be used by fisheries to tackle this issue. WWF is calling on the UK government to take urgent action to protect marine turtles by requiring all tropical prawn trawlers exporting into the UK to use TEDs. A WWF factsheet summarising the report can be found here.

IUU and traceability
Thailand to make bigger effort against IUU fishing, according to the EU. 19 July 2017.
The Thai government’s efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) seem to be insufficient for the European Commission (EC) to withdraw the ‘yellow card’ issued to that country. According to a source from the Department of Fisheries, the EC notified the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives that Thailand should do more to curb IUU activities despite the government having spent the last three years dealing with the problem. However, the EC has praised us for the measures we have taken, many of which have led to positive developments. EC representatives visited the country in July to follow up on the progress being made.

Shrimp traceability gets a boost from elemental profiling. 21 June 2017.
By analysing the elemental makeup of shrimp flesh, a group of researchers has been able to identify the shrimp’s country of origin, according to a recent study. The analysis technique – called elemental profiling – could, with further refinement, aid importers, customs officials and retailers as they seek to trace seafood back to its source. In the study, a group of scientists led by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) differentiated the origin of headless shell-on Pacific white shrimp from two areas of Thailand, three provinces of Vietnam and India. They could identify the country of origin with 98% accuracy, though tracing back to the particular state or province was less accurate.

Assessment of elemental profiling for distinguishing geographic origin of aquacultured shrimp from India, Thailand and Vietnam.

Reports
Irish seafood industry booming. 6 July 2017.
Ireland’s Seafood Development Agency, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), launched a Business of Seafood Report at its National Seafood Conference on 29 June, setting out the developments, issues, and challenges in the country’s EUR 1.1 billion (USD 1.26 billion) seafood sector. BIM’s report shows that Ireland’s seafood industry experienced a strong year in 2016, sporting 7.4% overall growth. The
sector employed more than 11,000 people. Total seafood production in 2016 reached 325,000 metric tons (MT) worth EUR 543 million (USD 630 million) at first sale, with the wild-caught sector accounting for 281,000 MT worth EUR 376 million (USD 429 million) and farmed fish and shellfish for 43,900 MT worth EUR 167 million (USD 191 million). The farmed sector (salmon, trout, perch, oysters, and mussels) showed at increase of 13% on 2015.

**WWF: Eating for 2 Degrees - new and updated Livewell Plates, 26 June 2017.**

WWF has launched its new Livewell report which looks at what we need to eat between now and 2030 to meet our Paris Agreement commitments. Besides carbon reduction targets, the report includes further environmental criteria – particularly water use and land footprint. The report also includes Livewell Plates for adolescents, the elderly and vegans for the first time.

**Landing the blame: overfishing in the Atlantic 2017: Which member states are setting quotas above scientific advice?** New Economics Foundation. May 2017.

*This is an amalgamation of the news alerts issued in June/July 2017.*