



A proposal to set up a Permanent Management- Science Committee

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1. Introduction

According to Article 14 of the NEAFC Convention, NEAFC seeks advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, ICES.

Article 14 of the NEAFC Convention establishes: *In the interest of the optimal performance of the functions set out in Articles 4, 5 and 6, the Commission shall seek information and advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea....*

In order to facilitate the tasks of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea in providing information and advice to the Commission, the Commission shall seek to establish in co-operation with the Council, arrangements to ensure that research studies for this purpose, including joint studies, are encouraged and conducted efficiently and without undue delay.

NEAFC has throughout its history cooperated with ICES, since 1999 under a Memorandum of Understanding and ICES has supplied the best scientific advice available for the full range of stocks over which NEAFC has competence. A new Memorandum of Understanding for the years 2004 –2006 was agreed between ICES and NEAFC in 2003.

Article 14 of the NEAFC Convention further establishes: *Such information and advice shall be sought on matters related to the Commission's activities falling within the competence of the Council, including information and advice on the biology and population dynamics of the fish species concerned, the state of the fish stocks, the effect of fishing on those stocks, and measures for their conservation and management.*

NEAFC every year specifies its scientific needs in a request for advice from ICES. The drafting of this request takes place during the Annual Meeting. A group is established at the start of the meeting, chaired by the Secretary last 4 years. Managers and scientists from all Contracting Parties have been invited to participate in this Group, but mostly Contracting Parties have been represented by scientists. The drafting has not been without troubles and lack of agreement on what to propose to the Commission led last year to that the Commission at very late stage of the Annual Meeting had to discuss very technical problems – without reaching a conclusion in all issues.

2. Main task of the Permanent Committee on Management and Science

The main task of a Management – Science Committee would be to draft requests for advice to ICES in advance of the Annual Meeting and for discussion and decision of the NEAFC Commission. This can be done by correspondence or by meeting before the Annual Meeting, if the Commission so wishes.

3. Other possible tasks

There may be other, strong reasons for creating a subsidiary body in NEAFC, which can become a forum for a dialogue between managers and scientists in preparation for discussions in the Commission. The strong focus in the 1995 UNFSA on science based management has

increased made it more important to get the science right and marry that to sustainable development that allows managers ‘to plan, develop and manage fisheries in a way that addresses the multiple needs and desires of society, without jeopardising the options for future benefits from the full range of goods and services provided by marine ecosystems’(FAO). The way Regional Fisheries Management Organisations handle science is of importance for their image. It can be said that NEAFC too often leaves science to ICES, also where science and management interrelate.

The movement towards mid and long term advice and towards the inclusion concerns for the environment and the ecosystems leads to more a complicated management set-up involving more stakeholders and managers with different portfolios.

There has been a very committed and healthy discussion between ICES scientists lately, which opens up for changes in the basis of advice. These changes, which often stem from changes in perception or new data analysis models, may improve the science, but when it leads to major changes in management advice, managers are in a difficult situation.

The focus on science and the general expectation in the public that scientific advice should be accepted without modifications opens up for a danger that political bias is introduced into the advisory process.

There may also be a need regularly to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of management measures recommended by the NEAFC Commission could also be undertaken by the Committee on the Commissions request.

The Committee would also be able to discuss how to support scientific projects in areas where lack of research hampers NEAFC’s possibilities to establish robust science based management.

a. Integration of advice on fisheries management and other advice

The advice from ICES has changed. NEAFC receives the standard advice fish stock by fish stock and advice asked for in special requests. In addition to that ICES offers advice, which describes features in the environment in which the fish live. It would be beneficial to try to set that advice into an NEAFC context although it does not necessarily directly affects the recommendations for management measures.

b. Reviewing the advice received

In the process of change in ICES at present there is a need for NEAFC managers and scientists to review the advice received, reviewing it for possible political bias and changes in basic assumptions from year to year.

c. Changes in models on which advice is based

The NEAFC Secretariat has participated in discussions with ICES and in other fora on basic problems in the advice received. For example variability and uncertainty in assessments, calculation of reference points, the monitoring of risk etc. It would be beneficial that such problems were discussed in a group of NEAFC managers and scientists.

4. PERMANENT COMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE

a. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2. Pursuant to Article 3 (8) of the Convention, and Chapter 5 of the Rules of Procedure, there shall be a **Permanent Committee on Management and Science**.
3. The functions of the Committee shall be to:
 - a. Draft requests for advice under the Memorandum of Understanding with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea;
 - b. provide the Commission with information on developments in science, technology and management tools in order to ensure that management measures are based on the best scientific evidence available i.e. changes in assessment methods, changes in the perception of data and progress with respect to moving from stock based advice to fishery based advice and monitoring the progress the ecosystem approach and the integration of fisheries management and environmental concerns;
 - c. On the request of the Commission review the effectiveness of the management measures and plans agreed;
 - d. review the support of conduct of scientific research to be used in the advisory process and possible NEAFC initiatives in this respect;
 - e. consider such other management and science matters as may be referred to it by the Commission ;
 - f. report to the Commission its findings, conclusions and/or proposals;
4. The Committee shall work by correspondence and the Secretariat shall propose solutions, which allow the optimum use of electronic communication and the NEAFC website. The Committee may meet in conjunction with the Annual Meeting and inter-sessionally if deemed necessary by the Commission.
5. The Committee may establish, with the approval of the Commission, such subsidiary bodies as are necessary for the performance of its functions.