

Northwest Atlantic



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SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEETING - JUNE 1986

ICES Proposal for Joint Working Group on  
Harp and Hooded Seals

by

NAFO Secretariat

1. In January 1985, the Scientific Council was informed, through a letter from the General Secretary of ICES, about the establishment of an ICES Working Group on Harp and Hooded Seals in the Greenland Sea, which would hold its first meeting during 9-13 September 1985, with F. O. Kapel as Chairman. The terms of reference were: (a) to assess the stock size and pup production of harp and hooded seals; (b) consider sustainable yields at present stock sizes and in the long term under varying options of age compositions of the catches; (c) consider effects of recent changes in the food supply and the possible interaction with other marine living resources in the area; (d) review the available data to assess the state of the stocks and give proposals for future research programs; and (e) give advice on catch options for the 1986 sealing season.

Because these terms of reference have much in common with corresponding work on harp and hooded seals in the Northwest Atlantic, the Scientific Council considered it advantageous that both ICES and NAFO coordinate their work. It was agreed that the feasibility of joint meetings of the respective working groups or the establishment of a joint ICES/NAFO working group should be considered and that a firm proposal should be developed for consideration by ICES at its Statutory Meeting in October 1985 (NAFO Scientific Council Reports, 1985, page 9).

2. The matter was not raised at the June 1985 Meeting of the Scientific Council, but it was further considered at the September 1985 Meeting (NAFO Sci. Coun. Rep., 1985, page 109). While agreeing that a cooperative arrangement with ICES was desirable, the Council noted that it had not received a proposal for a future meeting of scientists on seals. Consequently, it agreed that the question of a formal relationship with the ICES Working Group would best be left until there is some clear indication of what advice will be requested by the coastal states, but that the possibility of joint collaboration should be explored informally. It was agreed that Dr. A. Schumacher be requested to express the above opinion of the Scientific Council, if the matter is raised during the ICES Meeting in October 1985.
3. The following extracts are from a letter dated 11 March 1986 by the General Secretary of ICES to the Executive Secretary of NAFO:

"I am writing to bring to your notice the following Resolution adopted by the Council at the last ICES Statutory Meeting held in London in October 1985:

*NAFO will be invited to participate in a joint ICES/NAFO Working Group on Harp and Hooded Seals, with the terms of reference similar to those of the ICES Working Group on Harp and Hooded Seals in the Greenland Sea and those of the equivalent NAFO ad hoc Committee.*

"This Resolution is, in effect a further development of the move initiated when the ICES Working Group was established at the 1984 Statutory Meeting. You will recall ... that we discussed it when you were in Copenhagen early in 1985.

"Arrangements were made at the 1985 Statutory Meeting for the Working Group on Harp and Hooded Seals in the Greenland Sea to hold its second meeting at ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen on 3-8 October 1986 (immediately before the ICES Statutory Meeting). The relevant Council Resolution was as follows:

*The Working Group on Harp and Hooded Seals in the Greenland Sea (Chairman: Mr. F. O. Kapel) will meet at ICES Headquarters from 3-8 October 1986 to*

- a) *assess the stock size and pup production of harp and hood seals;*

- b) *consider sustainable and replacement yields at present stock sizes and in the long term under varying options of age compositions in the catch, and provide advice on catch options for the sealing season in 1987;*
- c) *consider the effects of recent changes in the food supply and the possible interaction with other marine living resources in the area;*
- d) *review the available data to assess the state of the stocks and give proposals for future research programmes.*

"These terms of reference are essentially the same as in the original resolution at the 1984 Statutory Meeting when the Working Group was established.

"Should NAFO decide to accept the ICES proposal to form a joint Working Group, these terms of reference could, of course, be augmented to meet NAFO's needs. It is envisaged that the joint Working Group would report directly to NAFO on its assessments and advice in relation to harp and hooded seal populations in the Northwest Atlantic and to ICES for the Greenland Sea populations."

4. The Scientific Council is requested to take a decision on this matter at the June 1986 Meeting, so that ICES can be promptly informed.