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SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEETING – JUNE 2012**REPORT OF THE CATCH ESTIMATION WORKING GROUP MEETING****16 May 2012**

Chair: Don Stansbury

Rapporteur: Neil Campbell

Preamble

In accordance with Article VI, paragraph 1(b) of the NAFO Convention, one of the functions of the NAFO Scientific Council is to “*compile and maintain statistics and records and to publish or disseminate reports, information and materials pertaining to the fisheries of the Convention Area*”. Scientific Council has noted the discrepancy between official records of catch available at the time of the meeting, and those derived from information received from scientific observers, across a wide range of years and stocks. In previous years it has been established practice for an *ad hoc* working group to meet in advance of the main Scientific Council meeting, either by correspondence or in the first days of the annual meeting. The purpose of this group has been to collate estimates of catches from various sources, define best estimates of total catches, and to provide these figures to designated experts in advance of Scientific Council. This has allowed the preparation of assessments before the commencement of the meeting, reducing the quantity of work required during the meeting and allowing more time for discussion.

Over the past decade there has been a substantial difference between official reported catches and working group estimates. In 2011, STATLANT 21A data was not received from several Contracting Parties in advance of the Scientific Council meeting, while the STACFIS catch estimates suggested a substantial TAC overrun for a number of stocks. The magnitude and implication of these differences were such that concerns were raised during the presentation of scientific advice to Fisheries Commission at the Annual Meeting.

In order to improve transparency of the process, it was decided that the workings of the Catch Estimation Working Group should be documented.

Report

The group met by WebEx at 0900 AST, 16 May 2012, to consider the sources of data available for catch estimation. As this meeting has traditionally been an informal event, no agenda was circulated in advance. This year, the only sources available to the group were the official STATLANT 21A submissions, plus unofficial STATLANT 21A data from Spain, which had not yet formally been submitted to the NAFO Secretariat. Catch statistics had been received from most parties who fished in the NAFO Regulatory Area in 2011, with the exception of Canada (Quebec), Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Spain and the USA. Notifications of zero catches and no fishing effort in 2011 were received from Poland and Japan. The details of submissions can be found in Table 1.

This was the first year in which the group had no catch estimations from scientific observers to consider. Concerns were expressed by the group that an incomplete set of STATLANT 21A data was a very different basis on which to conduct an assessment when compared to the figures used in previous years. It was noted by the group that the availability of other data sources has decreased over time as observer and inspection schemes in the NAFO area have been scaled back.

After extensive discussion the position was taken that the official catch statistics would be passed to designated experts for use in their assessments, with the caveat that these figures are not necessarily consistent with the catch

figures used in previous years, and that the implications of this change should be addressed on a stock by stock basis within STACFIS.

The group recommended that the Chair and Scientific Council Coordinator endeavor to obtain the delinquent STATLANT 21A catch data from the outstanding providers, even if it comes with a proviso that these are provisional figures. The meeting adjourned at 1030 AST.

Data Provider	Date Received	Notes
Canada (Newfoundland)	30/3/2012	-
Canada (Maritimes)	1/5/2012	A composite of separate Scotia – Fundy and Gulf submissions.
Canada (Quebec)	N/A	Outstanding as of 16/5/2012
Canada (Central & Arctic)	19/4/2012	-
Cuba	4/5/2012	-
Faroese	30/4/2012	-
Denmark	N/A	Outstanding as of 16/5/2012
Greenland	19/4/2012	-
St Pierre & Miquelon	10/5/2012	-
Germany	26/4/2012	-
Iceland	N/A	Outstanding as of 16/5/2012
Japan	25/4/2012	Did not fish
Norway	27/4/2012	-
Poland	26/4/2012	Did not fish
Portugal	8/5/2012	-
United Kingdom	26/4/2012	-
United States	N/A	Not active in NAFO Regulatory Area
Latvia	N/A	Outstanding as of 16/5/2012
Estonia	N/A	Outstanding as of 16/5/2012
Spain	N/A	Unofficial data available
Lithuania	2/5/2012	-
Russia	29/4/2012	-

Table 1. STATLANT 21A data submitted to the NAFO Secretariat and available to the *Ad Hoc* Catch Estimation Working Group.

APPENDIX I. WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS

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