

Northwest Atlantic



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Statement of the EEC Delegation to the 13th Annual Meeting  
of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization

Subject: Report of the Scientific Council June 1991 Meeting. NAFO/SCS Doc. 91/19

- The delegation of the EEC would wish to state its deep concern about the fact that except for one stock, this year's scientific report does not offer any option based upon different fishing mortalities in the summary sheet.
- Furthermore, no indications are given on the main criteria for the choice of a recommended TAC (protection of the spawning biomass, prevention of recruitment failure, yield per recruit considerations..).
- It is difficult, if not impossible, to build the dialogue between managers and the Scientific Council, necessary for an efficient management of the NAFO fisheries on a single figure which does not correspond to a precisely defined option, and is based on a highly subjective assessment on the status of most stocks.
- The EEC delegation reiterates its plea for management decisions corresponding to international standards and practices. The presentation of the Scientific Report does not in fact correspond to these criteria. It is of paramount importance that for each stock the management body be offered a range of options, the likely biological and economical consequences of each option being described.
- At the same time, the EEC delegation regrets that the uncertainties affecting the assessment, and hence the recommendations, are not taken into consideration in the final advice. This is especially true when conflicting implications are given by the various data sources, as stated in the Scientific Report. The multiplication of vague statements such as "it is believed", "it is thought", it "may be the case" shows that a final conclusion limited to a single figure, without any appreciation of the uncertainties can be severely misleading. The Special Workshop organized last year has indicated the importance of an explicit recognition of uncertainties in the formulation of the scientific advice. The delegation of the EEC does hope that in the future this will be taken into account. A risk analysis associated to various management options would considerably facilitate the final choices.
- The EEC delegation has also noted that analytical assessments have failed in most attempts. It does appreciate the influence of the weakness of the data base in this respect. But there appears to be some contradiction between the summary sheets, which analyze the lack of information, and the second part of the report which contains details of the stocks assessments. Extensive and long-term information on all relevant criteria such as biomass, year-class strength, catch and catch rate-at-age, mean weight at age, etc. can be found in this second part.

- The EEC delegation further regrets that the analytical assessments were systematically based upon a simple attempt to apply a single method, namely ADAPT. It should be checked whether other techniques, including less sophisticated ones, could lead to better results. The EEC delegation welcome the project of a '92 special workshop devoted to calibration techniques, and to the comparison of the various methods. But it does regret that such attempts were not conducted in 1991, and strongly ask the Scientific Council to try other techniques than ADAPT for the next June meeting.
  
- Finally, the delegation of the EEC would wish to formally recommend that NAFO should initiate and undertake everything possible in order to enable the Scientific Council to present, at the next annual NAFO meeting, a series of management options for all stocks under NAFO regime, the likely consequences, including the risks, being analyzed for each option.