

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(79) 612 final

Brussels, 29th October 1979

FIRST REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES

(Communication from the Commission to the Council)

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First Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee for Fisheries

1. The Scientific and Technical Committee which was established by the Commission on 8 June 1979*, completed its first report on 17 October 1979. The report was made available to member States informally on 19 October together with a resumé thereof prepared by the Commission services.

2. The Committee, though working in full independence of international scientific organisations, generally endorsed their recommendations, notably those of ICES, as providing the best scientific evidence available; it additionally made suggestions concerning certain technical conservation measures on the bases of general data furnished by ICES and, furthermore, insofar as basic data appeared insufficient to enable specific recommendations to be made, it has prepared questions to be put to ICES.

The Committee pursued its work in accordance with the line followed in scientific advice available to the Commission since 1977. The approach retained is founded on biological considerations including the best available information on the status of stocks, their life cycle and other living conditions as well as their probable evolution in relation with existing fishing activities.

The Report includes also indications on the consequences for the stocks of different choices of fishing mortality, thus enabling identification of the level of fishing effort which would give the best average long-term yield in weight. The Commission wishes in particular to draw attention to the figures in the Report indicating for each stock the effect of fishing effort on spawning stock biomass.

3. In determining a conservation and management policy for human needs, the Commission is conscious of the importance of a more detailed approach which takes account of the interrelation of stocks as well as of the effect on their future development of alternative choices as to the importance and the nature of fishing activities to be deployed. The Commission, nevertheless, underlines that the introduction of such parameters in the present schema necessitates, because of their nature and their importance, further consideration and in particular their being taken into account, at least partially, in the collection and treatment of basic data in international organisations; in these

conditions the Commission intends to ask the Committee to prepare in the early future some material on this theme and similarly it has seized the Consultative Committee on Fisheries of the subject so as to have a complete picture developed both from scientific analysis and from pragmatic considerations drawn from the economic, social and technical concerns of people directly involved in the industry.

The Commission, for its part, considers that special attention must be given to the need for gradualism in the evolution of existing structures while satisfying the foreseeable needs of the Community market. Certainly, a political decision could precede most of the options in the matter. However, political decisions should be based on solid ground with regard to their biological, economic, social, regional and other consequences.

4. To utilise such objective data means that information must be available in an organised, generalised and compulsory manner. The present situation, in which decisions by the Council in respect to general quantitative objectives is not accompanied by any constraint at the level of the fishing industry and where statistical information at Community level is not sufficient, does not permit a deeper examination of the situation as between different fisheries.

The Commission once again underlines the serious inconveniences which result from such a situation and the lack of coherence brought about between the political objectives decided by the Council and the results which its decisions obtain; in this respect it urges the Council to take an immediate decision on the question of a catch reporting system while accepting that it would not prejudice in any way decisions to be made in other matters of conservation and control.

5. In view of the short time that the Report of the Committee has been available the Commission considers that it should further assist the work of the Council by drawing its attention to major issues which emerge from the Report.

6. Principally and foremost is its description of the state of fisheries resources in the waters under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of member States. These resources are what the Common Fisheries Policy is all about. Debate about basic Regulations, structural changes, technical measures for conservation or control and so on is an arid exercise if the resources are whittled away whether by neglect or by the absence of restraint. Fishermen are right to be concerned about this. Their livelihood is involved and they are entitled to expect the Community Institutions to act seriously and quickly to protect the resources.

7. The Report shows that*:

- In the North Sea: out of eleven main stocks, two (herring and mackerel) are in danger of recruitment failure; not enough is known about three industrial stocks (sprat, Norway pout and sandeel); of the six demersal stocks five (cod, haddock, whiting, saithe and sole) can be brought towards a reasonable equilibrium but at lower catch levels in 1980 than in 1979 and one (plaice) is stable (i.e. is at its normal maximum catch rate);
- In the Skagerrak and Kattegat: not enough is known about the state of herring stocks and further data are required in regard to sprat; there are insufficient data on cod, haddock, whiting and plaice - except that cod in the Kattegat seems to be moving towards stability. Saithe appears to be stable;
- West of Scotland and West of Ireland South to Shannon: There are insufficient data on herring in the Clyde and West of Ireland (VII b, c) but otherwise the herring stock is still too reduced to be fished; the spawning stock biomass of the Western mackerel stock, which is found in ICES sub-areas VI, VII and VIII, is expected to decrease by about 25% as a result

* See tables 1 - 3 of the Report attached to the present Communication as separate annexes for convenience

of the 1979 fishery; demersal species range from stable (haddock, whiting and saithe) to approaching stable (cod).

- ICES sub-area VII other than VII b (Irish Sea, Celtic Sea, Western approaches, the Channel): the herring stocks in the Celtic Sea and the Mourne herring fishery are in extremely delicate condition; so far as demersal species are concerned, cod and whiting are approaching stability in the Irish Sea but not enough data are available on these stocks elsewhere in sub-area VII; plaice is approaching stability in the Irish Sea and is stable elsewhere in sub-area VII; sole is stable throughout sub-area VII.
- Sub-area VIII (Bay of Biscay): not enough data are available on hake in this area but what information is known suggests increased caution.

8. The facts that stand out from this brief summary of resources data in the Report are the following:

- (i) the main herring stocks still may not be fished in order to allow them to recover from serious overfishing of earlier years. Even though the development of the Common Fisheries Policy has not been attained, Community action, nevertheless, probably arrived in time to save these herring stocks from extinction. Even greater restraint will have to be exercised in the Irish Sea and in the Celtic Sea if the Mourne and the Celtic Sea herring stocks are to be saved from extinction.
- (ii) the mackerel fishery made up very considerably for losses sustained by Community fishermen, particularly in third country waters. A major mackerel fishery can be sustained indefinitely but not at the rate of fishing that has prevailed in the past few years. The Eastern mackerel stock is now severely menaced.
- (iii) as far as the industrial fisheries are concerned there is some reduction in the availability of one main species, sprat.

(iv) in contrast to the pelagic and industrial species, the demersal species are, generally speaking, in a state of stability or approaching stability, although in some areas the data remain insufficient to enable any firm conclusions to be reached. Nevertheless, in the most important fisheries, those of the North-Sea, there is still a long way to go before a sufficient abundance of demersal species is available to meet demands. To begin to arrive there the fishing rate must first be reduced in 1980 and for some time thereafter as compared with 1979.

9. On the whole, the picture left by the Report of the Scientific and Technical Committee is a further warning of the need to arrive at agreement on the development of the Common Fisheries Policy with the least possible delay. Taking all the important species together fishing effort in the Community part of the North-East Atlantic, especially in the North Sea, cannot be increased in 1980. The contraction of fishing effort which has characterised recent years can, however, be moderated and the situation reversed within a reasonable time if the Community is prepared to take the necessary steps to that end. Fishermen, consumers and the processing industries are all entitled to expect, in the light of their information, that the necessary steps will be taken. For its part, the Commission will put appropriate proposals to the Council in the immediate future.

10. Further consideration needs to be given to the state of Community resources in the Baltic and in the Northwest Atlantic. It is known, however, that the Greenland cod stock is considerably reduced from earlier years.

11. The Commission wishes to make a final point concerning resources. This is that there are serious inadequacies in the data basis for making stock assessments. These originate from:

- a) inadequate landings statistics either because national statistical collection services are inadequate or because landings made in excess of quotas are not recorded in the national statistics;

.../...

- b) inadequate fishing effort and area of fishing data arising from an inadequate statistical collection service;
- c) inadequate sampling programme for length and age composition data of fish landed;
- d) lack of data on fish discarded at sea.

The Commission draws this to the attention of the Council at this stage and reserves the possibility of making detailed proposals to the Council at a later date intended to obtain improvements in the data base.

12. The Commission asked the Committee to review the Commission's own proposals concerning mesh sizes for the Nephrops fishery and to comment on certain technical measures for conservation. In regard to both these elements the Committee has given valuable information which the Commission will take into account in the further consideration of some of its proposals.

ANNEXES

- △ Regulation (including prohibition) to improve spawning stock Recruitmt over F
- Spawning stock O.K. Moving towards F max Growth over F
- ⊕ Spawning stock O.K. At F max or stable in region of F 0.1 O.K.
- No data : precautionary TAC)
- + No data : real time assessment required) N.K.
- ⊞ Precuatory TAC : real time assessment required)

SPECIES GROUP	SPECIES	IIIA		NORTH SEA	WEST SCOTLAND + VIIB	VII					VIII			
		SKAG	KATT			D	E	A	F	G	OTHERS	Nth	Str	
PELAGIC	HERRING	+		△	△ CLYDE □			△		△		J □ B/C □		
	MACKEREL			△	○									
INDUSTRIAL + H.C.	BRAT	⊞		⊞										
	NORWAY P.			+										
	SAND EEL			+										
DIVERSAL	COD	□	○	○	○					○		cdefgk □		
	HADDOCK	□		○	⊕							cdefgk □		
	WHITING	□		○	⊕					○		cdefgk □		
	SAITHE	←⊕		○	⊕									
	PLAICE	□	□	⊕			⊕		○	⊕				
	SOLE			○			⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕				
	HAKE													□ □
△	5			2	1			1		1				
○	11		1	5	2			3						
⊕	10			1	3		3	1		2				
□	13		5		1							5		2
+	3		1	2										
□	2		1	1										
Σ	44		8	11	7		3	5		3		5		2

Table 1 SUMMARY OF STATE OF THE STOCKS

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF VERTICAL LANDINGS (AVERAGE 75-78), RECOMMENDED TAC's 1979, 1980 in thousands of metric tonnes, nominal whole weight

Group	Species	III a		IV North Sea	VI + VII b Clyde	VII					IV VI VII VIII a,b	TOTAL
		Skag	Katt			d	e	a	f	g		
PELAGIC	HERRING	76/8	97	101	64			16	5*			287
		79	45	0	0			11	0*	7(b.c)		65
		80	40**	0	0			10	0*	7(b.o) 6(J)		65
PELAGIC	MACKEREL	76/8		244								691
		79		145								580
		80		0								350
PELAGIC	TOTAL	76/8	97	345	64			16	5*			978
		79	45	145	0			11	0*	7(b.c)		645
		80	40**	0	0			10	0*	7(b.c) 6(J)		415
INDUSTRIAL	SPRAT	76/8	73	435								508
		79	70	400								470
		80	70	400								470
INDUSTRIAL	NORWAY FOUT	76/8		365								365
		79		DF								
		80		DF								
INDUSTRIAL	SAND EEL	76/8		687								687
		79		DF								
		80		DF								
INDUSTRIAL	TOTAL	76/8	73	1487								1560
		79	70	DF								70
		80	70	DF								70

* "Celtic Sea" = VIIg,h + VIIi to 51°N
 DF = Deferred Values for 1979 are for TAC's which exist only
 ** 2000 tonnes allocated to Norwegian fjords.

TABLE: 3 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL LANDINGS (AVERAGE 76-78), RECONSTRUCTED TAC'S 1979, 1980 in thousands of metric tonnes, nominal whole weight

Group	Species	III a		IV North Sea	VI + VII	VII						IV VI VII VIII a,b	TOTAL	
		Skag	Katt			d	e	a	f	g	Others			
DEMERSAL	76/8	21	16	220	16			8						292
	79	-	16	247	10.4			7.3						281
	80	14.0	16.4	200 ^o	12.1			5.0						257
HADDOCK	76/8	8.1 ^{**}		150	35									197
	79	6.6		83	11.0									101
	80	6.6		66	11.5									93
WHITING	76/8	29		139	19			11						216
	79	-		111	12.0			-						123
	80	22		100	10.5			10						161
SAITHE	76/8			220	34									254
	79			200	32									232
	80			129	31									160
PLAICE	76/8	18	12	114				3						151
	79	14		120				2.5						138
	80	14	10.8	112				2.5						142
SOLE	76/8			19				4	1					26
	79			13				-	-					14
	80			14				1.46	0.78	1.3	1.0 ⁺			18
HAKE	76/8													55
	79													43
	80													30
DEMERSAL	76/8	104		862	104			23						1191
	79	37		774	65			11						43
	80	84		621	65			19						30

* Values for 1979 are for TAC's which exist only
^o "Celtic Sea"
^{**} = VIIg, h + VIIa to 51°N
⁺ Subject to alteration by ICES - see p. 21 (cod)
⁺⁺ average 1976/7