Irish Prawn FIP meeting minutes

Location: Virtual Meeting

Date: 13th December 2022

Time: 10am-12:30pm

**Adoption of the agenda**

Agreed

John Lynch of the Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation and Norah Parke of Killybegs Fishermens Organisation sent apologies as they could not attend.

1. **New FIP contract & FIP Strategy Steering Group**

Mike Fitzpatrick introduced Ciara Dower. Ciara will be working with Mike and Frank on the running and development of the FIPs.

Mike gave an update on the new FIP contract which has improved resourcing of the programme in recognition of the increased FIP workload. Mike outlined that there will be closer integration with BIM’s other work programs and that a strategy steering group will be be formed shortly to address the overall progress and direction of the FIP program. More information will be circulated on this group after a meeting to be held on the subject with BIM early in the new year.

1. **FIP plans and status**

Mike gave a brief update on the current state of FIPs including current Fishery Progress ratings, updates for 2023 including changes to Fishery Progress social responsibility policy and reporting, and the new version of the MSC standard.

Mike spoke on the Prawn FIP upgrade on Fishery Progress from a D rating in early 2022 to its current B rating. Mike thanked Macdara for Marine Institute support in working with the FIP on rolling out the data collection initiative which was important element in the upgrade.

With the release of a new version of the MSC standard in November 2022, Mike noted that at some point changes will need to be made to the FIP workplan to ensure it is aligned with the new standard.

1. **UK FIP meeting updates**

The meeting was informed about a meeting of the UK Nephrops FIP, attended last week by Irish Prawn FIP representatives, where harvest strategies and options for maintaining sustainability of Functional Units without changing the current management regimes were discussed. Further information on this meeting will be available once the minutes of the meeting are released.

The UK prawn FIP also held a meeting in early December in Kilkeel between the UK FIP, Northern Ireland Producer Organisations and buyers from the major UK retail chains including Sainsburys, Lidl, Tesco, M&S and the Co-Op. It was noted that this meeting was the first of its kind where retailers got to speak directly to fishers to discuss issues within the industry and the meeting was very productive in terms of progressing mutual understanding. Fishers provided insight to the retailers on pressing matters such as crew and visa issues and rising costs of production. Retailers in turn made it clear that engagement with MSC or a FIP programme is vital to maintain a listing within their stores.

1. **Prawn stock status (Macdara O Cuaig, Marine Institute)**

Macdara provided information on the current state of the stocks and 2023 catch advice as per the Marine Institute stock book and ICES advice. Macdara raised the importance of data provisioning be it fishery dependent data such as data from logbooks and landings or independent data such as UWTV surveys. Macdara noted that prawn stock advice is based on in year surveys, unlike other fisheries which are based on the previous year’s surveys.

FU 14 (Irish Sea, East)

* ICES advice with MSY approach, catches in 2023 should be no more than 789 t.
* Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and stock size is above MSY Btrigger.
* The decrease in total catch advice is the result of the lower estimated stock abundance in 2022, together with a small decrease in mean weights in landings and discards

FU 15 (Irish Sea, West)

* ICES advice with MSY approach, catches in 2023 should be no more than 11,069 t.
* Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and stock size is above MSY Btrigger.
* The catch advice for 2023 is reduced compared to 2022 due to a reduction in the estimated stock abundance.

FU 16 (Porcupine Bank)

* ICES advises that when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for Western Waters and adjacent waters is applied, and assuming zero discards, catches in 2023 that correspond to the F ranges in the MAP are between 3054 t and 3787 t. The entire range is considered precautionary when applying ICES advice rule.
* Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and no reference points for stock size have been defined for this stock.
* The increase in total catch advice is the result of the higher estimated stock abundance after the addition of new data.
* The UWTV abundance estimate increased by 34% in 2022. No MSY Btrigger has been defined for this stock due to the short time series. The lowest abundance observed of 722 million individuals in 2014 could be used as a MSY Btrigger proxy.

FU 17 (Aran, Galway Bay, and Slyne Head)

* ICES advises that when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for Western Waters and adjacent waters is applied, catches in 2023 that correspond to the F ranges in the MAP are between 316 t and 363 t.
* Advice based on the UWTV survey was not deemed robust enough due reduced sampling caused by poor weather rendering the survey incomplete. The stock size is unknown for 2022. The assessment and advice is therefore based on the 2021 UWTV survey.
* Fishing pressure on the stock is at FMSY, and stock size unknown for 2022.

FU 19 (Southeast and Southwest Coast of Ireland)

* ICES advises that when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for Western waters and adjacent waters is applied, catches in 2023 that correspond to the F ranges in the MAP are between 302 t and 338 t.
* The decrease in catch advice for 2023 compared to previous years is directly linked to the decreased estimate of stock abundance in 2022.
* Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and stock size is below MSY Btrigger.

FU 20 and 21 (Celtic Sea)

* ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2023 should be no more than 1,803 t.
* The decrease in catch advice for 2023 compared to last year is directly linked to the decreased estimate of stock abundance in 2022. The latest estimate of stock abundance is above MSY Btrigger and the third lowest observed in the time series.
* Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and stock size is above MSY Btrigger.

FU 22 (The Smalls)

* ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2023 should be no more than 2,548 t.
* The increase in catch advice for 2023 compared to last year is directly linked to the increased estimate of stock abundance in 2022. The latest estimate of stock abundance is below MSY Btrigger and the fourth lowest observed in the time series.
* Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and stock size is below MSY Btrigger.

In reply to a query on the extent of the UWTV surveys Macdara advised that the MI UWTV survey covers FUs 15, 16, 17, 19,20-21, and 22 while the Irish Sea functional units are conducted by NI. There were also some queries on whether the UWTV survey covered all active fishing grounds including on rougher ground. The overlap between fishing grounds and UWTV coverage will be on the agenda for a meeting between the prawn fishing interests and scientists at the end of January 2023. Macdara also noted that the UWTV survey can only assess the number of burrows while the data on size and age classes comes from sampling trips further emphasising the need for increased sampling efforts. Macdara gave thanks to fishers and processors who currently partake in sampling programmes and expressed the need to increase participation in 2023.

**Actions:**

* Macdara to source information on overlap between UWTV survey sites and distribution of fishing effort for discussion at January meeting.
* Macdara to consult stock scientists on when a reference point will be made available for the porcupine stock.
1. **Plans for 2023- Focus on FIP specific tasks**

January progress report requirements

Mike Fitzpatrick outlined that an annual report for the FIP has to be submitted in January 2023 and that progress is required on key workplan actions in order to satisfy Fishery Progress requirements. The first key issue is on improving sampling at sea levels and this can be discussed further at the workshop at the end of January 2023. The other issue is how to ensure the sustainability of individual prawn stocks. A survey is currently being conducted on industry views on protection of functional units. A report will be produced and submitted as part of the annual progress report in January.

There was a short discussion on the prawn workshop scheduled to take place in late January 2023. It was noted that the agenda has not been formalised, but the basis of the meeting will be on how Irish prawn fishers can improve the science, management and value of the fishery. The issue of making the 3-month closure at the Porcupine (FU 16) applicable to all countries was raised and further discussion of this topic will take place at the January meeting.

**Actions:**

* FIP coordinators will contact co-op managers, fishermens organisation representatives and the Marine Institute Fisheries Liaison Team Leader in order to develop a plan or next steps to improve industry data provision levels.
* FIP coordinators will conduct a survey of industry views on options to protect sustainability of prawn stocks.

FIP Social responsibility Requirements

The social responsibility policy that all Fishery Progress registered FIPs must report on and comply with was discussed. Mike detailed that Fishery Progress have provided extensions on social responsibility reporting compliance as it was realised how challenging a task this was to implement among FIPs globally. Mike advised on the formation of a social responsibility working group to comprise of representatives across all the FIP as it is a fisheries wide issue. PO reps also advised that updates on the atypical working scheme are due to be released in January.

GDPR database

Frank updated the meeting on the creation of the GDPR compliant database to record details of FIP membership. This will serve two purposes, complying with Fishery Progress requirements and, assisting companies who have Origin Green plans with Bord Bia. The database would hold details of all fishers who are registered with the FIP. These types of lists are also publicly available for all MSC fisheries.

1. **AOB**

There was a query relating to the scope for a FIP to be established for whelks. Mike advised on the need for resourcing to be considered when establishing more FIPs and advised that this was a topic for the strategy steering group.

**Actions:**

* Once the strategy steering group is established, assess the options for establishment and funding of further FIPs.

Meeting ended 12:11