



## ICES Issues ~~Diverse~~ Advice for Pelagic Fish

On October 3 and 4, ICES issued advice on a number of the main pelagic stocks. The advice on nephrops will be issued later in the month. As usual ICES provided advice on the individual stocks, according to the normal procedure. However in addition, there were a number of special requests to ICES. As in the June advice, discards and other previously unaccounted mortality is subtracted from the catch advice to give advice for landings or TACs. In other words, the landings advice relates to the landed component, having accounted for other forms of mortality. Overall, the combined advised TACs for pelagic species, including those dealt with in June, is about 10 per cent higher than in 2012. This is mainly driven by increases in mackerel, blue whiting and boarfish.

**Mackerel:** ICES advises that catches should not increase in relation to the last three years average. This corresponds to landings of no more than 889,886 tonnes in 2014. ICES notes that discards (including slippage) are known to take place, but cannot be quantified accurately; therefore total catches cannot be calculated. This advice is an increase of 64-79 per cent on last year. The basis of the advice is different this year. It is based on average catch advice. No analytical assessment can be presented. The main cause is a change in the perception of the accuracy of the catch data prior to 2005. Sensitivity runs with alternative catch series demonstrated that the assessment model was dependent on the accuracy of the historic catch data series.

**Boarfish:** Following the MSY approach implies a fishing mortality at FMSY = 0.23. On this basis, ICES advises that catches in 2014 should not be more than 133,957 tonnes. If discard rates (from non target fisheries) do not change from the average of the last 10 years (2003-2012) the average discard rate of 6,448 tonnes should be subtracted from this, resulting in landings in 2014 of no more than 127,509 tonnes. This advice is based on the assessment conducted in 2013. This work was funded in part by the KFO and the wider fishing industry in Ireland and Denmark, and includes an acoustic survey estimate from 2012 and 2013. This advice represents an increase of 51 per cent in the TAC.

**Blue whiting:** ICES advises on the basis of the management plan agreed by Norway, the EU, the Faroe Islands and Iceland that landings in 2014 should be no more than 948,950 tonnes. All catches are assumed to be landed. This represents a 48 per cent increase in TAC. This is based on the current management plan, which

has a target fishing mortality of 0.18. However, in the spring ICES suggested that other fishing mortalities in the range of 0.22 to 0.3 would be consistent with fishing at MSY. It is not clear if the management plan will be adjusted accordingly. However the TAC advice relating to these ranges from 948 950-1,502,000 tonnes (48-134 per cent TAC increase).

**Western horse mackerel:** ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach that landings in 2014 should be no more than 110,546 tonnes. Even though some discards are included in the assessment, the total amount of discards cannot be quantified. Therefore total catches cannot be calculated. This is a 40 per cent decrease in the TAC from the 2013 adopted TAC. If the management plan, developed by scientists and the Pelagic RAC were adopted, the decrease would be 25 per cent with a TAC advice of 137,524 tonnes.

**Atlanto-Scandian herring:** ICES advises on the basis of the management plan of EU, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, and Russia that landings in 2014 should be no more than 418,487 tonnes. Minor discards are known to take place, but cannot be quantified accurately; the proportion of discards in the total catches is considered negligible. This is a 32 per cent decrease on the TAC for 2013. The stock is declining. In the last 15 years, five large year classes have been produced (1998, 1999, 2002, 2003 and 2004). However, the available information indicates that year classes born after 2004 have been small. Fishing mortality in 2011 and 2012 is slightly above the management plan target F.

**North Sea horse mackerel:** New data on survey indices available for this stock do not change the perception of the stock; therefore,

the advice for this fishery in 2014 is the same as the advice for 2013. Based on the ICES approach to data-limited stocks, ICES advises that landings should be no more than 25,500 tonnes. Discards are known to take place but cannot be quantified; therefore total catches cannot be calculated.

There were a number of special requests that were also dealt with. Many of these were from the European Commission, but were in fact the result of work by the Pelagic RAC. There were also a number of requests from NEAFC on issues surrounding mackerel. The number of such requests has increased markedly in recent years, and the scientific community does not have the capacity to answer them all. The result of this is that the responses are not of the quality that may be considered appropriate. NEAFC, the European Community, the RACs and the national fisheries administrations will need to agree which requests are priorities and which are not.

**Request for full evaluation of proposed management plan for boarfish and possibility of a revision of the TAC in 2013:** ICES did not fully evaluate the plan. However, ICES identified that given that a Category 1 assessment is now being used for advice, ICES recommends that Tier 1.1 of the plan be considered consistent with the PA and MSY approaches for as long as a Category 1 assessment is available. An in-year TAC revision is not possible at the moment because the 2013 assessment is the first that is of sufficient quality to be used for advice. An in-year revision would require an accepted 2012 assessment, and this was not available. Also, the in-year revision in the original request was contingent upon the availability of a full evaluation of the plan. However no such evaluation is possible at present.

**Request for evaluation of proposed plan for western horse mackerel (issued in July)** ICES considers that the current harvest control rule (HCR) in the Western horse mackerel management plan is not consistent with the precautionary approach (PA) because the plan does not deal adequately with two or more years of very low recruitment, which has been observed for this stock since 2004. However, ICES does suggest an alternative option for amending the current HCR based on appropriate stock and recruitment modeling. Until these issues are addressed, ICES is neither able to advise on a suitable replacement plan nor a revision of the 2013 TAC.

## EU Commission Adopts Trade Measures Against Faroes to Protect Stocks

In August the EU Commission finally adopted a package of measures to address the continued unsustainable fishing practices of the Faroe Islands. It is expected that this action is a forerunner to similar moves against Iceland. The measures include the ban of imports of herring and mackerel from the Atlanto-Scandian stocks that has been caught under the control of the Faroe Islands as well as fishery products containing or made of such fish. The measures also include restrictions on the use of EU ports by vessels fishing for the herring and mackerel stocks under the control of the Faroe Islands. This means that some Faroese vessels will not be allowed to dock in EU ports, except in emergency cases.

Up until 2013 the Atlanto-Scandian herring stock was jointly managed by Norway, Russia, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and the EU, through an agreed long-term management plan and pre-established shares of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC). However, in 2013 the Faroe Islands unilaterally decided to break out of this agreement and established an autonomous quota which more than trebled their previously agreed share. Despite efforts to find a negotiated solution and the repeated warnings that measures could be adopted, the Faroese refused to end their unsustainable fishing of the stock. The scientific advice for Atlanto Scandia herring (see page one) is showing a large decrease of 31 per cent for next year which will be further exacerbated by the action of the Faroe Islands and will lead to closure of this fishery in future if left unchecked. Having exhausted all other means, the Commission decided to make use of the powers granted by the Trade Instrument. These measures received the clear support of Member States in the Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture on July 31, 2013.

While addressing the Pelagic Conference in Alesund on August 21, Sean O'Donoghue highlighted the impact of Faroes and Icelandic fishing activities on catches of pelagic species and the financial fall-out for countries such as Ireland with a high dependence on this sector. He called for an end to the irresponsible behaviour of the Faroes and Iceland and fully endorsed the EU Commission's use of the Trade Instrument in this instance.

## Crustacean Update

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) has recently launched two consultation processes – Lobster Management and Shrimp Management – which are of particular interest to inshore pot fishermen. The response date has been extended from the end of September to October 25, so there is still plenty of time if you have not already made your views known. Lobster Management Consultation 2013: The Minister is seeking stakeholder views on proposals for new management measures for the lobster stock. The proposals involve introducing either a maximum landing size of 127mm OR increasing the present minimum landing size to 90mm. There is a very straightforward "tick-the-box" form to complete and an option to include your comments at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/fisheries/marineagency/esprogrammesdivision/fisheriespolicyandmanagement/lobstermanagementconsultation2013/> While this will inform the DAFM of stakeholder views on optimum landing sizes, it will also hopefully be the first step on management of this valuable stock. Shrimp Management Consultation 2013: The Minister is seeking stakeholder views on proposals for new management measures for the shrimp stock. The proposals involve closing the shrimp fishery on February 1 each year, rather than the current May 1 closing date. Views are also being sought on other management issues for the fishery. Details of the proposals can be viewed at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/fisheries/marineagency/esprogrammesdivision/fisheriespolicyandmanagement/shrimpmangementconsultation2013/> For more information please contact Norah Parke, Crab Coordinator, KFO, Tel: 087 9055414 or e-mail: [norakfo@eircom.net](mailto:norakfo@eircom.net) or details of both proposals are available on DAFM website (as above).

## Survey Gathers Independent Data on Mackerel And Horse Mackerel Eggs

Every three years, the International Council of the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) co-ordinates the International Mackerel and Horse Mackerel Egg Survey. The survey is a collaboration between ten research institutes in nine countries: Scotland, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Iceland and the Faroes. The survey series started in 1977 and it currently provides the only fishery independent data to the stock assessment process. The data collected from the surveys is used by ICES to estimate the spawning stock biomass (SSB) of mackerel, and to provide an index of abundance of horse mackerel.

In 2013, 17 surveys, totalling 341 days of ship time, were carried out. The surveys started off the coast of Portugal in early February, and finished to the west of the Hebrides, on July 31. The Marine Institute undertook two surveys in 2013. The first took place in February/March and covered the Celtic sea and much of the Bay of Biscay. The *Celtic Explorer* carried out 140 plankton tows and eight fishing hauls. The second survey, which took place in July, started west of Brest and continued north to the Hebrides. Due to the size of the area covered in July, alternate transects were sampled with estimates being interpolated for the intervening transects. 133 plankton tows and eight fishing hauls were made.

Mackerel and horse mackerel spawn mainly along the Continental Shelf edge, from Portugal to the north of Scotland. The spawning fish move northwards during the summer as water temperatures rise. The survey programme is divided up into six sampling periods with countries being assigned a time period and area to sample. Plankton samples are collected every ICES half rectangle, 0.5°

by 0.5°, along a transect. Historically the sample areas were quite fixed, and were close to the 200m contour line. In more recent times, the survey has had to adapt in an attempt to cover the large increase in the distribution area of mackerel. Now ships continue to sample along a transect until they have two zero counts for either mackerel or horse mackerel. An alternate transect strategy has also been developed whereby ships initially sample every second transect of their assigned area, and fill in the gaps if they have time towards the end of their survey.

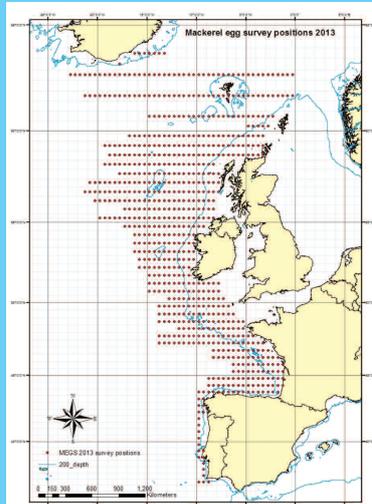


Figure: Distribution of plankton stations during the 2013 ICES international mackerel and horse mackerel egg survey.

Plankton samples are collected using a special plankton sampler with a fine mesh, which is towed at 4kn on a v-shaped tow to within 5m of the bottom to a maximum depth of 200m. Once the sampler is on board all fish eggs are picked from the plankton. Mackerel and horse mackerel eggs are subsequently identified and their stage of development is noted. The number of the most recently spawned eggs (stage one) is used to calculate the total egg production of mackerel and horse mackerel eggs throughout the whole spawning period.

Adult fish are sampled to determine their fecundity, i.e. the number of eggs produced per female fish. During the 2013 survey, fishing for mackerel was carried out on all surveys, while fishing for horse mackerel was only carried out by Scotland and the Netherlands during June. Fecundity samples are collected from mature fish and samples are subsequently divided among six of the participating laboratories for analysis.

Egg numbers from all surveys were collated by the survey co-ordinator in Scotland in early August to provide a provisional total annual egg production for use by the ICES Working Group for Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE) in their assessments. Preliminary fecundity data was also provided. The final data will be compiled and analysed by a working group in April 2014 at its annual meeting.

## ICES Accepts Boarfish Assessment and Advises Large Increase for 2014

With the 2013 boarfish fishery resuming after the summer lay-up it is a good opportunity to take stock and to look at the prospects for the year ahead. Between the boarfish survey and the development of a stock assessment and advice at ICES WGWIDE it's been a busy and productive few months for the boarfish project.

On July 10 the third annual Boarfish Acoustic Survey left Killybegs onboard the *MFV Felucca* to link up with the *RV Celtic Explorer* off the west coast. This effectively extended the Malin Shelf Herring Acoustic Survey to the south, which resulted in continuous coverage from approximately 58.5°N to 47.5°N. The survey followed the same track and protocols as in 2012, starting on the Porcupine Bank before heading back inshore and continuing south. As with previous years, boarfish were found in all the expected places but this year the shoals seemed to be less dense and the fish more scattered. The reasons for this are unclear but it may be related to the exceptionally settled weather Ireland experienced in July. The water temperature off the west and southwest was significantly higher than the average at this time of year, which may have affected shoaling and spawning behaviour. The acoustic estimates of total stock biomass were 863,446 tonnes and 439,897 tonnes in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

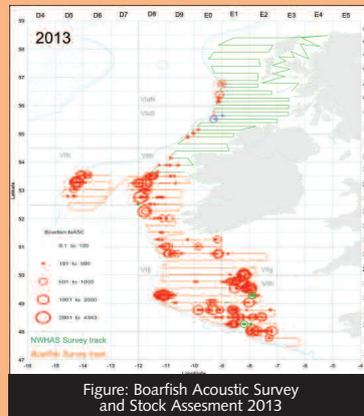


Figure: Boarfish Acoustic Survey and Stock Assessment 2013

The significant drop in biomass in 2013 is difficult to explain but may be related to the unusual environmental conditions observed in 2013. Inter-annual differences like this in survey estimates are expected and a longer time series of survey data are needed before trends can be accurately detected.

The acoustic estimates fed directly into the newly developed assessment model for boarfish along with landings and discard data, and bottom trawl survey data from 1991-2012. The new assessment has been accepted by the ICES WGWIDE and is the basis for ICES advice for 2014 (see page one.) This allows the advice to be based on the MSY approach rather than on average catches or point acoustic estimates as was previously the case, which provides a sound scientific basis for the provision of future advice for this stock. ICES has advised that total landings in 2014 should be no more than 127,509 tonnes. This is a large increase on the 2013 advice of no more than 82,000 tonnes and is a significant step forward

for the fishery.

It is still early days for the boarfish fishery and each year of data enhances our knowledge of this species. It is important not to get complacent though and to continue to pursue novel research that will help us to better understand their biology and ecology. To this end, a new project on the genetic stock structure of boarfish is due to start in October, the results of which will feed into future assessments. The future looks bright for boarfish.

## Blue Whiting Acoustic Survey Shows Large Increase In Stock Size

Working Groups I and II of the Pelagic RAC meeting in Amsterdam in July were given a comprehensive and encouraging update based on the most recent stock survey by Ciaran O'Donnell of the Marine Institute. He explained that there is now a 10-year data set of the International Bottom Trawl Survey (IBTS) and that this year the survey lasted 19 days, covered an area of 87,895 nautical miles with 3,044 fish being aged and 7,044 measured. He further pointed out that migration was slightly delayed this year and that very deep aggregations of fish were found down to 700 meters. He concluded that the conditions were so favourable for spawning that the fish did not only spread horizontally, but also vertically.

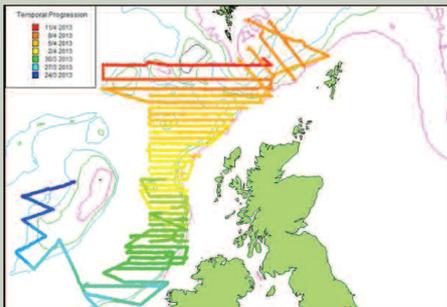


Figure 1: Timing of the Blue Whiting Acoustic Survey shown in different colour (See Legend)

A strong 2010 year class is now coming into the fishery as indicated by the dominance of three- and four-year old fish in the sampling. The dominant year classes are years three, four, five and eight and the highest proportion of juveniles is found in the Shetland/Faroe region. The biomass is estimated at 3.4 million tonnes which is a 55 per cent increase compared to 2012. The most productive region remains around the Hebrides containing >73 per cent of the spawning stock biomass.

Regarding the detail of the survey, he noted the co-operation and close alignment between the vessels which ensured the survey was carried out as planned and comprehensive trawling ensured validation of the acoustic recordings. More than 96 per cent of total biomass recorded in the areas was surveyed by more than one vessel and there was wide agreement between participants in age readings. This indicates an exceptionally reliable level of precision in the estimates. It was noted that Norway did not take part in this year's survey but is expected to participate as usual next year.

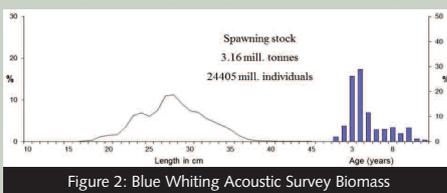


Figure 2: Blue Whiting Acoustic Survey Biomass

BIM's new five year strategy "Capturing Ireland's Share of the Global Seafood Opportunity" was launched by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney T.D. on July 17 at the Gibson Hotel in Dublin. The Strategy sets out a number of clear high level targets to be achieved by 2017. These include creating 1,200 new jobs in the sector and delivering €1 billion in seafood sales, of which €650 million will come from exports and €350 million from the domestic market. Further, the sector will see an expansion in raw material supply by 45,000 tonnes per annum, both from aquaculture and from capture fisheries; in particular from boarfish, blue whiting and increased landings from foreign vessels into Ireland. Finally, the strategy is targeting the delivery of 8,000 training places to the sector and the expansion of four companies to reach a turnover in excess of €50 million per annum.

The new strategy highlights opportunities for unprecedented sectoral growth that are largely dependent on Ireland's ability to produce and supply seafood products to an increasing world

## Urgent Need to Improve Safety Culture in the Commercial Fishing Industry

Almost ten fishermen in the Irish fishing industry drown every year; this is an intolerable level of loss and devastation in a relatively small sector. In response, a new high-level working group on safety in the Irish fishing industry has been established. The group was launched by Minister for Agriculture Food and Marine, Simon Coveney and supported by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar, in Union Hall in July. It will consider and advise on a number of issues including safety standards on vessels, improving compliance with safety regulations; changing culture and attitudes to safety; safety training; technical innovation in safety; making the fishing industry more attractive for new entrants with improved career structures and opportunities.

The Marine Safety Working Group consists of representatives from the Irish fishing industry, including KFO, BIM, the relevant government Departments, the Marine Survey Office, Coast Guard and several other well-known and influential figures from a fishing background. The Group is chaired by Lt. Crd. John Leech, who has been a prominent figure in Irish water safety circles for many years. He envisages industry-wide participation in the working group. He intends to invite a number of bodies which are actively involved in the fishing industry and may be able to assist us in the work of the Group to make presentations. More importantly the Group is

inviting fishermen, family members and partners of fishermen and members of the public to contribute to its work by making a submission to and/or completing an online survey which is available at: [http://esurv.org/online-survey.php?surveyID=OCONON\\_f69ec7f](http://esurv.org/online-survey.php?surveyID=OCONON_f69ec7f)

BIM will play a pivotal role in this initiative as the agency charged with the task of implementing the more immediate steps. Enhanced safety training courses and grant aid for safety equipment form the basis of the new programme and will be aimed primarily at the more vulnerable, smaller inshore fleet. Key aspects of the package are:

- Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) integrated into Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs);
- Float free, self activating Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs);
- Auto Pilot Alarms;
- Wireless engine cut offs;
- Revised Fishing Vessel Code of Practice to be tougher and amended to take account of lessons learnt from recent tragedies;
- The establishment of a high level working group on safety in the Irish fishing industry;
- A new Marine Notice being drafted on use of lifejackets;
- A new National Maritime Safety and Emergency Response Strategy to be launched; and
- A new enhanced Safety Training Course run by BIM on a five year cycle.

## Funding Arrangements For The New CFP and CMO Still To Be Agreed

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) - worth just under €6.5 billion and an integral supporting mechanism for the recently adopted reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the Common Markets Organisation (CMO) -- had started the process towards a final conclusion when the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament voted to adopt the amended proposal for a regulation to implement this critically important element of the reform process. The Council has already adopted a position during the Irish and Danish presidencies.

There were many areas in the original proposal which caused concern to the Irish industry but, by and large, most have been addressed with the inclusion of some key amendments. The requirement to land all catches was originally a daunting prospect but, through lengthy negotiations, has been reduced to a hopefully more manageable level and will be aided by funding to develop more selective gear and facilities to handle, process and store unavoidable unwanted fish.

The poor perception of fishing as a career choice has led to a gradual loss of young people in the Irish fishing industry but this can be reversed with some

of the financial packages that will be available for them to train and to purchase vessels. Subsidies for fleet modernization are included in the amendments which are critically important where ageing vessels and equipment pose a safety hazard and need to be replaced. In general, there was an increased emphasis on the socio-economic conditions experienced by workers in the fishing sector in an effort to bring those more in line with other workers; however, what works in industrial sectors cannot always transfer directly to the fishing sector. Improvements and innovations for processing fishery products will be supported as will the preparation of production and marketing plans, storage aid and funding for Advisory Councils. Data collection and data management systems will be improved which should lead to improved scientific advice and dialogue between fishermen and fisheries management.

The next hurdle for the EMFF will be the vote of the European Parliament plenary which is planned for October 22. Trilogue negotiations with the Council and Commission will start after the plenary vote with a view at this stage to reaching a political agreement before the end of the year.

## Capturing Ireland's Share of the Global Seafood Opportunity

population and an attendant growing demand for seafood. This upward trajectory in population growth will see the global requirement for seafood fish grow by an additional 42 million tonnes per annum by 2030, according to the Fisheries and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Through the new strategy BIM is aiming to develop the Irish seafood industry and deliver on the targets by focusing on five key areas which include:

1. Expanding the raw material supply from fisheries and aquaculture to Irish processors;
2. Maximising additional value from the raw material base;
3. Creating scale within industry structures;
4. Developing industry skills that will help grow the sector; and
5. Enhancing the environmental sustainability of Irish seafood.

Each of these five key priority areas contain a series of actions which BIM will undertake to ensure that the objective is delivered on in each case. There are 37 actions to be undertaken in all. Some of these

will involve participation and engagement with other agencies including Bord Bia, the Marine Institute, the Seafood Protection Authority, Enterprise Ireland, Udaras na Gaeltachta and Teagasc as well as developing relationships with the third level education sector. The latter will be critical to bringing new talent and skills to the sector.

The strategy was drawn up to closely link with the Government's Food Harvest and Harvesting Our Ocean Wealth documents as well as having regard to the new Common Fisheries Policy due to come into effect in 2014. It brings together a combination of micro and macro thinking that will allow the industry to capitalise fully on the undoubted market opportunities that are being offered by the very encouraging global trends that are set to continue well beyond the life of the strategy itself. BIM firmly believes that this new strategy and its outlined actions will serve to lead the Irish seafood sector to new levels of output, employment and prosperity. The Strategy can be viewed on line at [www.bim.ie/our-publications](http://www.bim.ie/our-publications).

# Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



and most importantly Ireland cannot end up as a significant loser. Minister Coveney must ensure that this does not happen. The KFO will continue to play a proactive role in all the relevant fora to protect our number one economic fishery and large number of jobs at sea and ashore dependant on the fishery.

The ICES scientific advice for widely distributed stocks was issued on October 3 and 4, (see article page one.) The advice is positive for mackerel, blue whiting and boarfish with large increases, and negative for horse mackerel and Atlanto Scandia herring with large decreases. In giving its advice this year, ICES has made a number of very significant and far-reaching changes, particularly the ~~downgrading of mackerel to a data-poor stock.~~

The mackerel advice is very surprising, not in relation to the increase of 64 per cent in the TAC which is long overdue, but because ICES was unable to give advice in relation to the management plan as there was no accepted analytical assessment for mackerel in 2013. ICES concludes that the survey results taken together with estimates of mortality based on catch give strong indications that there have been increases in stock size, and current levels of catch and landings do not pose a threat to the stock. In light of this, ICES has given advice based on recent landings but this advice is seen as a temporary interim measure. ICES will attempt to incorporate more stock size information in an appropriate assessment model at the benchmark in 2014. Should this approach be unsuccessful a data-limited stock approach will be developed based specifically on the triennial regime of survey data. It is incredible that mackerel may after the benchmark next year be classified as a data-poor stock.

The Mackerel International Egg Survey which finished at the end of July has shown a significant

increase on the previous survey with the estimated stock size based on the survey only of approximately 5.6 million tonnes. I expected this outcome as it is reflecting what the pelagic industry has encountered over the last five years on the fishing grounds, with large shoals of mackerel over the entire distribution area which has expanded both south and north. This is not confined to one area or one fleet. The industry is also seeing signs of very good recruitment (above average) over the last number of years, particularly in 2009, 2010 and 2011. I am of the firm view that the ICES advice for 2014 is too conservative but at least is beginning to reflect the reality on the grounds.

The large increase in mackerel should be good news but it is actually 14,000 greater than the declared expected catches of 334,000 tonnes for 2013 by Faroes, Iceland and now Greenland (51,000 tonnes). This really highlights the reckless and irresponsible behaviour of both Faroes and Iceland over the last four years. I envisage that the ICES advice will give a renewed impetus to reach agreement on the sharing arrangements at the upcoming Coastal States meetings. It is imperative in any agreement that Iceland, Faroes and now Greenland are not rewarded by a large percentage share as a result of their irresponsible behaviour

The boarfish advice (page one and two) ~~advice~~ for next year is up 51 per cent. The key reason for the increase is that ICES has accepted the new assessment method proposed by Irish scientists which includes the acoustic estimates from the surveys along with landings and discard data, and bottom trawl survey data from 1991-2012. The new assessment is the basis for ICES advice for 2014 (see page one.) This allows the advice to be based on the MSY approach rather than on average catches or point acoustic estimates as was previously the case, which provides a sound scientific basis for the provision of future advice for this stock. Boarfish is a real success story in terms of collaboration between industry and scientists. I must recognise the enormous amount of work done by the scientists (Ed Farrell, Maurice Clarke and Cólín Minto) over the last twelve months to address the issues raised last year and on getting the new assessment method accepted by ICES this year.

ICES is advising a 40 per cent reduction for western horse mackerel for next year. This advice is based on the MSY approach which I consider inappropriate for this stock and has not been used by the Commission over the last number of years when making its proposals. Instead the Commission has used the management plan formulated by the PRAC since 2008. ICES was requested to evaluate the management plan this year and to suggest changes if it found the plan was no longer precautionary. Unfortunately ICES found that the management plan is no longer precautionary but was unable to address the second part of the request about amendments to the plan due to resource constraints. This is a very unsatisfactory situation with the MSY approach the only scientific option on the table. The best way forward in my view is to continue to use the management plan for next year which entails a 25 per cent reduction and to ensure that the problems with both the assessment and management plan are fully addressed by ICES next year.

The ICES blue whiting advice has yet again changed dramatically from the previous year. The advice given is for a 48 per cent increase (949,000 tonnes) based on the existing management plan with a fishing mortality of 0.18 which ICES had originally advised. ICES however has changed the fishing mortality to 0.30 and when this is combined with the large increase in stock size from the acoustic survey (55 per cent) (see page three) the ICES advice is for a TAC next year of 1.5 million tonnes. I did not believe or accept the ICES advice when it recommended a TAC of 40,000 tonnes in 2011; similarly I do believe the 1.5 million tonnes for next year. The advice from ICES of 949,000 tonnes is based on a management plan that they know is no longer valid given their advised change in the fishing mortality rate and the advice should be for a TAC of 1.5 million tonnes. In my opinion the TAC should be in the range of 1 million to 1.2 million tonnes.

It is worth noting that the ICES advice ~~is~~ not the final TACs from 2014. The final decision on next years TACs will be taken at the Council of Fisheries Ministers in December and will be based on the Commission's proposals due out at the end of October.

## Important Dates October - December 2013

October 2	PRAC Discards meeting	Hague
October 2	Northern Pelagic Working Group	Hague
October 3	PRAC WG1 & WG2	Hague
October 3	ICES Advice Pelagic Stocks released	Copenhagen
October 4	PRAC AGM & Executive Committee	Hague
October 7	Industry/Science Partnership	Galway
October 8	Quota Management meeting	Dublin
October 9	WG, Safety, Training & Employment	Dublin
October 14	Celtic Sea Project meeting	Brussels
October 14-16	Coastal States Blue Whiting	London
October 16	LRAC Working Group 2	Brussels
October 16-18	Coastal States Atlanto Scandia Herring	London
October 17-18	Fisheries Council	Luxembourg
October 22	Whitefish Quota Management meeting	Dublin
October 23-25	Coastal States Mackerel	London
End October	Commission Proposals TACs & Quotas 2014	Brussels
November 4-5	WG, Safety, Training & Employment	Dublin
November 7-8	NWWRAC WGs, EXCOM & FG	Paris
November 11-15	NEAFC AGM	London
November 18-19	Fisheries Council	Brussels
November 18-22	EU/Norway first round	Clonakilty
November 20	WG, Safety, Training & Employment	Dublin
November 22	Executive Board EAPO	Webex
November 2-6	EU/Norway second round	Bergen
December 10	WG, Safety, Training & Employment	Dublin
December 16-18	Fisheries Council	Brussels