



Catching opportunity for 2007

It's that time of year again. The annual process for setting the catching opportunity is in its final stages and the attention of those industry sectors catching quota species or affected by the rules is focused on what will be available for 2007. It is a process of many parts and here SFF Chief Executive BERTIE ARMSTRONG provides an overview of its workings

Annually, scientific information on the biology of the quota stocks is collected throughout the year by a variety of surveys and by data analysis. At the request of the European Commission, this emerges in the autumn in the form of stock-by-stock advice from ICES (the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) – an independent scientific 'virtual' body comprising scientists and resources from the 20 or so contributing nations, with our own FRS in Scotland being a significant contributor. We received this information on the 17 October this year.

This advice, from the ICES Advisory Committee for Fisheries Management (ACFM) is purely scientific opinion, taking nothing into account other than the biology of the stocks. Specifically, it takes no account of the economic effects that it might have, which explains why sometimes it looks extreme and impractical – zero catch of cod for example.

Economic effects on the catching industry cannot be ignored, of course, and that is meant to be taken into account at the next stage, the consideration of the ACFM advice by an EU employed committee of experts, STECF – the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries. Technical measures such as those contributing to catch selectivity will also be considered in the STECF process. This then results in the final advice to be considered by the European Commission, in making their proposals to the final decision

making body, the European Council of Ministers. The final outcome, at the end of the December Council of Ministers, is the TAC and Quota regulations for the following year.

To summarise, the European process has four stages:

- The pure scientific advice is published (ICES/ACFM).
- This is then modified by STECF, taking economic and technical factors into account.
- The Commission then turns this into recommendations for the Council of Ministers.
- Finally the Council of Ministers decides what it will approve or change in making the allowable catches and rules for the following year.

That's not quite the whole story. In parallel with the internal EU process described above, the crucial EU/Norway and Coastal States negotiations take place. This series of meetings uses the ICES/ACFM advice as the basis for arriving at catching opportunity decisions for the stocks jointly fished and managed with Norway and the other Coastal States outside the EU, Greenland, Iceland and

the Faeroes. For us in the Scottish catching industry, these EU/Norway decisions are every bit as important as the overall EU process, covering amongst other stocks, herring, mackerel and haddock.

The process is recognised by all players as excessively labour intensive and complex, and ways to ease the load have been under active consideration. This year, for the first time, a paper was issued by the Commission in late summer – before the science came out - laying down the overall Commission approach to catching opportunity for 2007. This allows at least the opportunity to better prepare for the subsequent negotiating process. Further, for the future, the possibility of altering the timing of some of the science to allow for some decisions to be taken early, thereby reducing the extravagant December Council of Ministers agenda, is under active consideration.

So, what is this likely to mean for 2007? It would be unwise to make forecasts while the process is in full swing, but the general shape

Continued overleaf

Tragic loss of the Meridian

Everyone in the fishing industry was tremendously saddened about the loss of the four-man crew of the Kirkcaldy-registered fishing vessel Meridian whilst on guard ship duty in the North Sea.

This tragic incident highlights the harsh conditions that our brave fishermen often work under. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation would like to extend its deepest sympathies to all the family and friends of the vessel's crew.

Inaccurate scare stories

The fishing industry has come under unprecedented attack in recent months from media scare stories that in many instances contain serious inaccuracies.

The Federation recognises that countering these charges is going to be a major challenge for the future.

The latest story to do the rounds was the publication of a report in the journal *Science* predicting that global fish stocks would collapse by 2048.

However, closer examination of the report quickly revealed that it was fundamentally flawed.

SFF Chief Executive Bertie Armstrong said: "The article, aimed at a scientific audience, recognised in its opening paragraphs the scientific inadequacies of collecting local experiments and theories together and then making global assumptions. It then proceeded to do just that.

"As an example of the flawed nature of this approach we might look at the population explosion graphs of the 1960s which were at the time extrapolated into the future, predicting a doomsday scenario for mankind. That didn't happen because the slope of the graph changed.

"The trends underlying the problems covered in the *Science* magazine article are also changing, but that has been ignored. Three ocean ecosystem villains are mentioned:



exploitation; pollution and habitat destruction. We have strenuous improvement efforts being made in each of these areas but the article fails to recognise this, preferring to paint a much more dramatic picture which is scientifically superficial and invites damaging misinterpretation.

"Using the Scottish fishing fleet – the second largest in the EU – as an example, dramatic reductions in the last five years has seen the fleet match the sustainable catch opportunity."

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is emerging in most sectors. There is no room for complacency; full engagement by the Federation with SEERAD, DEFRA, the Commission and the representatives of the other member states will continue until the catching opportunities for 2007 are set.

It must be said that the outlook on catching opportunity for the deep water fleet is not optimistic. The initial Commission recommendations are very precautionary indeed, mainly on the grounds that the science for deep water species is very sparse.

For the pelagic industry, the mackerel opportunities have already been agreed at Coastal States talks between the EU, Norway and the Faeroes in Edinburgh in late October and this has had a satisfactory outcome for the Scottish industry. The blue whiting TAC has also been set at talks in the Faeroes. This is reduced as expected, but again the deal is

satisfactory for the industry. Herring has yet to be decided at the time of writing, but a substantial reduction on the grounds of stock biology is expected.

For the demersal industry, biology of the core stock of haddock is stable and a reasonable settlement is hoped for. However, the Cod Recovery Plan casts its long shadow over the whole demersal mixed fishery. It is to be reviewed next year and with that in mind, the Scottish position is that given the first encouraging signs in the stock, a roll-over of TAC and effort control would be appropriate. Effort control – days at sea – will certainly be an issue in the light of Cod Recovery for the whitefish and prawn fleets.

For the prawn fleet, science on the *Nephrops* stock is produced every two years. The last output was in 2005, with no changes expected in TAC for 2007. However, the ICES advice

Coastal and Marine National Park

On 11 October the Scottish Executive launched a consultation on Scotland's first coastal and marine national park. The consultation will finish on 10 January 2007 and includes a 'roadshow' that will visit many of the candidate areas.

In June 2005 Ross Finnie announced the Scottish Executive's desire to establish a coastal and marine national park (CMNP) in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage was then asked to give advice to Scottish Ministers on the possible areas for such a park, along with the policy framework and added value associated with it. This advice, which was published at the end of March 2006, identified 10 potential areas. These were:

- Argyll Islands and Coast.
- Firth of Clyde.
- Lochaber and South Skye Coast.
- Moray Firth.
- North Uist, Sound of Harris, and South Lewis.
- Orkney and Pentland Firth.
- Shetland.
- Solway.
- South Uist, Sound of Barra and Barra.
- Wester Ross and North Skye Coast.

Although the Scottish Executive has stressed that fishing activities will not be managed by the Park Board, it is evident that operations will be affected by the park designation at some level. A worst case scenario is a Park Authority with regulatory power which, in the words of the Scottish Executive, could lead to 'restructuring in some sectors such as inshore fisheries'.

(first stage, see above) challenged the rationale used by STECF (stage two, see above) in setting last year's TACs, resulting in an initial recommendation for significant reductions. This is an unexpected disappointment and is being vigorously challenged.

So, in final summary, the overall outlook for the industry has worrying aspects, but does not amount to an excessively gloomy picture. By the time you read this, the picture will be more clear, but the final outcome will not be available until the end of December Council.

Minister told of need for a good catch deal



Alex West, SFF President with Scottish Fisheries Minister, Ross Finnie.

There is an air of optimism in the Scottish catching sector and the industry should be proud of its record on sustainability - although a number of challenges lie ahead for 2007, Scottish Fishermen's Federation Chief Executive Bertie Armstrong told guests at its annual dinner in Edinburgh on 11 October.

He told the event, which was attended by Fisheries Minister Ross Finnie, that high operating costs were currently being offset by good prices and Scottish fishermen were fortunate to have world class fishing grounds right on their doorstep.

Fishermen are also taking their environmental responsibilities extremely seriously and an action plan agreed across all sectors of the industry is looking positively towards the future.

"We now have sustainability, underpinned by science, in all our main target species," he said.

"We have the smallest environmental footprint we have ever had with none of the malpractice that you see pilloried in the world media. We don't have deepwater nets tens of kilometres long. Nor do we hook albatrosses as happens in the southern ocean line fishery or have giant vessels fishing on stocks with no or little biological data. All this is simply nothing to do with the industry here."

He added: "We do, however, have our challenges in the short and longer term. We need catching opportunity for 2007 and into the future, which takes proper account of the strong efforts the Scottish industry has put into down-sizing the fleet and in ensuring compliance and building sustainability.

"We welcome Mr Finnie to our gathering and reiterate the request made in productive discussions with him and his staff throughout the year to take our requirements for fair, sustainable catching opportunities combined with realistic effort control measures forward to the negotiations that will govern our viability for next year and into the future."

In response, Mr Finnie said that at the end-of-the-year Fish Council talks he would not support any Commission proposals that had no evidential basis and were not justified by the science.

ICES meeting

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), held its 2006 Annual Science Conference, in Maastricht, Netherlands from 19 to 23 September.

Gerd Hubold, General Secretary of ICES, said: "Marine science is progressing at breathtaking speed. The only chance to keep track of all the exciting developments is to get the key players together at a large conference once a year and ask them to present their science directly from the labs. The ICES Annual Science Conference is such an event, bringing together about 700 marine scientists from all over the world to present their hottest results and discuss how these results can be applied to improving the sustainable management of the use of the oceans and their resources."

The 2006 Conference covered many themes and a variety of these are listed:

- Most recent reports from the North Atlantic showed that the changes in temperature, salinity, and large-scale water movements observed over the past few years are here to stay.

- As a result of continuing warming, southern species like snake pipefish have invaded the Northeast Atlantic Ocean and new fish species are also established in the North Sea.

- Norwegian scientists foresee increased cod recruitment from 2007 to 2008 of between 450 to 700 million individuals and shifts in plankton composition can determine the success of species such as cod through interaction in the juvenile phase.

- The observed ecosystem changes do not seem to be linear. We need to better understand these changes-of-state to identify the relationship between human pressures and ecosystem changes to



develop a sustainable marine management.

- In a changing environment, herring make use of social learning to find their spawning grounds and both climate and fisheries can modify the behaviour and distribution of fish.

- Insights into the behaviour, eg of cod, based on new electronic tags revealed their reactions to extreme environmental conditions.

- Eco-genetic models help us understand and quantify fisheries-induced selection pressures and forecast the direction, speed, and outcome of evolutionary changes; and the results are being used to investigate the consequences of realistic management scenarios.

- Sophisticated electronic storage tags use fish, eg cod, flounder, and salmon as 'lab assistants', and reveal new aspects of their behaviour.

- ICES member countries are beginning to establish networks of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), in accordance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and these initiatives have major implications for 'classic' fisheries management and for scientific advice provided by ICES.

NS Stocks Survey



Following the distribution of the 2006 North Sea Stocks Survey (NSSS), Tim Daw, a postgraduate student from Newcastle University conducted telephone interviews with 24 skippers from the British demersal fishing fleet, who completed the survey, to investigate perspectives of fishermen towards the survey and the questionnaires' ability to collect the knowledge of the fishers. SFF members were requested to return a short reply slip directly to Tim in a supplied stamped addressed envelope.

Tim asked questions about fishers' opinions on the survey, the status of cod, whiting and *Nephrops* stocks this year compared to 20 years ago, in 2000 and last year, and the work of fisheries scientists and their interactions with fishermen.

Fishers generally approved of the survey design, no interviewees thought that the questionnaire was currently too complicated and many warned of the effect of further complications on the rate of response.

Several interviewees suggested that the zones were too large to depict patterns in fishing activity or stock trends and that the survey did not allow the description of different trends observed in different areas. There was also a suggestion for discards to be reported in terms of proportions of catches rather than trends from one year to the next.

There were varying levels of awareness of how this survey was used with some not receiving any feedback, others not really sure about what happens with the results of the survey and others suggesting that it was to get an overall impression of fishers' views for the use of scientists, fishers' representatives,

or to feed into a stock assessment system.

There was a general feeling that the survey should benefit fishermen either through a direct link to improving the science and the assessments of stocks or with a more general assumption that the provision of data should be rewarded by more favourable management decisions for the industry.

Fishermen clearly expect to see benefits of the survey and their motivation in completing it is tied to wider management issues affecting their financial situation.

It could be suggested that the NSSS is more important in the light of alarmist and sweeping claims about conservation and the problem may not be about year-on-year abundance trends but much wider.

One interviewee was concerned that fishermen are being forced out of business as a result of an unfair and flawed governance system.

Currently, the NSSS does not record perceptions of ecological processes or management practises but expanding the scope of future surveys to include perceptions of management and ecology may make it more relevant to the concerns of fishermen.

Climate change

The Federation and FRS are engaged in a joint project to assess the extent of climate change. The project is looking to document what conditions are like today, and how they compare to five, 10, 50 or 100 years ago.

FRS has been tapping into the huge knowledge pool contained within the industry to discover how fishermen have seen conditions changing in our waters. This includes looking for information on changes in weather, ocean conditions, fish abundance and the appearance of unusual species.

Once FRS has collated two sets of observations, one from scientists using direct measurements of the marine environment, and the other from fishermen's own experiences, they will try and come up with an overall picture of the possible effects of climate change.

As part of the project, Dr Bill Turrell, Director of FRS's Fisheries Management Programme, spent two weeks on sabbatical at the Federation in August 2005.

The findings of the study will be presented to fishermen in the near future and it is hoped that it will provide fresh perspective on the impact of climate change and will help inform future management discussions.



The Clyde Fishermen's Association

The original records of the Association have gone missing but folk memory suggests that it was founded in 1934 under the Chairmanship of Archibald D Macnair, JP, Provost of Campbeltown who was still the Chairman at the date of the first existing Minute of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Association held in Glasgow on 16 April 1941.

That was the first meeting attended by the present Secretary's father as Secretary in his own right following his father's death by enemy action in Campbeltown in February of that year. The present Secretary's first meeting was on 15th August 1970. It is interesting to note that a common topic of those two meetings was the herring fishing on the Ballantrae Banks.

The Association's main objective during the first forty years of its existence was the protection and preservation of the herring fishery and its fishermen in the Firth of Clyde and West of Scotland. The ring-net herring fishery which was so important on the West

Coast had its origins in the waters of lower Loch Fyne as a result of the ingenuity of Tarbert fishermen. That last Minute of Meeting reveals a determination to prevent the spread of mid-water trawling which, it was feared, would see the end of that ring-net fishery. There are now almost no herring caught in the Firth of Clyde.

A Minute of Meeting of 8th April 1962 refers to a proposed by-law for the Firth of Clyde allowing under certain conditions, trawling for prawns. The Nephrops fishery is now the major source of income for Clyde fishermen supported by a smaller but no less active scallop fishery.

The objectives and work of the Association have much expanded from the early days but the primary purpose remains the protection of a way of life centred on family fishing businesses supporting small communities on the Firth and adjacent shores.

To that end, the Association has taken a lead in the protection of the interests of inshore or artisanal fishermen. It fought, successfully, for the revocation of the three mile limit and, since then, for the modernisation of inshore fishing legislation. In that connection it is

currently following with close interest the attempt of the Scottish Executive to form Inshore Fisheries Groups.

It also has a particular interest in ensuring that the voice of the fisherman is not lost in the increasingly voluble campaign of those who claim to be the protectors of the marine environment.

Following the tragic loss of its member vessel Antares and its crew, the Association mounted a swift and effective campaign which resulted in the control of dived submarine activity in UK waters.

The Association has provided two Presidents to the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. The first was the second Secretary of the Association, AIB Stewart, CBE, BL who was one of the Federation's founding fathers and its first President. The other is a current Honorary President of the Federation, Cecil T Finn, OBE.

The Association is proud to be a founding member of the Federation and is its keen supporter of its promotion of the common interests of Scottish Fishermen.



Golf event

The annual SFF/UKOOA (United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association) Golf Event has been running since 1998. It is always a very enjoyable day out where representatives of the two industries meet in an informal basis away from the daily rigours of day to day work.

The Event was all the more relaxing for the SFF representatives this year, as the Fishermen won the event, hosted at Fraserburgh Golf Club, and are now the current holders of the Trophy.

The series is now tied at four wins each with one draw.

Catch Reward

A reward is being offered to fishermen who catch haddock, cod or monkfish that have been tagged as part of a scientific research programme.

The fish have been tagged internally with electronic markers and are easy to spot, as they have a bright external tag attached to their dorsal side.

If you find a tagged fish, please return the tags and whole fish (ungutted if possible), together with capture details to the release institute named on the tag, or to your local fishery office.

There is a £25 reward for the electronic tag and £25 for the return of the whole fish (plus the market value). In addition, you will be sent a free gift and your name will be entered into an annual cash draw for £1,000.



Public support



The recent BBC TV series 'Trawlermen' has proved a hit with the public and has brought home the crucial importance of one of the most dangerous jobs in Britain.

The Federation has received many messages of support from the public following the screening of the series.

One viewer wrote: "The programme showed everyone the true cost of our fish and chips. Our fishermen are some of the bravest blokes in the world."

SFF Chief Executive Bertie Armstrong said: "We've had many responses from the public saying how impressed they were with 'Trawlermen' and wanting to pass on their thanks to the BBC and the men involved.

"Most of the press response to the series focused on the use of subtitles in case some viewers couldn't understand the Doric used. But this is a side issue, which actually demonstrated the breadth of the audience captured.

"In recent times the industry has been used to bad publicity based on wrong perception and emotion. At long last it is good to see the practical challenges faced by the industry being portrayed in an honest fashion."

The part of the industry portrayed in the series was the demersal or whitefish sector, which in the last six years has contracted by 65 per cent.

Mr Armstrong added: "These massive cuts have left behind a leaner and fitter fleet. If the fisheries administrators in Brussels, Whitehall and Edinburgh work sensibly with the industry, then there is a great future in sustainably harvesting the natural resources of our world-class fishing grounds."

Seafood Scotland heads up regional projects to improve supply chain

This autumn, Seafood Scotland (SFS) is continuing to set up regional initiatives throughout Scotland, to ensure local industry needs are met, and facilitate quality improvements and best practice at grass roots level.

As part of these efforts, SFS Technical Manager Jess Sparks has put two regional advisors in place on the West Coast of Scotland, sourced through the Fish Industry Training Association (FITA). The two advisors, Seafish Group Training Association (GTA) coordinator Lachie Paterson, and Mallaig ex-fisherman Michael Currie, will act as a first point of contact between SFS and the local industry, advising and assisting industry members, and informing SFS of regional quality issues and needs.

They will provide one-to-one industry advice and make referrals to SFS; evaluate individual training needs and promote SFS training workshops; provide advice on current grant funding available to industry and communicate any necessary support from SFS; assist with the planning and implementing of quality projects and initiatives with industry; and assist in co-ordinating and promoting SFS workshops, supply chain visits, and the Seafish vessel accreditation scheme.

Lachie Paterson says: "I think the work SFS regional advisors will be doing is hugely valuable. Not only does it show local industry members that SFS cares about individuals at grass roots level, but it also gives the organisation an opportunity for gap analysis in terms of what services are lacking in various areas of Scotland. It will inform them how best to tailor their support to benefit the Scottish seafood industry as a whole."

SFS is hoping to attract further regional advisors, with work already underway to source contacts through Duncan MacInnes at the Western Isles GTA. Additional funding for similar roles in the North East and South East of Scotland is also being investigated.

Other regional work that SFS is undertaking includes helping Scottish skippers across the

country to prepare for the Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) accreditation audit. As a result of promoting this scheme, SFS has attracted interest from a number of UK processors including Fastnet and Whitby Seafoods who have both stated they are willing to meet 50 per cent of the audit costs for the Scottish fishermen they buy from, to enter the RFS

SFS is also looking to initiate trials in the Mallaig area to further assess the benefits of icing at sea. The purpose of these will be to demonstrate the temperature versus quality relationship of langoustines, using ice at sea onboard small vessels. They will also investigate ways in which such vessels can effectively hold iced products properly.

Jess Sparks says: "SFS is constantly looking at ways to improve its service to industry, helping to maximise the value return to fishermen, and providing assistance where it's needed most. All the regional work we are currently undertaking and planning, from the implementation of regional advisors, to assistance with the RFS accreditation and icing at sea trials, is about taking a net-to-plate approach to business, improving quality, and facilitating responsible fisheries in Scotland. Helping fishermen at a local level is key to creating a sustainable supply chain and a top quality product, and that responsibility is ours as much as it is industry's."

For more information about the role of the regional advisors in the Argyllshire and Inverness-shire area, and how they may be able to help you, please contact:

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