

## Minutes: Monkfish Steering Group meeting

Meeting Date: 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Location: Online

Attendees	Organisation
AW: Andy Wheeler	Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation (CFPO)
CN: Chloe North (Chair)	Western Fish Producer Organisation
EM: Eilidh Milligan	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
HO: Harry Owen	Western Fish Producer Organisation
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
JH: Juliette Hatchman	South Western Fish Producer Organisation Ltd (SWFPO)
MK: Michael Kemp	Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
LB: Lisa Bennett	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
LH: Loren Hiller	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
NK: Nikki Kelly	Interfish
RL: Rebecca Lyal	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
RH: Ruth Hoban	New England Seafood International (NESI)
SJ: Sophie Jenkinson	Morrisons
TH: Tim Huntington	Poseidon
<b>Apologies</b>	
<b>Ben Lambden</b>	<b>Tesco</b>
Chris Ranford	Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation (CFPO)
Lisa Readdy	Cefas
Philipp Boeni	Coop Switzerland

### Purpose of the meeting

1. Updates from Cefas on recent monkfish stock assessment and mixed fisheries management advice
2. Update from the MSC on commercial markets for monkfish in the UK and abroad.
3. Discuss remaining actions for completion in the final year of the FIP, and next steps after April 2024

### Agenda Item 1: Stock status update (Actions 1-4) (Tim)

TH updated on behalf of Lisa Readdy. Based on the recent stock assessment, *Lophius piscatorius* (MON) and *L. budegassa* (ANK) are both listed as ICES data 'Category 1' stocks and have a relatively stable stock status. Both species are included in the mixed fisheries management advice in two ecoregions (Celtic Seas and Bay of Biscay and Iberian Waters). The action plan recommends continued engagement with ICES over the ANK benchmarking and stock assessment process, and suggests a score of SG80 in 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 in year 7 should be achievable. For Action 4, a project has been proposed to examine the extent of species hybridisation within the stocks, as this is currently unknown, and adds some uncertainty to the overall stock status.

**Actions from Item 1:**

- TH to ask Paul Medley to clarify that the ICES advice stating that “management of both species together prevents effective management of either species” will not present an issue in a full MSC assessment.

**Agenda Item 2: Secondary species (Action 5, 6) (Chloe)**

Cefas told CN that the public-facing part of Geofish is scheduled for September. Geofish is a tool which combines satellite tracking and logbook data to provide information about fishing activity and impacts and will provide valuable information for this FIP.

TH said performance indicators 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 are on track and could achieve SG80 at the end of Year 7. CN, AW and TH discussed the mesh sizes used in Project 50%, and whether fishers were still voluntarily using larger mesh sizes to increase catch selectivity, particularly at the cod end.

Based on the preliminary gap analysis conducted against Version 3 of the MSC Fisheries Standard, the FIP will need to provide further definition of input or output measures that minimise bycatch mortality, and evidence of effectiveness that the measures have reduced or minimised bycatch mortality.

**Actions from Item 2:**

- SWFPO, CFPO, WFPO to summarise any voluntary gear modifications being used by the fishers in their PO to be included in the FIP FMP (CN / AW / JH)

**Agenda Item 3: ETP species (Action 7, 8) (Bex/Tim)**

The [Clean Catch App](#) is being trialled to meet the requirements of milestone 8a. The Secretariat thanked the South West Fish Producers Organisation for promoting vessels to trial functionality of the app; this trial should be starting over the coming weeks. If the trials are successful, then the intention is for the app to be used across all vessels in the FIP.

CN, TH, AW discussed the bycatch reported in Kingston *et al.*, 2021, which suggested higher bycatch of harbour porpoise, common dolphin and seals than expected. ‘Pingers’ are used by the certified Cornish hake fishery to deter marine mammals; this may also be useful for vessels in this FIP. JP noted that the MMO have not released permits for widespread use of pingers due to the unknown impact of sound on other species. CN suggested inviting a Cefas representative from the Clean Catch UK team to discuss the population status for marine mammals with the Steering Group, to provide information to the group and help inform any discussions when considering the new requirements under version 3.0.

CN updated that the Shark Trust posters have been printed and posted to the Producer Organisations.

**Actions from Item 3:**

- Secretariat to check timeline of the CleanCatch UK app feasibility trials and plans for wider rollout.

- Secretariat to contact Al Kingston to query whether the levels of interactions will hinder the recovery of all three species listed in Kingston et al, 2021RL to follow up at next CCUK meeting on the use of pingers on <12m, and the need for MMO permits.
- TH to check with FN if some ETP species from this FIP can be included in the preliminary test-run being conducted by Poseidon for using the Risk Based Framework method under version 3.0.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Habitats (Actions 9, 10, 11, 12) (Lisa)**

##### *Inshore VMS (I-VMS)*

On the 19<sup>th</sup> June, the MMO announced that the roll-out plan for I-VMS device redistribution is in development. The roll-out timetable will be announced in the coming weeks. The proposed legislation is not expected to be implemented until 2024.

##### *Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)*

To support these habitat actions, TH has prepared a risk analysis matrix template to look at Marine Management Organisation (MMO) MPA regulations and fishing activity across the UoA against each gear type, for inclusion in the FIP FMP. LB gave an overview of the MMO MPA rollout stages. The [consultation period for Stage 3](#) ended in March, which looked at the impacts of bottom towed gear in 41 MPAs; 11 of these are in the English Channel. Management measures are expected by the end of 2024.

##### *Discussion*

MK and EM agreed to work with the Secretariat to develop the risk analysis matrix. TH said that v3.0 also requires consideration for management measures to prevent or reduce ghost gear, which CN said industry can do by demonstrating their process for recording and minimising ghost gear. TH suggested using the risk assessment template for ghost gear and abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear that has been used in the crab and lobster FIP.

##### **Actions from Item 4:**

- Secretariat to follow up with a call with MK and EM to discuss creating the matrix of MPA's measures and fishing activity, based on the template from TH
- MK to check if this type of information/matrix already exists in the MMO
- Secretariat to consider resources such as Natural England's seabed and gear interaction consultations to help inform the MPA/fishing impacts matrix.
- Secretariat to share ghost gear and abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear risk assessment template with POs to fill out
- POs to fill out ghost gear risk assessment template sent by the Secretariat

#### **Agenda Item 5: Compliance and enforcement (Action 13) (Lisa/Chloe)**

This action is largely dependent on the implementation of new technologies such as Remote Electronic Monitoring. Defra are currently consulting on the rollout of an REM pilot study. CN noted that the FIP can support the process by feeding into the consultation and being willing to engage with the pilot.

TH said that for v3.0, evidence is required to show the fishery is complying with national regulations. CN suggested submitting a freedom of information request to demonstrate any non-compliances within the fishery, which LB noted had been done for other FIPs to understand if there have been any sanctions in the fishery in the last 5 years.

**Actions from Item 5:**

- CN suggested all POs and industry representatives encourage engagement with the REM pilots next year, and to feed into the consultation.
- Secretariat to submit an FOI to the MMO to seek information on any non-compliances in the fishery.

**Agenda Item 6: FisheryProgress.org Social Policy (Bex)**

The Secretariat has been supporting the FIPs with the Fishery Progress requirements for their human rights and social responsibility (HRSR) policy. Action updates are submitted every six or 12 months [on the FIP profile](#), as required. A supporting document for the Grievance Mechanism requirement was recently uploaded by the Secretariat; Steering Group members are welcome to provide comments on that document. LB said that while there are no new actions to start, there are outstanding requirements that are largely beyond the capacity of the FIP. The Secretariat are supporting ongoing independent work on crew welfare and grievance mechanisms, as explained in the HRSR action plans.

**Agenda Item 7: Commercial markets update (Loren)**

In 2022-23 the UK & Ireland market ranks third, globally, for MSC labelled sales, ahead of most European countries (excluding the German, Austrian and Swiss grouped region). 1,350 unique labelled products were retailed in 2022-23, comprised of 52 species. Sustainable seafood 'shelves' and improved search engine optimisation on retailer websites has increased visibility of labelled products when shopping online. Southern European retailers have increasingly been announcing commitments to expand the proportion of MSC labelled products, including on fish counters, driving the need for certification to fulfil their sourcing requirements. MSC labelled monkfish are sold in 4 countries from one certified fishery, with a 79% increase in labelled sales since 2018. A second monkfish fishery (FISF Faroe Island demersal) is currently in assessment (1898mt). LH confirmed that UK retailers are sourcing monkfish from the FIP, particularly those who prefer to source from British fisheries.

**Agenda Item 8: ITM/Next steps further discussion (Lisa)**

The Steering Group need to consider the next steps for the FIP at the end of its current timeline. After April 2024, the MSC will no longer act as Secretariat for the FIP. This means that Steering Group meetings will no longer be scheduled, and Poseidon will also no longer be available to advise fishery stakeholders on how to deliver the FIP action plan. From May 2024, the FIP will be listed as 'inactive' or 'complete' on Fisheryprogress.org, depending on progress made against the actions, with a public statement available detailing any outstanding actions, accordingly.

Three options were proposed to the Steering Group to discuss and comment on:

**Option 1:** The fishery uses the time between now and the end of the FIP to address additional actions aimed at meeting Version 3.0 (v3.0) of the MSC Standard. After April 2024, the FIP aims to enter full assessment on v3.0. To do this, the next steps are to:

- Form a client group to take responsibility for the certificate
- Approach several CABs for quotes to undertake the initial assessment, as well as annual surveillance audits
- Organise funding for the initial assessment as well as annual surveillance audits
- Complete a documents checklist and gather all documentation and evidence required to demonstrate that the fishery scores on average SG80

**Option 2:** The FIP joins the In Transition to MSC (ITM) program, led by a client group, and continues to work on actions in the action plan to meet either Version 2.0 (v2.0) or v3.0 of the Standard. The ITM program provides FIPs with access to certification using v2.0, with the understanding that all fisheries must be certified against v3.0 by November 2028. FIPs joining the ITM program must:

- Have a pre assessment less than 36 months old and an associated action plan, both verified by a CAB (the monkfish pre assessment was updated by Poseidon in April 2022)
- Have an aim to enter MSC assessment at the end of their action plan
- Have a project manager responsible for delivering the FIP action plan
- Report progress regularly

**Option 3:** The FIP seeks an extension with FisheryProgress.org and uses the time between now and the end of the FIP to continue to address the current actions. After April 2024, the FIP gains an additional extension to make the improvements and continue using FisheryProgress.org, under a different Secretariat. To do this, the next steps are to:

- Identify a new Secretariat from April 2024
- Approach FPO with a request to extend the FIP, with justification and appropriate timeline
- Organise any funding needed for the extension timeline
- Takes on Social Responsibility actions

### *Discussion*

SJ said that it would be preferable if the fishery could go straight into full assessment on v3.0, though would need to check with the Morrisons buying team for their position. Morrisons currently source monkfish from the FIP and have a sourcing strategy that requires FIP or MSC certified fisheries. EM doesn't directly feed into M&S sourcing decisions but can support on sustainability queries. EM's personal opinion also supports the fishery entering into full assessment against v3.0. NK agreed that would be preferable, though is unsure if it is achievable at this point. From the action plan, CN doesn't think entering assessment would be possible until the MPAs have been regulated and the REM policy has been clarified, therefore the end of 2024 is more plausible, though she queried what would be done in the interim. CN would like to hear more from the supply chain about their support for the FIP going into the certification process, including potential financial support, and the impact of not remaining in an MSC/FIP environment.

## Any Other Business

- JP highlighted that the SW hub meeting for PO's, catching sector and retailers is a good opportunity to have a group discussion and consider the next steps for the SW fisheries.
- This is CNs last Steering Group meeting as she is going on maternity leave. Harry Owen will represent WFPO and said he is happy to take on chairing responsibilities. LB thanked CN and welcomed HO.
- Project UK Round 3: JP gave a brief update on Round 3 of Project UK FIPs. The Secretariat has had philanthropic commitments to funding, that hopefully FASS can match fund in November. Additional funding is still being sought, and Steering Groups need to be formed before the FIPs should be able to launched in 2024.

## Meeting Closes

Actions Arising	Responsibility
<b>Actions from Item 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TH to ask Paul Medley to clarify that the ICES advice stating that "management of both species together prevents effective management of either species" will not present an issue in a full MSC assessment.</li> </ul>	TH
<b>Actions from Item 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWFPO, CFPO, WFPO to summarise any voluntary gear modifications being used by the fishers in their PO to be included in the FIP FMP (CN / AW / JH)</li> </ul>	CN / AW / JH
<b>Actions from Item 3:</b> <i>Secretariat to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• check timeline of the CleanCatch UK app feasibility trails and plans for wider rollout.</li> <li>• contact Al Kingston to query whether the levels of interactions will hinder the recovery of all three species listed in Kingston et al, 2021</li> <li>• Secretariat to follow up at next CCUK meeting on the use of pingers on &lt;12m, and the need for MMO permits.</li> <li>• TH to check with FN if some ETP species from this FIP can be included in the preliminary test-run being conducted by Poseidon for using the Risk Based Framework method under version 3.0.</li> </ul>	Secretariat          TH
<b>Actions from Item 4:</b> <i>Secretariat to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• follow up with a call with MK and EM to discuss creating the matrix of MPA's measures and fishing activity, based on the template from TH</li> <li>• consider resources such as Natural England's seabed and gear interaction consultations to help inform the MPA/fishing impacts matrix.</li> </ul>	Secretariat

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share ghost gear and abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear risk assessment template with POs to fill out</li> <li>• MK to check if this type of information/matrix already exists in the MMO</li> <li>• POs to fill out ghost gear risk assessment template sent by the Secretariat</li> </ul>	<p>MK CN / AW / JH</p>
<p><b>Actions from Item 5:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CN suggested all POs and industry representatives encourage engagement with the REM pilots next year, and to feed into the consultation.</li> <li>• Secretariat to submit an FOI to the MMO to seek information on any non-compliances in the fishery.</li> </ul>	<p>CN  Secretariat</p>