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SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEETING - 2009

**FISHERIES COMMISSION'S REQUEST FOR SCIENTIFIC ADVICE ON MANAGEMENT IN 2010
AND BEYOND OF CERTAIN STOCKS IN SUBAREAS 2, 3 AND 4 AND OTHER MATTERS**

1. The Fisheries Commission with the concurrence of the Coastal State as regards the stocks below which occur within its jurisdiction, requests that the Scientific Council, at a meeting in advance of the 2009 Annual Meeting, provide advice on the scientific basis for the management of the following fish and invertebrate stocks or groups of stocks in 2010:

Northern shrimp in Div. 3M, 3LNO
Greenland halibut in SA 2 and Div. 3KLMNO

Noting that SC will meet in October of 2008, FC requests SC to update its advice for 2009, as well as to provide advice for 2010, for both shrimp stocks referenced above.

2. The Fisheries Commission with the concurrence of the Coastal State as regards the stocks below which occur within its jurisdiction, requests that the Scientific Council, at a meeting in advance of the 2009 Annual Meeting, provide advice on the scientific basis for the management of the following fish stocks according to the following assessment frequency:

Two year basis

American plaice in Div. 3LNO
Capelin in Div. 3NO
Redfish in Div. 3M
Thorny skate in Div. 3LNOPs
White hake in Div. 3NOPs
Yellowtail flounder in Div. 3LNO

Three year basis

American plaice in Div. 3M
Cod in Div. 3NO
Cod in Div. 3M
Northern shortfin squid in SA 3+4
Redfish in Div. 3LN
Redfish in Div. 3O
Witch flounder in Div. 2J+3KL
Witch flounder in Div. 3NO

To continue this schedule of assessments, the Scientific Council is requested to conduct the assessment of these stocks as follows:

In 2009, advice should be provided for 2010 and 2011 for American plaice in Div. 3LNO, yellowtail flounder in Div. 3LNO, redfish in Div. 3M, cod in Div. 3M, white hake in Div. 3NO and capelin in Div. 3NO.

- In 2007, advice was provided for 2008, 2009 and 2010 for redfish in Div. 3LN, redfish in Div. 3O, cod in Div. 3NO and witch flounder in Div. 2J+3KL. These stocks will be next assessed in 2010.
- In 2008, advice was provided for 2009 and 2010 for yellowtail flounder in Div. 3LNO, and thorny skate in Div. 3LNOPs. These stocks will be next assessed in 2010.
- In 2008, advice was provided for 2009, 2010 and 2011 for cod in Div. 3M, American plaice in Div. 3M, witch flounder in Div. 3NO, redfish in Div. 3LN and northern shortfin squid in SA 3+4. These stocks will be next assessed in 2011. For redfish in Div. 3LN, the Scientific Council conducted full assessments and provided advice in 2007 and 2008 for this stock.

The Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to continue to monitor the status of all these stocks annually and, should a significant change be observed in stock status (e.g. from surveys) or in by-catches in other fisheries, provide updated advice as appropriate.

3. The Commission and the Coastal State request the Scientific Council to consider the following in assessing and projecting future stock levels for those stocks listed above. These evaluations should provide the information necessary for the Fisheries Commission to consider the balance between risks and yield levels, in determining its management of these stocks:
- a) The preferred tool for the presentation of a synthetic view of the past dynamics of an exploited stock and its future development is a stock assessment model, whether age-based or age-aggregated.

- b) For those stocks subject to analytical-type assessments, the status of the stocks should be reviewed and catch options evaluated in terms of their implications for fishable stock size in both the short and long term. As general reference points, the implications of fishing at $F_{0.1}$ and F_{2008} in 2010 and subsequent years should be evaluated. The present stock size and spawning stock size should be described in relation to those observed historically and those expected in the longer term under this range of options.
- c) For those stocks subject to general production-type assessments, the time series of data should be updated, the status of the stock should be reviewed and catch options evaluated in the way described above to the extent possible. In this case, the level of fishing effort or fishing mortality (F) required to take two-thirds MSY catch in the long term should be calculated.
- d) For those resources for which only general biological and/or catch data are available, few standard criteria exist on which to base advice. The stock status should be evaluated in the context of management requirements for long-term sustainability and the advice provided should be consistent with the precautionary approach.
- e) Spawning stock biomass levels considered necessary for maintenance of sustained recruitment should be recommended for each stock. In those cases where present spawning stock size is a matter of scientific concern in relation to the continuing reproductive potential of the stock, options should be offered that specifically respond to such concerns.
- f) Information should be provided on stock size, spawning stock sizes, recruitment prospects, fishing mortality, catch rates and catches implied by these management strategies for the short and the long term in the following format:
- I. For stocks for which analytical-type assessments are possible, graphs should be provided of all of the following for the longest time-period possible:
 - historical yield and fishing mortality;
 - spawning stock biomass and recruitment levels;
 - catch options for the year 2010 and subsequent years over a range of fishing mortality rates (for as many years as the data allow)
 - (F) at least from $F_{0.1}$ to F_{max} ;
 - spawning stock biomass corresponding to each catch option;
 - yield-per-recruit and spawning stock per recruit values for a range of fishing mortalities.
 - II. For stocks for which advice is based on general production models, the relevant graph of production as a function of fishing mortality rate or fishing effort should be provided. Age aggregated assessments should also provide graphs of all of the following for the longest time period possible:
 - exploitable biomass (both absolute and relative to B_{MSY})
 - yield/biomass ratio as a proxy for fishing mortality (both absolute and relative to F_{MSY})
 - estimates of recruitment from surveys, if available.
 - III. Where analytical methods are not attempted, the following graphs should be presented, for one or several surveys, for the longest time-period possible:
 - time trends of survey abundance estimates, over:
 - an age or size range chosen to represent the spawning population
 - an age or size-range chosen to represent the exploited population
 - recruitment proxy or index for an age or size-range chosen to represent the recruiting population.
 - fishing mortality proxy, such as the ratio of reported commercial catches to a measure of the exploited population.

For age-structured assessments, yield-per-recruit graphs and associated estimates of yield-per-recruit based reference points should be provided. In particular, the three reference points, actual F, $F_{0.1}$ and F_{max} should be shown.

4. Noting the Precautionary Approach Framework as endorsed by Fisheries Commission, the Fisheries Commission requests that the Scientific Council provide the following information for the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Fisheries Commission for all stocks under its responsibility requiring advice for 2010:
- a) the limit and precautionary reference points as described in Annex II of the UN Fisheries Agreement indicating areas of uncertainty (for those stocks for which precautionary reference points cannot be determined directly, proxies should be provided);
 - b) the stock biomass and fishing mortality trajectory over time overlaid on a plot of the PA Framework (for those stocks where biomass and/or fishing mortality cannot be determined directly, proxies should be used);
 - c) information regarding the current Zone the stock is within as well as proposals regarding possible harvest strategies which would move the resource to (or maintain it in) the Safe Zone, including medium term considerations and associated risk or probabilities which will assist the Commission in developing the management strategies described in paragraphs 4 and 5 of Annex II in the Agreement.

5. The following elements should be taken into account by the Scientific Council when considering the Precautionary Approach Framework:
 - a) References to “risk” and to “risk analyses” should refer to estimated probabilities of stock population parameters falling outside biological reference points.
 - b) Where reference points are proposed by the Scientific Council as indicators of biological risk, they should be accompanied by a description of the nature of the risk associated with crossing the reference point such as recruitment overfishing, impaired recruitment, etc.
 - c) When a buffer reference point is proposed in the absence of a risk evaluation in order to maintain a low probability that a stock, measured to be at the buffer reference point, may actually be at or beyond the limit reference point, the Scientific Council should explain the assumptions made about the uncertainty with which the stock is measured.
 - d) Wherever possible, short and medium term consequences should be identified for various exploitation rates (including no fishing) in terms of yield, stability in yield from year to year, and the risk or probability of maintaining the stock within, or moving it to, the Safe Zone. Whenever possible, this information should be cast in terms of risk assessments relating fishing mortality rates to the trends in biomass (or spawning biomass), the risks of stock collapse and recruitment overfishing, as well as the risks of growth overfishing, and the consequences in terms of both short and long term yields.
 - e) When providing risk estimates, it is very important that the time horizon be clearly spelled out. By way of consequence, risks should be expressed in timeframes of 5, 10 and 15 years (or more), or in terms of other appropriate year ranges depending on stock specific dynamics. Furthermore, in order to provide the Fisheries Commission with the information necessary to consider the balance between risks and yield levels, each harvesting strategy or risk scenario should include, for the selected year ranges, the risks and yields associated with various harvesting options in relation to B_{lim} , and F_{lim} and target F reference points selected by managers.
6. Many of the stocks in the NAFO Regulatory Area are well below any reasonable level of B_{lim} or B_{buf} . For these stocks, the most important task for the Scientific Council is to inform on how to rebuild the stocks. In this context and building on previous work of the Scientific Council in this area, the Scientific Council is requested to evaluate various scenarios corresponding to recovery plans with timeframes of 5 to 10 years, or longer as appropriate. This evaluation should provide the information necessary for the Fisheries Commission to consider the balance between risks and yield levels, including information on the consequences and risks of no action at all.
 - a) information on the research and monitoring required to more fully evaluate and refine the reference points described in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Annex II of the Agreement; these research requirements should be set out in the order of priority considered appropriate by the Scientific Council;
 - b) any other aspect of Article 6 and Annex II of the Agreement which the Scientific Council considers useful for implementation of the Agreement's provisions regarding the precautionary approach to capture fisheries; and
 - c) propose criteria and harvest strategies for new and developing fisheries so as to ensure they are maintained within the Safe Zone.
7. Regarding pelagic *S. mentella* redfish in NAFO Subareas 1-3, the Scientific Council is requested to review the most recent information available on the distribution and abundance of this resource, as well as any new information on the affinity of this stock to the pelagic redfish resource found in the ICES Sub-area XII, parts of SA Va and XIV and to the shelf stocks of redfish found in ICES Sub-areas V, VI and XIV, and NAFO Subareas 1-3 for 2009.
8. Noting the FC Rebuilding Plan for 3NO cod adopted in September 2007, Fisheries Commission requests Scientific Council to advise, before September 2010, on possible measures the Commission may consider to ensure by-catch of cod is kept at the lowest possible level.
9. Recognizing the initiatives on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VME), and with a view to completing fishery impact assessments at the earliest possible date, Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to:
 - a) Provide, as soon as possible in 2008, delineations, if any, of significant concentrations of corals in the NAFO Regulatory Area, by species, for the identification of VMEs. This should include the size and catch characteristics of corals obtained respectively from commercial fishing vessels and fisheries research vessels and the assessment of

significant adverse impacts, with a particular focus on those species which involve interactions with commercial fisheries. The data should include absence/presence of corals as well as density.

b) Provide, by June 30, 2009, delineations, if any, of significant concentrations of sponges in the Regulatory Area by species, including the size and catch characteristics of sponges obtained respectively from commercial fishing vessels and fisheries research vessels, with a particular focus on those species which involve interactions with commercial fisheries. The data should include absence/presence of sponges as well as density.

c) With respect to corals and sponges in canyons denoted in the Scientific Council's response on the area denoted as "Southern Flemish Pass to Eastern Canyons", provide detailed information as soon as practicable or at least a report on progress by June 30, 2009, with a particular focus on those species which involve interactions with commercial fisheries.

10. With respect to Greenland halibut in SA 2 + Div. 3KLMNO, Fisheries Commission requests Scientific Council, in its 2009 assessment of this stock, in addition to the information requested above:

a) To complete an evaluation of alternate assessment models for this stock. This evaluation will enable the determination of the robustness of the assessment model currently used.

b) To advise Fisheries Commission, if catches of this stock are 16,000 tons in 2009 and in subsequent years, what is the biomass trajectory over these years, based on the most recent assessment?

11. For stocks currently under moratorium, but showing recent increases as assessed by Scientific Council, such as 3M cod and 3LNO American plaice, Scientific Council is asked to provide catch, biomass, and fishing mortality projections where possible, for as many years as the data will allow, at the following levels of fishing mortality: $F=0$; $F_{0.1}$; and F_{2008} , in addition to any projections requested in the sections above.

12. Noting that the Scientific Council assessments of American plaice and yellowtail in Div. 3LNO are currently scheduled to be done in alternate years, Fisheries Commission requests that Scientific Council provide full assessments of both these stocks in the same year. Noting the schedule of assessments currently followed, this would require an additional assessment of yellowtail flounder to be conducted in 2009.

13. Fisheries Commission requests Scientific Council to examine the consequences resulting from a decrease in mesh size in the mid-water trawl fishery for redfish in Div. 3M, to 100 mm or lower.

14. Noting the desire of NAFO to apply ecosystem considerations in the conservation and management of fish stocks in the NAFO area, the Scientific Council is requested to provide the Fisheries Commission at its next annual meeting in 2009 with an overview of present knowledge related to role of seals in the marine ecosystem of the Northwest Atlantic and their impact on fish stocks in the NAFO area, taking into account the proceedings at the September 29 – October 1, 2008 Symposium in Dartmouth.