Summary of IFSRP Meeting 24/01/23

The latest *Nephrops* Stock Assessments and Advice:

Sampling and data sources (Macdara O’Cuaig, MI)

* Criteria for sampling: 1 box unsorted catch, 1 box unwanted catch.
* Sampling follows the fleet- increased sampling in FU where efforts increase.

Survey - Assessment - Advice cycle (Jennifer Doyle, MI)

* Sediment data, backscatter determines relative hardness of the ground
* Other data that feeds into stock assessments are IFGS data and observer data. Scientific data provides bulk of information for assessment due to lack of industry-based information.
* Survey takes place annually over 3 legs, surveying 3 separate fishing grounds
* High level of quality control in UWTV survey to ensure validity of data for stock assessment.
* Results:
  + Mean density (burrow/m2) at each station
  + Total abundance estimates for each FU
  + MSY Btrigger based on survey series

Review of assessments and ICES advice by FU (Jonathan White, MI)

* LPUE and sex ratio determined that June, May and July are best months for closure at FU 16, in that order. Closure to protect spawning stocks, juveniles, and females.
* FU 20-21 drove decrease in overall fishing effort. Sudden stock increase followed by sharp decrease driven by ecological factors
* During Q&A
  + More data requested for stocks before and after windfarms, example: Whitehaven, Irish Sea.
  + Data on international fishing efforts in FU 16 during Irish closure needed

The latest Irish HEI Research on *Nephrops*

Advances in understanding of *Nephrops* biology & Impact of changing oceanographic drivers on *Nephrops* (Anne-Marie Power NUIG)

* Growth by size structure difficult to measure in Nephrops
* Length-cohort analysis difficult
* Age analysis unreliable
* Growth per year is highly variable especially in males
* Results from time series show nephrops in higher densities grew less per year
* Larval retention, dispersal and connectivity of stocks.  In 2018 larval retention <1% in Aran grounds, 15% in FU 15

Microplastics loadings in *Nephrops* (Haleigh Joyce, GMIT)

* While microplastics are found in Nephrops fishery and surrounding habitat and it is an area of increasing concern it is not as hot an issue as in other fisheries
* Low microplastic levels were recorded in *N. norvegicus*, indicating that microplastics do not bioaccumulate.

Genetics of *Nephrops* (Jeanne Gallagher, UCD\BIM)

* 5 of the 12 sampling grounds in Irish waters
* Results suggest at least four genetically distinct groupings of the species across the sampled distribution and the presence of isolation by distance. No evidence for genetic bottlenecks were found in any population, however the genetic structure observed in this study does not correspond to current fisheries management delineations.

Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) closures on the Porcupine Bank (Colm Lordan, MI)

* Discussions on VMEs, focus on polygon 61- request to push for legislative change on polygon location before release of advice in April

Discussion on management and conservation (John Lynch facilitator)

* Discussions revolved around FU 16 (porcupine) and conservation measures that should be implemented by all flags fishing the porcupine
* Approximately 80% of FU 16 landings are Irish with France and the UK landing in smaller figures
* Spanish landings increased in 2021

BIM Fisheries Conservation

* Reducing unwanted catches (Ronan Cosgrove, BIM)
  + Recent trials with TCMs and gear modifications discussed
* Improving energy efficiency (Matthew McHugh, BIM)
  + Next step in gear trials include off bottom doors to reduce impact on seabed and to improve drag

Food Safety Requirements for Freezer Vessels (SFPA)

* Presentation on best practice and standards aboard freezer vessels including control regulations

Update on *Nephrops* Fisheries Improvement Plan (Mike Fitzpatrick, *Nephrops* FIP)

* Background and update on FIPs including recent activity and reporting status of Nephrop FIP
* Trends in the market- retail sourcing policy increase in demand for sustainably sourced seafood
* FIP detailed the survey conducted in late 2022 of fishing skippers in relation to their views on approaches to protect functional units or sub-stocks of Nephrops. Results include:
  + FU16 was high priority for skippers interviewed
  + General agreement amongst fishers to support measures that would reduce fishing impacts on female prawns
  + Inshore fishers also highlighted need for protection of juvenile prawns
  + Emphasis on the need for improved scientific data and science-industry co-operation to inform such an approach.
* Recommendations for enhanced protection of female prawns in FU16

Main actions from workshop:

* Review of Irish 3-month closure in FU 16 - More industry data and information required to feed into decision making
* Access socio economic impacts of closure including impacts of continued fishing by other member states during Irish closure in FU 16
* FIP committed to continue discussions on FU sustainability with FIP participants in the interim

Workshop set to be held annually.