

Note of Common Language Group (CLG) meeting held at Billingsgate market, London. Wednesday 5 November 2014

For the CLG minutes and meeting presentations see:

<http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-common-language-group>

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Mike Kaiser welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Attendees

Adriaan Rijnsdorp	Wageningen IMARES
Alex Olson	Esperson
Ally Dingwall	Sainsburys
Alyx Elliott	World Animal Protection
Andrew Clayton	PEW
Bernadette Clarke	MCS
Carl O'Brien	Cefas
Catherine Pazderka	BRC
Chris Brown	Asda
Chris Leftwich	Fishmongers' Company
Claire Pescod	MSC
Clarus Chu	WWF
Colin Charman	National Resources Wales
Cristina Fernandez	Seafish
Dan Lee	GAA
David Jarrad	SAGB
David Parker	Youngs Seafood
Elizabeth Bourke	NFFO
Emma MacLaren	SFP
Emi Katoh	MRAG
Estelle Brennan	Lyons Seafoods
Gary Hooper	Tesco
Guy Dorrell	Faircatch Ltd
Helen Duggan	Seafish
Huw Thomas	Morrisons
Jack Cowden	Kilkeel Seafoods
Jason Hall-Spencer	University of Plymouth
Jerry Percy	LIFE
Jess Sparks	Seafood Scotland
Jim Portus	SWFPO
John Butler	Oscar Mayer Group
Karen Green	Seafish (Minutes)
Katie Miller	ClientEarth
Mike Kaiser	Bangor University (Chair)

Laky Zervudachi
Libby Woodhatch
Martin Cooke
Max Goulden
Mel Groundsell
Melissa Pritchard
Mike Berthet
Mike Brummitt
Mike Mitchell
Mike Short
Nigel Edwards
Paul Williams
Peter Stagg
Phil McMullen
Richard Stansfield
Sam Stone
Sarah Holmyard
Steve Cadwallader
Stuart Smith
Suzanne Clift
Toby Middleton

Direct Seafoods
Seafish
World Animal Protection
MacAlister Elliott & Partners Ltd
Seafish
New England Seafood
M&J Seafoods
Regal Fish
Youngs Seafood
FDF
Seachill
Seafish
Le Lien Ltd
Seafish
Flatfish Ltd
MCS
Interfish
Falfish
Co-op
ASC
MSC

Apologies

Allen Townsend
Andrew Lakeman
Audrey Mealia
David Dickens
Elaine Hayes
Ester Luiten
Iain Pollard
Jane Ryder
Jon Harman
Lucy Blow
Martin Jaffa
Mike Park
Mike Weavers
Neil Aucherlonie
Ross Jolliffe
Tom Pickerell
Tracey Heyworth

Ocean Fish
World Animal Protection
Fishermen's Mission
Seafish Board
ASC
SFP
Seafish Board
ASMI
New England Seafood
Callander McDowell
SWFPA, Seafish Board
Defra
Cefas
Cefas
Seafish
Birds Eye Iglo

2. Minutes from the last meeting held on 9 July 2014.

The final minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting and have been added to the CLG web page. In the following minutes Seafish will provide a link to the various presentations given at the meeting but not summarise the whole presentation. In the main we do not attribute the comments made at the meeting. A paper was sent round listing forthcoming events. A full list can be found on the Seafish website:
<http://www.seafish.org/about-seafish/news-and-events/events>

3. Review of 2014 ICES advice. Carl O'Brien, Cefas.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1327189/clg_nov2014_cefas_stockstatus2.pdf

The 2014 advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) on North East Atlantic (NEA) stocks is cause for optimism. Taken as a whole there is a generally improving situation in the ICES assessed areas. Fishing mortality levels have come down strongly, there are an increasing number of stocks now exploited at or below maximum sustainable yield (MSY), and spawning stock biomass is generally increasing. There are 27 stocks in the North East Atlantic and surrounding waters which are now managed at MSY, compared with just five in 2009, and over the same period the number of stocks with MSY assessments has increased from 35 to 46. It is estimated that 55 per cent of stocks in the NEA and surrounding waters are now within safe biological limits, up from 31 per cent in 2009. There was also reference to the North East Arctic cod and haddock stocks as a marker – these are well-managed stocks with a high biomass, but biomass is declining and there are expectations of a decrease in recruitment so the advice is for a reduction in the TAC. The Commission press release of the previous week does show recommendations for a decrease in TAC for a large number of stocks.

Discussion

- Some of this appears a little puzzling with some strange anomalies. Is there any suspicion of environmental overlay? Answer. All ICES advice is for single species however there are moves to a more ecosystem-based approach and multi-species plans which would also take into account predators/prey/climate change, which is not currently taken into account with single species advice. This will be more difficult and we could end up with a range of values depending on how we want the ecosystem to look. Judgments will have to be made but we need the right tools to be able to address this.
- With stocks that are being managed under a management plan which has not yet been assessed by ICES how will this new advice impact on the plan? Answer. There is likely to have been a scientific assessment of the management plan. If management plans are in place that are considered precautionary, but not in line with MSY, they will generally not be followed, but there is no reason why ICES could not refer to a management plan even if it has not been adopted.
- With changes occurring over spatial distribution of stocks will our indicators allow us to take this into account? Answer. This can cause problems. Science will take into account changing distribution patterns but will apply fixed MSY values. Under a mixed species approach there could be a range of values applied ie you could choose to over-exploit some stocks and under-exploit others.
- Is there any rationale behind the 'arbitrary' 20% TAC reduction being advised for some stocks for next year? Answer. This is being applied to data-limited stocks and in the past it was suggested this could be 25%. This is being applied as a precautionary buffer but should only be applied once and fixed for a finite number of years, such as five years.
- There are some that could argue that the precautionary buffer is not precautionary enough. It is quite often the case that scientists have advised further cuts and these have not been carried through. Answer. In some cases this is correct. It is a complicated area and there are a number of reasons for this.

4. Fishing down the food web - Plymouth University study: Overfishing and the Replacement of Demersal Finfish by Shellfish: An Example from the English Channel. Prof. Jason Hall-Spencer, University of Plymouth.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1327192/clg_nov2014_plymouthuniv_engchannel.pdf

This study looked at dataset of 90-year English Channel landings to see if there had been major changes in the species landed. This has shown that the mean Trophic Level (mTL) decline in the English Channel has been one of the fastest observed worldwide; that invertebrates are now more prevalent in landings (scallop is a tough animal that survive dredging well) but fish spawning areas can be damaged; and that seabed recovery zones may benefit marine life and the fisheries that depend on it.

Discussion

- I found this a very useful and interesting presentation to illustrate scientific examples of some key concepts. From a market perspective the decline of higher trophic species and the abundance of lower trophic species is not such a bad thing, as these are the higher value species. Answer. Our seas have changed and this can result in increased profits.
- The Grand Banks illustrates this concept. The collapse of the higher trophic cod fishery led to the development of a profitable shellfish industry. However this year the quotas for shrimp have been reduced but the cod stock is increasing. Is this an example of a managed reversal, and could the outcome of your study be to look at reversing decline and managing reversal? Answer. This is a possibility. My real point is the importance of maintaining complicated habitats which will help boost fish populations. Society needs to be aware that we have changed the ecosystem in the English Channel. We also want to look at ocean acidification and global warming. There is a possibility that changes to the chemistry of the water could put shellfish and scallops at risk.
- I agree with your conclusions but actually have reached the same conclusion but in a non-scientific way. The 1970s saw a major change for the UK fishing fleet when the UK entered the European Union and there were changes to fishing policy, a 'race to fish' and the conscious move from catching white fish to catching shellfish because of its higher economic value. So these changes are not just driven by the availability of fish, we also need to take into account political and managerial dimensions. I would also question whether we want to revert. The slide on cuttlefish illustrates the development of a new market. 1994 was the first year there was a market for cuttlefish in Brixham.
- Is there any evidence of reversibility? Take the Irish Sea as an example – there is no obvious recovery and the *Nephrops* are getting smaller. At what point does change become irreversible? Answer. This is a concern, especially as there are some vessels that are wholly reliant on *Nephrops*.
- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have their place but we need to be very clear about what we hope to achieve through them. Closed areas are not necessarily the best way forward.

5. Our current knowledge on electric pulse fishing. Prof. Adriaan Rijnsdorp

Wageningen IMARES (Institute for Marine Resources and Ecosystem Studies).

http://www.seafish.org/media/1327210/clg_nov2014_imares_electricpulsefishing.pdf

There are currently 84 pulse trawlers in North Sea who have been granted experimental licences. However there are concerns about the adverse effect of electricity on marine organisms with regards to mortality, injuries and ulcers; an increase in fishing efficiency and the risk of over-exploitation.

Discussion

- I can see the potential but my concern is that with such a big gap in knowledge how is it that 84 licenses have been granted? I am shocked about the legality of this. Answer. These are short-term licences with strict terms and conditions. We

want to be able to evaluate this fishing method and address all the concerns. It is permissible for 3% of the fleet to use this gear in its exploratory phase. There has been a doubling in the number of licences issued this year in anticipation of the introduction of the Landings Obligation.

- This was a fascinating insight, however we already have a problem with this fishing method as seen in the liver degradation of razor clams in Scotland. The biggest concern is the potential to create an upwardly mobile disease.
- What voltage is used, both 60 volts and 120 volts have been mentioned? Answer. It is defined by how you determine amplitude. Voltage will have an impact at 60v.
- There was mention of single exposure experiments to demonstrate behavioural response, injuries, mortality and feeding in cod, sole, dogfish, shrimp and nereis. Answer. The quality and welfare of the fish are paramount. The electrodes only touch a small part of the body.
- There are many concerns about this form of fishing on the South East coast with instances of dead fish being picked up with the injuries highlighted in the presentation. There needs to be a lot more research into the impacts. Answer. We want to address all the issues raised and compare similar habitats – one where pulse trawls are used and one where they are not used.

6. Low Impact Fisheries of Europe (LIFE). Jerry Percy, LIFE.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1327198/clg_nov2014_lowimpactfishersofeurope.pdf

This is a new initiative launched in November 2012 with 50 fishermen from nine EU countries who want to share experiences and challenges and discuss how to improve the situation and representation of low-impact fishermen all around Europe and at EU level. This resulted in the adoption of a Joint Declaration of European artisanal and low impact fishers and shellfish harvesters.

Discussion

- Is there any intention to introduce a customer label or logo? Answer. There are moves to set up an office in Brussels, and the group is looking at marketing and labelling.
- This group is not just about static/passive gears it is about using the right gear, at the right place, at the right time.

7. Fish feed focus at major aquafeed conferences/workshops. Daniel Lee, GAA.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1327201/clg_nov2014_gaa_feed.pdf

This covered the seminar on aquafeed sustainability at the Park Hyatt Saigon on 7 October (attendance 150); the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ASC, GAA and GloabalG.A.P. with the key aim to develop common requirements related to feed; and social concerns associated with feed production to help configure the industry response.

Discussion

- There can be no sustainable/ethical trade without traceability and the biggest obstacle is the assurance of traceability. Answer. This is crucial to be able to trace back to the source. Certification now places a lot of emphasis on traceability and chain of custody.

8. Brussels update. Cristina Fernández, Seafish.

http://www.seafish.org/media/1327204/clg_nov2014_seafish_brussels.pdf

Seafish now has an office in Brussels and a Brussels network that all member. There are currently a lot of changes with a new EU Commissioner now in place. Work in Brussels focusses on the European Parliament (European Transparency Register, ENVI, TRADE, FISHERIES Committees), and the European Commission: where Seafish is included in the list of interest groups, is liaising with the Advisory Councils (Markets and Aquaculture) and adopting a bottom-up approach, building alliances with EU partners.

Discussion

- This post in Brussels was created at the request of the Seafish panels for somebody to be on the ground horizon-scanning at an EU level.
- There were questions about the new labelling requirements which are effective 13 December 2014 and yet there is still ambiguity about how it will be interpreted ie there will be a legal obligation to put the fishing method on the product and yet all the fishing methods have not yet been defined.

Action: Circulate contact details.

Headline news – quick updates on policy, key initiatives and industry groups

9. Knowledge sharing. Karen Green, Seafish.

A number of issues were discussed by the CLG Steering Group as possible agenda topics for this meeting.

9.1. Faroese pilot whale cull

Seafish has prepared a background paper on the Faroe Islands pilot whale drive. Around 800 long-finned Pilot Whales (*Globicephala melas*) are taken annually, mainly during the summer. Other species of cetacean are also caught, but pilot whales are the main target species. For a copy E: k_green@seafish.co.uk

9.2. Russia and their import ban

Seafish convened a telephone conference on the impact of this ban and produced a briefing note.

<http://www.seafish.org/industry-support/international-trade/seafish-factsheet-on-the-russian-ban-on-the-import-of-seafood-from-the-eu>

9.3. New food crime unit

This is simply to flag the new unit. The new Food Crime Unit is one of a number of improvements the government is taking to ensure consumers have absolute confidence in the produce they purchase. The Food Crime Unit in the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is due to be operational by the end of 2014, and in addition Defra is working with Work with interested parties to develop 'Centres of Excellence' in food authenticity and a virtual network.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consumer-confidence-to-be-strengthened-through-new-food-crime-unit>

10. Seafish groups

10.1. Update on Discard Action Group activities and latest developments

Latest news and minutes can be found on the Seafish web page:

<http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/conserving-fish-stocks/discards/the-discard-action-group>

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Next meeting – 25 November 2014 at The Wesley Hotel, London.

Agenda to cover:

- Views of the Advisory Councils on the recently published pelagic discard plans.

- Update on devolved administration activities.
- Skipper perspective. David Stephens, *Crystal Sea*.
- Seafish Economic Impact Assessment progress.
- Understanding the effects of a discard ban at the vessel level.
- Onshore implications - Foodservice and Retailer perspective.

Last meeting 2 July 2014 at Fishmongers' Hall, London

Agenda included:

- The Defra consultation on the pelagics landings obligation and the regional plan for pelagics. Defra, SWFPA skippers and NUTFA perspective.
- Update on devolved administration activities.
- Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Landings Obligation on the UK fishing fleet and onshore sector.
- Control and enforcement - How the control agencies perceive the landings obligation will be enforced. MMO and Marine Scotland perspective.
- EMFF funds for CFP transition.
- Seafish pot bait study.

10.2. Update on Aquaculture Common Issues Group activities and latest developments

Latest news can be found on the Seafish web page:

<http://www.seafish.org/industry-support/aquaculture>

ACIG minutes and presentations:

<http://www.seafish.org/industry-support/aquaculture/aquaculture-groups/aquaculture-common-issues-group>

Last meeting - 23 September at Billingsgate market, London.

Agenda included:

- Progress on England Aquaculture Plan.
- Environment Agency Consultation on proposed update to River Basin Plans.
- Water quality and norovirus .
- BBSRC/NERC/SARF: Up-coming activities in aquaculture.
- FISH DISH study: Comparing the long-term health effects of eating two portions a week of Scottish salmon raised on traditional versus more sustainable feeds.
- Research agenda for University of Stirling.
- Aquaponics and the formation of the British Aquaponics Association.
- Progress on Seafish Corporate Plan and aquaculture review.

10.3. Update on Skates & Rays Group

Skates and Rays Group minutes and presentations:

<http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-skates-and-rays-group>

Last meeting 15 October 2014 at Friends House, London.

Discussions covered:

- New ICES advice published 9 October 2014 on 39 Celtic Sea stocks.
- Defra/Cefas projects incl: Shark ByWatch; Shark risk assessment; Project NEPTUNE; spurdog management; south coast skate surveys; undulate rays.
- Media roundup of the last year.
- Seafish Risk Assessment for Sourcing Seafood (RASS).

- There was also lengthy discussion about the new ICES advice for 39 Celtic Sea skates and rays stocks. With the exception of thornback rays in VI and VIIa,f and g ICES advice is for a reduction in quota for 2015/6. In the North Sea with the exception of thornback, spotted and cuckoo ray in IV, VIId and IIIa ICES advice is for a reduction in quota for 2015/6; and the announcement by the Marine Management Organisation on 10 October of the closure of the area VI and VII skates and rays fishery to all fishing vessels administered by the MMO until the end of the year (possibly) due to stock exhaustion.

10.4. Update on Seafood Ethics Working Group

Seafood EWG minutes, briefing notes and presentations

<http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-ethics-working-group>

The inaugural meeting was held on 17 July 2014 at Fishmongers' Hall, London.

Activities to date are:

- This first meeting talked about labour issues in general, but did focus specifically on issues with Thailand.
- There is a web page and a draft TOR for the group.
- Two Seafish briefings have been produced on *Labour issues in Thailand's warm water prawn supply chain* the *Legal framework for working on UK fishing vessels*.
- A news alert service has been set up highlighting the latest developments.
- Seafish has liaised with the Home Office to discuss bringing their Modern Slavery campaign out to the seafood sector.
- Seafish is currently working through and scoping work on ethics for the remainder of this financial year and is looking to define an action plan for the group and produce a letter from the collective group asking for a meeting with UK Government.

11. Key ongoing initiatives

11.1. Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS). Libby Woodhatch, Seafish.

The latest news is:

- The two new standards – multiple crew and single handed – are now in their final drafts for ISO17065 accreditation with positive feedback being received from the Public Consultation period, which ended 25 September.
- FCI has been appointed as the Certification Body (CB) to independently audit the standard, following a rigorous tender process. FCI is now working with Seafish and standards expert Mike Platt, to develop the audit methodology.
- Compliance Support Guides (CSGs), which underpin the standards, are being developed with key industry stakeholders to ensure they are fit for purpose. Content will be signed off by the end of 2014. The CSGs cover: Demersal, Pelagic, Shellfish, Nephrops, Scallops, Health & Safety, Ethical & Welfare, HACCP & Food Safety
- Pilot Training Audits – are underway to develop and finalise the format of the audits, working closely with FCI's core team and pilot vessels from around the UK over the next couple of months.
- Recruitment & Training of Auditors – we will be developing the content of the training module in time to start training January 2015 to establish a pool of experienced and credible auditors to start confirming new scheme certifications by March 2015.

- Communication and Outreach – will continue and increase over the coming months, including targeted engagement with both the catching sector and the supply chains as we progress towards ISO accreditation the official Scheme launch during Summer 2015.

11.2. Marine Conservation Society (MCS) methodology/Industry Review Group.

Bernadette Clarke, MCS.

The MCS is currently inviting a response to its consultation on its methodology for wild capture fisheries, which opened on 20 October 2014 and closes on 1 December 2014. The proposals reflect changes to inherent vulnerability following comments made by CLG participants. The consultation documents have been added to the Seafish website.

<http://www.seafish.org.uk/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-common-language-group>

Discussion

- It would be useful if MCS could clearly flag up the key areas where changes have been suggested. Answer. MCS will do this when the comments have been received.

11.3. Project Inshore

This is a multi-stakeholder project, which has been presented at CLG previously, which aims to provide a gap analysis of the inshore fleet. 450 pre-assessments have been produced. In consultation with the IFCA's strategic sustainability reviews have been produced which show how these fisheries could move towards Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) accreditation. These reports have been sent out for peer review. The hope is they will be published in the next four to six weeks. Stage 4 of the project will run from December 2014 to June 2015.

Discussion

- Has there been any thought about developing this model in Scotland? A. MSC would love to develop this in Scotland and has had talks with the Scottish Advisory Group and Marine Scotland but it is likely to be on the basis of a different approach.

Action: The new MSC certification requirements, due to come into effect 1 April 2015, could be an agenda topic at the next meeting.

11.4 Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) initiative. Katie Miller, ClientEarth.

Two codes, on responsible sourcing and harmonised labelling, were launched in September 2014. Businesses, who are part of the SSC, have until 18 September 2015 to align with the codes. The next step is to expand SSC membership.

12. Any other business

12.1. New Seafish Strategic Investment Fund. Phil McMullen, Seafish.

This new fund will launch in April 2015, linked to the Corporate Plan. The criteria and framework for applications is currently being worked on.

12.2. Seachange campaign. Alyx Elliott, World Animal Protection.

This campaign will highlight how ghost fishing gear is endangering sea life with an estimated 640,000 tonnes of fishing gear left in our oceans each year and 25,000 nets in the North East Atlantic recorded as lost or discarded annually.

Action: Consider as a possible agenda item at the next meeting.

12.3. Looking ahead

Mike Kaiser raised the issue of the size of the group, its format, location, choice of venue and engagement levels. With 53 attendees he questioned whether the group functioned with the same dynamic in this format and invited feedback.

Discussion

- In the early days the group was smaller and because of that the atmosphere was more convivial.
- The question was asked whether there was increased interest in the group because of a wider remit.
- The big picture is important and to facilitate dialogue between industry and the NGO community.
- Advocacy work by Greenpeace some years ago when they asked UK consumers about attitudes to seafood and targeted the retailers was the catalyst to form the group. Seafish received multiple requests from industry asking the same questions. A large number (70-80) attended the first meeting but only 5/6 attended the second.
- This is a fantastic function that Seafish performs but perhaps it has become a victim of its own success. It has become a mini-conference.
- CLG meetings are very different to Discard Action Group (DAG) meetings, which are smaller and there is more dialogue.
- Maybe we have been trying to pack too much into the agenda.
- Need to determine the ratio of presentation time to dialogue.
- As the group has evolved and grown we have perhaps lost the more conversational aspect and the comfort of being able to explore solutions to issues in a safe environment. The suggestion was to cover the same topics but on a smaller, regional scale to encourage more interaction. This was discounted as it was felt this would result in different views from different locations.
- Having been to a large number of industry meetings it is difficult to create a roundtable effect with this number of people. This is my first CLG meeting and I am very impressed how, as an industry, you are prepared to handle these issues.
- The important thing is to get people in a room together. We could try café style to encourage dialogue without diminishing the agenda.
- I quite like the feel of Billingsgate – a smaller room.
- It would be helpful to get the presentations in advance but if this was not possible a bullet point descriptor on the topics would be useful.

Action: It was agreed that a short survey monkey would be circulated to canvas opinion on format, location, choice of venue and engagement levels.

13. Date of next meeting

The date for the next meeting will be circulated. The CLG Steering Group will meet to discuss the agenda for the next meeting. Any ideas for agenda items should be sent to k_green@seafish.co.uk