**Whitefish FIP Meeting Q1 2024**

Haddock and Saithe FIPs Update

* Verifact presented the strategic priorities for Haddock and Saithe FIPs for 2024
* FIP priorities for industry data provision, sampling at sea and observer programs were discussed and supported by the meeting.
* It was noted that the Fishery Progress benchmark tracking tool could be taken into consideration for decision making and tracking progress.
* MF gave an overview of the FIP report on Celtic Sea Whitefish improvement options including skipper consultation.
* MF explained the rationale for the report and gave an overview of the feedback received by skippers.
* One of the main findings of the report was that fishers strongly supported the use of T90 mesh codends over square mesh panels as the T90 meshes were felt to be much more effective at selecting larger Haddock, Saithe and Whiting and reducing discards. Fishermen recommended that further trials of T90 gear should be undertaken particularly on trawls.
* The BIM gear technologist at the meeting said they would consider this recommendation and they are positive about doing further work on T90 trials.

**Actions**

* FIP coordinators will organise a follow up meeting with the BIM conservation team on T90 trials and will look to further align the FIP workplan with the BIM conservation teams gear technology program.
* FIP coordinators will circulate the Celtic Sea Whitefish Improvement Report

Whiting Pre-assessment Report (Poseidon)

* RC introduced the background of the pre-assessment which was conducted under V3 of the MSC standard.
* GS talked through P1 scores and rationale
  + Question on Area 6a Harvest Strategy score, it was explained that while scores under one PI may be good that if HCRs aren’t working in conjunction with other measures it can result in lower score
  + MF expressed that HS is covered as an action under the workplan.
  + It was noted by RC that pre-assessment was conducted using data pre-2023 so current assessments of the fishery is not reflected in the scores.
  + EF provided some updates on stock assessments for 6a:
    - Whiting was benchmarked in 2021 so data prior to 2021 would not be as useful for assessment
    - Cod, recently there has been a major stock revision for northwestern stocks
    - Monkfish is due to be benchmarked in late Q1 2024.
* RC talked through P2 scores and rationale
  + Question on ghost gear and how the FIP can address it, would gear recycling initiatives be relevant?
  + MF noted that step one is to address if there is an issue with ghost gear and step 2 is, if so, how to address it.
  + FF commented that there are industry initiatives on end-of-life gear, an extended producer responsibility scheme (EPR) is being developed for fishing gears and the FIP will be monitoring that progress and how the FIP can align their workplan with these initiatives.
* RC talked through P3 scores and rationale- he noted that more information on compliance and enforcement of LO may be available via SFPA reports

New Whiting Workplan

* MF presented the draft workplan for the Whiting FIP based on the pre-assessment and opened the discussion to the meeting for comment
* RC suggested the Marine Institute conducted management strategy evaluations may be useful under P1 actions.
* There was a query on if the FIP covered 7d now that it has been added to North Sea under ICES
* Discussions took place on Whiting FIP Area coverage, the option of splitting areas covered by FIP was presented to the FIP for consideration.

**Actions:**

* FIP to circulate additional information regarding FIP coverage of 7a and 7d
* FIP to circulate pre-assessment and workplan and set a deadline for comment
* Set up a meeting with demersal scientists in MI to discuss areas for improvement, including catch profiles, MSE, etc
* Consider recent and upcoming benchmarks across relevant species under FIP areas.

Social Requirements

* Updates on state of play with social requirements were presented to the meeting.
* Submission of the FIP social policy statement and information on Fishers’ awareness of rights including potential future actions were put to the group for comment.
* The consensus of the meeting was one of agreement with the importance of social requirements and support for ongoing FIP efforts

AOB

No AOB, meeting closed at 4pm.

*Note*: Following feedback immediately after this meeting, the FIP committed to explore mechanisms to have more skippers in attendance at FIP meetings in addition to their representatives.