

Minutes

Joint NWWAC/NSAC/MAC Focus Group Brown Crab

Virtual meeting via Teams

28 February 2023

Participants

Enda Conneely	IIMRO
Ciara Dower	Verifact
Mike Fitzpatrick	Verifact
Adam Holland	Sea Source
Ian Lawlor	BIM
Jonathan Loubry	CNPMEM
John Lynch	IS&EFPO
Mo Mathies	NWWAC
Geert Meun	VisNed
Patrick Murphy	IS&WFPO
Norah Parke (Chair)	KFO
Pedro Reis Santos	MAC
Tamara Talevska	NSAC

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all participants. Apologies were received from David Jarrad and Aodh O'Donnell prior to the meeting. The agenda was adopted. The Chair went through the minutes and action points from the last meeting which were approved.

Action points from the last meeting:

1	Secretariat to contact Holland with the draft minutes and invite him to the next meeting Done
2	Kathib to confirm with Laurent once date for next FG meeting has been set. This had been done but unfortunately Martial Laurans is not in attendance .
3	Members to organise videos to show at workshop. To be discussed under agenda item 3
4	The FG will come back with a number of dates in early May to propose to the CNPMEM. To be discussed under agenda item 3
5	Secretariat to draft ToR and objectives for the workshop and reflect on the list of participants, including experts from the ACRUNET project To be discussed under agenda item 3

2. Overview of French Crab industry – Martial Laurans, IFREMER

Unfortunately, Martial Laurans was unable to attend the meeting.

The Chair felt it would be useful to ask Adam Holland for additional details on the NI FIP as he was in attendance today.

Holland explained that he was brought in to focus on the MSC certifications as well as some of the other sustainability issues within the brown crab industry in Northern Ireland including the measures put forward by fishermen to DEARA as they recognised there were issues relating to fisheries specifically the increase in effort over the past years. He added that the FIP in south eastern England is finalised and going forward for MSC certification. This had also been the plan for the NI FIP, but due to lack of resources within the Department as well as the industry, some of the requirements may not be achievable within the time frame. This could potentially mean the establishment of a basic FIP through Fisheries Progress and not through the MSC standard. This could help to link in with improving the score for Brown Crab for example on Fish Choice or the Marine Conservation Society score

There has been some positive change and, since the last update, the banning of landing of white crab has come in. Some confusion has arisen regarding what constitutes “white crab”. Fishers have seen an improvement in the fishery since the bringing in of the minimum landing size which is now 150mm. Some pushback has been seen from fishers with support at approx. 50%, and discussions being held at the inshore Fisheries Partnership Group.

The Chair thanked Holland and explained that in the Irish fishery similar problems were experienced. The Brown Crab FIP had been successful in Ireland, and she would prefer many fishers participating in a successful FIP rather than just a few being involved in an MSC certified fishery. The latter can also be quite expensive and thus unattainable for certain fisheries. She invited Ian Lawlor, BIM, to comment on the FIP as BIM is directly involved in this work.

Lawlor stated that the FIP had been useful and the increase in landing size from 130 to 140mm was brought in under this. He referred to the bait projects in Nofima and Atlantic Technical University and explained that the FIP work is undergoing a review currently to identify where improvements could be made. He felt that the FIP had been more processor driven and a better balance could be struck between processors and fishers. BIM has been tasked by the Minister with convening a working group on brown crab. This has not started yet. He apologised that he had to leave the meeting as he had another commitment.

The Chair thanked Lawlor for this update. She asked Holland if any additional preferences were being looked at regarding practices in NI.

Holland stated that compensatory measures have been put forward in Kilkeel for fishers who have been impacted by offshore wind farms. He explained that any work will be looked at in the context of

the other involved two jurisdictions, i.e. Republic of Ireland and Isle of Man. It is likely that the NI FIP will develop along the same path as the Irish FIP.

3. Draft Terms of Reference Workshop – Discussion and development

Mathies gave an update following the discussion of the Commission's approach to the co-management of non-quota species at last week's Inter-AC Brexit Forum. This Forum was established between the PelAC, NSAC, NWWAC, MAC and LDAC to address horizontal issues regarding Brexit, the Specialised Committee on Fisheries and any other issues relating to the TCA and EU-UK discussions. She explained that the agreed approach between the EU and the UK is on the development of multi-year strategies for non-quota species and that a pilot strategy is currently in development for King Scallops in the Channel. Unfortunately, no details are available on this yet. In addition, the report from last year's STECF EWG on non-quota species has also not been published yet. Both of these items would provide important background information for the focus of the workshop. MARE C5 has indicated that the EWG report will be published in the very near future and will be shared with the NWWAC.

Mathies then went over the draft Terms of Reference with participants.

Patrick Murphy asked if there were any biological elements to the workshop, for example related to the softness of the crab and the spawning, in the context of best practice.

The Chair responded that best practice had been dealt with extensively in the ACRUNET project and that these are likely to continue being a major issues into the future. Though fishers may not like to implement these, they are vital for the sustainability of the fishery. Soft crab has very little market value and returning it to sea for it to be fished a few weeks later as hardened crab is common sense as it makes the most of the effort of putting into catching crab in the first place.

Murphy added that clawing of fish leads to large mortality in the shellfish. He felt that there was now better public awareness regarding the fishery including the awareness that crab are sentient beings.

Parke stated that in the UK the fact that crustaceans are sentient animals was recognised in law.

Holland commented that this had only recently come into law and it's something that is currently being implemented.

The Chair felt that this could be an item to be included on the agenda for the workshop. She added that the Shellfish Association of Great Britain who is mainly dealing with this issue could be asked for an update on their experience with this new legislation and whether it is making any difference.

John Lynch agreed with the discussing management measures around soft crab. He felt that the workshop ToR should include a discussion on ORE. He wondered if Holland had any information on crab fishing in ORE in the UK and if it had been successful.

Holland stated that he could find out more information on this though he was not sure if he would be able to attend the workshop in person. He explained that fishers in Kilkeel are being paid for surveying

so it is an alternative route for work as it is unclear if fishers can still fish in the areas once construction has taken place. The surveys will include cameras attached to pots. Holland will be linked to this survey work and can provide an update on this at one of the next meetings. The key site for this work will be the Oriel site in the Irish Sea.

Geert Meun stated that there is an enormous increase in the number of wind parks. He was wondering if more information on impacts of brown crab in offshore wind parks could be included in the workshop. He was referring to the distribution of brown crab in wind farms and any fisheries taking place in them. He stated that this increase in wind park construction could be seen in Dutch and German waters.

The Chair agreed that this was an important issue also in the Irish EEZ.

Mathies cautioned regarding broadening the workshop agenda too much and advised members to be clear on the outcomes which they wish to achieve. She reminded participants that one definitive aspect to include is the outcome of the STECF EWG and the structure of the proposed multi-year strategy on scallops as advice on this from the ACs can directly contribute to the EU-UK negotiations on the multi-year strategy for brown crab.

The Chair felt that this important issue was of concern to all participants and should therefore be included on the workshop agenda. This could potentially fit in with the aspect of MPAs which are included in the Focus Group's ToR.

Lynch, Murphy and Enda Conneely agreed with the Chair's assessment stating that the ORE developments constitute a threat to the fishery and supported the inclusion of the topic in the workshop agenda.

ACTION: Include ORE topic in workshop agenda

Mathies pointed out that any involvement of scientists who are members of the ICES WGCRAB would be on behalf of their own organisations and not on behalf of ICES. She also proposed that a representative from the STECF or the Commission would be desired to go over the STECF EWG conclusions as well as the multi-year strategy approach to NQS. The follow up on these should also be addressed in one of the roundtable discussions at the workshop.

The Chair felt that the scientists that the group has been relying on so far have been more stock status focussed and that the element of impacts on the fishery by for example ORE developments is missing.

ACTION: Members are invited to provide contact details on suitable experts to the Secretariat

Pedro Reis Santos mentioned that Wind Energy Europe might have potential expert knowledge in this field which could contribute to the discussions on the day. He added that from the MAC point of view, the big topics to be addressed in the workshop are the public consultation that took place in China to change the level of acceptable cadmium in brown crab for which it would be interesting to have someone from DG TRADE. However, they have not been available to discuss this in the past. The

other issue relates to health certificate needed for sending brown crab to Asian countries and China who do not accept the health certificates of all Member States. Therefore, most people go through the Netherlands because China accepts the Dutch certificates. But at the same time the Dutch authorities do not necessarily accept the certificates from other Member States. There is no automatic recognition. The MAC has tried to discuss this with DG SANTE in the past but they have pointed to the Member States as the responsible authority. The MAC recently contacted several contacts in the markets and trade unit of DG MARE asking for a specific contact to assist in addressing this topic but has not received a reply so far.

Mathies enquired regarding the proposed videos.

The Chair stated that her contacts could cover both vessel and onshore work from an Irish and Dutch perspective. Jonathan Loubry only took over the crab file very recently in CNPMM and did not feel he could contribute to this.

ACTION: Secretariat to contact David Jarrad to see if a video contribution could be made from the UK.

- **Date: 16 May**
- Hybrid meeting with potential virtual discussion room for online participants
- Language: English
- Experts: STECF/COM, Frank Fleming (Verifact), Wind Europe (contact Jacopo Pasquero EBCD on this), Oliver Tully (Marine Institute), Martial Laurans (Ifremer), Carlos Mesquita (Marine Scotland), Marcel Rozemeijer (Wageningen Marine Research), US representative on crab management/ORE impacts
- Videos from vessels/processing facilities: possible for IE/NL, check for UK

4. AOB

The next FG meeting will held on 27 March at 09:00 – 11:00 IE/UK | 10:00 – 12:00 CET.

5. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	Include ORE topic in workshop agenda
2	Members are invited to provide contact details on suitable experts to the Secretariat
3	Secretariat to contact David Jarrad to see if a video contribution could be made from the UK.
4	Jonathan Loubry to contact Martial Laurans to see if he is available for the next FG meeting
5	Jonathan Loubry to confirm 16 May as workshop date internally with CNPMM
6	Secretariat to invite Marcel Rozemeijer to next FG meeting for update on Dutch industry.