

WADDEN SEA FORUM

THEMATIC GROUP FISHERIES

Meeting TG-F-4

Husum, 9-10 December 2003

FINAL MINUTES

1. Opening

The chairman, Mr. Holstein, opened the meeting at 13:00 hours. The agenda was adopted and is in **Annex 1**. A list of participants is in **Annex 2**.

2. Adoption Minutes TG-F-3

Document: Final draft minutes TG-F-3

The final draft minutes of TG-F-3, Cuxhaven, 8-9 September 2003, were adopted.

3. Announcements

Mr. Holstein informed the meeting that the results of the evaluation study of impacts of shellfish fisheries in the Netherlands will officially be presented on Thursday 11 December. It was **agreed** that an English translation of the conclusions of the study would be sent to the members of TG Fisheries.

4. Brief Report WSF-3 meeting

Document: TG-F-4-4.1. Final draft minutes WSF-3

The meeting was informed about the outcome of the WSF-3 meeting (Oldenburg, 30-31 October 2003), in particular with regard to TG relevant decisions.

With regard to the topical issue of shipping safety, for which WSF-3 had agreed to initiate a study into recent developments and gaps, Mr. Loos stated that the plans in the Netherlands to withdraw personnel from lighthouses were not compatible with the designation of the area as a PSSA. The meeting supported this statement. Also the reduced marking of shipping channels in The Netherlands and Germany was regarded unacceptable from a safety perspective. It was agreed to inform the WSF about the worries within TG Fisheries about these developments. It was furthermore agreed that these issues, as well as developments with regard to towing capacity, radar coverage and pilotage, would have to be addressed in the shipping safety study.

5. Shrimp fishing

At the WSF-3 meeting it had been decided that TG-F would make an inventory of the national developments regarding the shrimp cartel case.

Mr. Loos gave a general impression of the current situation. He stated that there is chaos in the shrimp fishing: prices go up and down, there is no stability and he expected that 10-20% of the fleet would die. Only the big ones would survive. It will take years before the producers will be united again. According to information from Niedersachsen the profits for 2003 will go down by 10-30%. The producers have no influence on the price development. The producers' organisations have not been able to steer catch activities and landings. Despite lower prices for producers, the market prices have not gone down. The Dutch cartel office is now investigating this. It is the general impression of sector specialists that the Dutch wholesale trade has profited from the cartel case.

At the national political level it was reported that the case has been discussed in the Dutch parliament. The general impression is that there is broad political support but that ministers have internal problems.

In Denmark and Germany there has hardly been political action. The Länder ministers refer to the Federal ministers, which refers to the EU Commission.

The Euregio Watten has also written a letter to the EU Commission.

The situation in Brussels is that DG Fisheries is working on Ordinance according to which international cooperations of producers' organisations will be allowed. The cartel DG is, however delaying the process. The next meeting of the Ordinance Commission is 8 February 2004.

The general opinion of the sector is that there is an urgent need for action because the social situation of the shrimp producers is getting worse.

It was **agreed** that the secretariat would contact the WSF chairman to discuss possible follow-up activities, in particular the building up of national and/or regional political pressure on the relevant DGs.

6. Brief introduction to finalized external studies

The secretary gave a brief overview of finalized and ongoing external studies. The Planco study socio-economic inventory Germany and the COWI socio-economic inventory Denmark have been finalized. These reports, as well as the Oxford Brookes policy and management study will be printed in January and be made available to the members.

A study about sustainable development is being carried out by COWI and will be finalized in January 2004.

The consultant Prognos is working on an integrative assessment of the national socio-economic studies. The results will be presented in an easy-to-read format and will become available in the course of January 2004.

Prognos is also doing a perspective study for the Wadden Sea relevant sectors and branches, which will be finalized by the end of January 2004.

With regard to the last study Mr. Verhey remarked that this study should have been available in an earlier stage in order to be useful for the TGs.

7. Generic scenarios

The secretary informed the meeting that the new draft of the generic scenarios had not yet been finalized. The draft would be sent out by the end of this week or the beginning of next week.

8. Discussion on sector-specific scenarios and strategies

8.1 Introduction to and discussion of the draft extended skeleton of the specific scenarios

Document: TG-F-4.8-1. Specific scenarios fisheries

On the basis of the outcome of the TG-F-3 meeting the drafting team had elaborated an extended skeleton for the specific scenarios. The meeting **decided** to start the discussion with developing a vision for sustainable fisheries, together with an inventory of current limitations or restrictions and possibilities to improve the chances for sustainable fisheries. It was **agreed** that this should be the main content of the end product of TG-Fisheries to be submitted to the fourth meeting of the Wadden Sea Forum in April 2004.

8.2 Development and testing of sector specific strategies

After some discussion the meeting **agreed** on the following elements for a vision for Wadden Sea sustainable fisheries:

- Small scale fisheries, i.e. individual or family companies;
- Keep occupation and added value in the region;
- A healthy, dynamic ecosystem.

The discussion on a strategy to achieve the vision focused on threats and opportunities for sustainable fisheries and the changes considered necessary for achieving the vision.

The availability of catch, market developments and the structure of the sector were considered essential elements for the strategy. For each of these elements several specific (sub-) issues were identified which are summarized in the table below.

Catch availability	Market	Structure of sector
LEGAL RESTRICTIONS	DIRECT SELLING	LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE
Static/flexible rules	DIRECT MARKETING	Education
Seed import	Processing in region	Successors
USER CONFLICTS	Auctions	Working hours
The "Right to fish"	MARKETING/LABELLING	Infrastructure
CARRYING CAPACITY	QUALITY CONTROL	COST-EFFECTIVENESS
Stock management		Scale
Water quality		Mixed-species licenses
Ecological balance		PRODUCERS ORGANISATIONS
Toxins		
Selective/tailor made fishing		
From quantity to quality		
Aquaculture		
Exotic species		

Catch availability

LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

The main problem identified by the fisheries' representatives was the legal restrictions to fishing. Generally, the existing rules and regulations were considered too static for a dynamic system like the Wadden Sea. For a higher fishing efficiency and thus less ecosystem impact, rules would have to be more flexible. The catch season should, as an example be adapted to the availability of catch., Closed areas were considered ineffective for nature protection. It was stressed that the rules should take account of regional differences. Very relevant were long-term management agreements (instead of one year licenses).

In this respect Ms. Gubernator criticised "old fashioned" nature protection policies such as the protection of individual species and stated that nature protection should be more dynamic.

Mr. Tougaard pointed to the enforcement problem connected with flexible regulations. The meeting agreed that mutual trust was an important prerequisite. Mr. Tougaard also stated that closed areas could have other purposes than reserving food for birds.

The meeting was optimistic about possibilities for improvement.

USER CONFLICTS

Several other uses interfere with fisheries, amongst which dredging, shipping, the construction of harbours, cables and offshore wind parks. As a result of past activities already many fishing grounds had gone lost. Ms. Gubernator raised in this respect the concept of the "Right to Fish". She pointed to the fact that fishing grounds can be permanently destroyed by, for example, an offshore wind park, without taking the interests of fishermen into consideration and without compensation being offered.

CARRYING CAPACITY

Mr. Holstein raised the issue of decreasing carrying capacity as a result of decreasing nutrient inputs. Fish stocks would decrease but also bird populations. The meeting was of the opinion that goals for ecosystem protection and fishing quota should be fixed in accordance with the carrying capacity. There ought to be a balance between fishing and stocks of fish and other species. According to Mr. Holstein the best way to deal with decreasing carrying capacity was by means of tailor-made fishing, i.e. selected fishing for high quality and making maximum use of the available raw material. Also mixed licenses would be in support of such an approach: if the stock of one species would be low, fishermen could instead fish other species that were available in sufficient quantities.

In the framework of increasing efficiency also the import and export of seed mussels was discussed. There are currently different regulations within the Wadden Sea. The opinion was expressed that exchange of seed mussels should be possible within the Wadden Sea. Also import from outside (for example Ireland) should be possible, be it under strict quality control. In this respect the danger of importing exotic and toxic species was mentioned.

The above-mentioned approaches would have to be part of integrated stock management for which the sector would be responsible.

There should, furthermore, be sufficient possibilities for testing new technologies, in order to be able to improve fishing methods, including aquaculture, in such a way that a higher efficiency level could be reached.

Market

DIRECT SELLING

It was made clear that direct selling is no option for improving the economic position of small companies. The hygienic requirements are too high as well as the amounts produced.

Direct selling was, however, considered positive for the image of the product. Therefore, it would be good to create more regional selling points (which are in fact no direct selling points because the products is bought at the auction).

DIRECT MARKETING

Direct marketing was considered more relevant. The meeting stressed that money should be kept in the region. For shrimps the market is controlled by two big Dutch players who have the best possibilities for processing. In this respect the relevance of good peeling machines was underlined. Only if these become available, is there a chance to increase peeling in the region. Another problem is that the auctions are in the Netherlands. The option to start auction halls in Germany and Denmark was not considered very feasible, but it would be a prerequisite for direct marketing in these regions. For mussels the example of Ireland was given, where mussel POs also sell their product.

LABELLING

The labelling of Wadden Sea products was considered highly important. This should best be done on a Wadden Sea wide scale and also including other primary products (agriculture). There should, in fact, be one Wadden Sea (eco) brand, promoted by one organisation. Contact should be sought with the tourism, recreation and health industry in the region.

However, it would be absolutely necessary for a Wadden Sea label that both the catching and the processing are done in the region. Quality control should be high and the same over the region.

Two current problems were presented. First, most mussels are consumed in Spain, where an eco-label will not make much impression. Second, the label is not protected.

Experiences with promoting the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label for Wadden Sea mussels had not raised much enthusiasm. Generally, most small fishermen in the Wadden Sea are in fact only interested in fishing and not in marketing and promotion issues.

QUALITY CONTROL

Examples were presented of very different practices of quality control in the EU member states, despite common requirements. It was agreed that there should be free trade but that the quality control should be the same everywhere. Moreover, it should be easier and more integrated.

Structure

LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

Long-term stability was considered one of the most important elements for the future of fisheries. It is related to licensing, possibilities for starting a new business and follow-up. There is currently much uncertainty about the future perspectives, which is bad for investments, education and follow-up. The uncertainty is related to short-term licenses and rapidly changing rules and regulations. As a positive example the mussel agreement in Schleswig-Holstein was given. Here, there is a long-term perspective for fisheries, combined with social and ecological conditions.

What was considered necessary is long-term stability and a reliable government. Important instruments are long-term and flexible management plans (see also "Catch availability"), including long-term licenses.

Also essential for the future of small-scale fisheries is that young starters have a fair chance. A factor hindering follow-up of small-scale companies and new starters are the complicated rules and

regulations (amongst others with regard to hygiene facilities), especially in small harbours. Examples were given of regional and local authorities hindering new starters. This should be the other way round: starting new companies in Wadden Sea fisheries harbours should be facilitated. That such is possible in practice was shown by the example of Bengersiel where a shrimp fisher had been attracted in order to increase the recreational value of the village.

Finally the over-capacity in the shrimp sector was discussed. In fact, there is over-capacity but on the other hand, the crew of small shrimp vessels works 100 hours a week. This is of course also an important reason why young people are not very motivated to start working here. For the long-term perspective of the sector it seems wise to reduce this to “normal” proportions.

COST EFFECTIVENESS

The cost effectiveness of small vessels is closely connected with EU support for building new vessels. EU subvention policies have in fact stimulated scale enlargement and mono-species fisheries by supporting specialized vessels with more technical features than necessary. Generally, these policies are not compatible with the needs of young starters and existing companies needing new ships. What is actually needed in the Wadden Sea are subventions for building vessels, suited for flexible mixed-species fishing. This is closely connected with the possibility to provide mixed species licenses (see also “Catch availability”). Mixed-species fishing will in itself improve the cost effectiveness because catching other species can bridge years with low stocks of one species.

PRODUCERS’ ORGANISATIONS (POs)

According to the EU Market Structure Regulation individual fishing companies can be organized in Producers Organisations. Producers Organisations are responsible for the supervision of the implementation of relevant fishing regulations but can also make agreements about the allocation of quota, fishing periods and fishing areas.

There are substantial differences in the structure and legal possibilities of POs between EU member states. As mentioned above, the Irish mussel PO not only catches but also sells mussels. In NL and Germany this is not allowed, although in the NL there are close connections between catch, processing and marketing.

The meeting underlined the importance of POs for sustainable fishing and the necessity of creating trilateral POs, working on the basis of common agreements in which many of the elements raised above can be incorporated.

The shrimp fisheries POs had a trilateral agreement, regulating catches and prices, but the Dutch cartel office ruled that this construction was not compatible with trade regulations (see further agenda item 5).

9. Sustainability aims and indicators

Document: TG-F-4-9.1. Sustainability aims

At the WSF-3 meeting a first discussion had been held about sustainability aims. The preliminary results are summarized in a matrix, which is in document TG-F-4-9.1. WSG had asked TG-4 and TG-5 to further specific the sustainability aims and to apply them in the testing procedure.

The meeting discussed the entries in the matrix and made the following comments:

Social dimension.

Engagement. Also local knowledge is relevant in this respect.

Identity. Production in the area is part of it.

Economic dimension.

The meeting questioned whether the use of fossil energy could be regarded as sustainable. This could be the case if it was used as transition to renewable energy use.

Good fisheries practice was added.

The necessity of harbour extension was questioned. In this respect also the necessity of additional dredging and dumping was mentioned.

Economic activities must be rooted in the region and there should be a complete chain of activities.

Ecological dimension.

The issues of light pollution and noise were raised again and it was **decided** to ask the TG Energy to address the issues of unnecessary use of light and noise by wind turbines.

The meeting was against the aim that the Wadden Sea should be kept as it is. Instead, it should be a dynamic and regenerative system.

There was a long discussion about the aim “No loss of biodiversity”. It was agreed that “Maintain natural biodiversity” was a better aim.

The secretariat informed that this exercise would be carried out by all TGs and that the integrated results would be presented and applied in the TG-5 meetings.

10. Next meeting

It was **agreed** that the secretariat and Mr. Römgens would test the strategy elaborated under agenda item 8 for the different scenarios. The results would be presented to TG-5 as a basis for further discussion. Also the results of the Prognos perspectives study would be taken into consideration. The TG-F-5 meeting will be held 2-3 March 2004 in Harlingen (NL).

11. Any other business

There was no any other business.

12. Closing

The meeting was closed at 13:00 hours. Mr. Holstein thanked Ms. Lübcke for hosting the meeting.

Annex 1

WADDEN SEA FORUM THEMATIC GROUP FISHERIES

Meeting TG-F-4

Husum, 9-10 December 2003

AGENDA

- 1. Opening**
- 2. Adoption Minutes TG-F-3**
- 3. Announcements**
- 4. Brief Report WSF-3 meeting**
- 5. Shrimp fishing**
- 6. Brief introduction to finalized external studies**
- 7. Generic scenarios**
- 8. Discussion on sector-specific scenarios and strategies**
 - 8.1 Introduction to and discussion of the draft extended skeleton of the specific scenarios**
 - 8.2 Development and testing of sector specific strategies**
- 9. Sustainability aims and indicators**
- 10. Next meeting**
- 11. Any other business**
- 12. Closing**