



منظمة الأغذية
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y la
Alimentación

EUROPEAN INLAND FISHERIES ADVISORY COMMISSION

TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION

Mondsee, Austria, 14 – 21 June 2006

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS REPORT SUB-COMMISSION I – Biology and Management

Chairperson: T. Brenner (Germany)
Vice-Chairperson: J. Caffrey (Ireland)
Rapporteur: I. Navodaru (Romania)
Technical Secretary: G. Marmulla (FAO)

Activities and achievements of the Sub-Commission during the intersessional period are summarized as follows:

Joint EIFAC/ICES ad hoc Working Party on Eels

Convener: W. Dekker

There is no substantial improvement yet since the eel stock in Europe reached a historical minimum in 2001 and the eel stock is still outside safe biological limits. Current scientific knowledge is inadequate to derive specific and detailed management targets. Although no conclusive evidence could be compiled, anthropogenic impacts (e.g. habitat destruction, migration barriers, exploitation) have been shown to exceed tolerable limits in many places and management actions are therefore urgently needed. The Working Party (WP) met in January 2006 prepare an update of the information on the status of the European eel stock, a detailed description of the spatial distribution of eel fisheries, an evaluation of the options for, and effect of, glass eel re-stocking as a stock rebuilding measure, a feasibility study for the potential inclusion of spawner quality parameters in the stock assessment.

The WP recommends that a) the rapid development and implementation of management plans is facilitated through a series of workshops and the development of guidelines; b) areas producing high quality spawners (large sized females, low contaminant and parasite burdens, unimpacted by hydropower stations) be identified in order to maximise protection for these areas; c) management targets are set for spawner escapement with reference to the 1950s-1970s, either identifying the actual spawner escapement levels of that period in full, or 30-50% of the calculated spawner escapement that would have existed if no anthropogenic mortalities would have impacted the

stock; d) within the framework of the WFD, due consideration (especially as regards reporting) be given to eel as an indicator of river connectivity and ecological and chemical status.

Following the advice to compile a recovery plan for the eel, the European Commission has issued a Communication on Development of a Community Action Plan for the management of European Eel, and proposed a Council Regulation establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European Eel (Com 2005, 472 final). This proposal has been discussed with Member States, Fishing Industry and scientists. The WP developed guidelines for proper inclusion of the eel in the Data Collection Regulation Programme. Now, objectives and targets for regional management of the eel are addressed.

In January 2006, the FP6-project "Slime" started, bringing together existing expertise on modelling eel stocks, focusing on a small set of well-documented case studies. It is shaped according to the 2004 recommendations of this WG and closely linked to the work of this WG. The development of national and river-specific management plans is scheduled for the coming months.

Ad hoc Working Party on Fish Monitoring in Fresh Waters

Convener: P. Hickley

During a meeting in May 2004, the WP commented on the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) draft standard entitled "Water quality - Guidance on the scope and selection of fish sampling methods". This Standard (prEN 14962), prepared by Mr Dehus (Germany), is about to be published.

Links were maintained with the Fish-based Assessment Method for the Ecological Status of European Rivers (FAME) project by some members of the WP also being FAME partner delegates (completed during November 2004).

The WP made progress with an Information Note on Electric Fishing Best Practice. It is hoped that member countries will field-trial the draft guidelines and provide feedback. The WP also commenced work on a short manual on recommended sampling methods for the monitoring of fish populations in fresh waters. Both drafts are posted on the EIFAC web site. Furthermore, the WP continued to provide its regularly updated list of fisheries related conferences.

A joint EIFAC/CEN workshop, held in March 2006 at the Freshwater Biological Association River Laboratory, Dorset, UK, was convened to produce a draft standard on "Water quality – Sampling fish with hydroacoustics". The output comprised an initial draft standard which can now be formally taken to CEN with the proposal that it be adopted as a new work item.

Ad hoc Working Party on Introductions and Stocking

Convener: I. Cowx

The review of stocking and introductions in EIFAC countries was redrafted, updating that produced for the European Commission. A summary will be circulated at the 24th Session. A key output of this study is a framework to update the EIFAC Guidelines on Stocking and Introductions. This work has been used as a major contribution to the EU Council regulation "Setting rules governing the use of alien species in aquaculture" which has important implications for stocking and introductions of fish in aquaculture in Europe.

The EIFAC work will form the basis of several initiatives including a UK Environment Agency project on guidelines for stocking and introduction of fish and a proposed intervention by FAO to produce guidelines on stock enhancement to implement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. At the Biological Invasions in Inland Waters workshop in May 2005, the Convener of the WP discussed the proposals to build risk assessment strategies into the Code of Practice.

The WP has been in close contact with the ICES working group on Introductions and Transfers of Marine Organisms to formulate a joint set of guidelines for aquatic organisms. This has

culminated in a submission to the European Commission for funding under the Science to Support Policy funding call for a project entitled: Environmental impacts of alien species in aquaculture, and several EIFAC members are included in the submission. A decision is expected towards the end of the year, but this project will be a platform for future funded activities of the WP.

Ad hoc Working Party on Maps of fish distribution and aquatic habitat quality

Convener: R. Fricke

A first set of fish distribution maps for UK and Ireland is now available to start the database. However, at present no suitable maps are available as a basis for mapping of European inland water fishes and aquatic habitat quality. The existing maps (FAO) are not detailed enough and contain numerous errors. Therefore, it is necessary to either purchase or develop new maps of aquatic systems of the EIFAC area, which is currently under discussion between the convener and FAO. As funds are needed to provide such maps, the project may be delayed until they can be acquired. Input of data into the database cannot start before suitable maps are available. We hope to solve this problem by the end of 2006.

Ad hoc Working Party on Management of sturgeon

Convener: M. Chebanov

During 2005, the WP was actively involved in several sturgeon-related international meetings and workshops, e.g. the 5th International Symposium on Sturgeons organized by the World Sturgeon Conservation Society, and the Workshop on Stocking for Rehabilitation of Fisheries in the Caspian Sea supported by the Fisheries Department of FAO. These events were devoted to key problems of restocking-efficiency assessment (e.g. use of juveniles, mass tagging, principles of broodstock formation management and early sex determination).

Conservation matters of sturgeons of the Iberian Peninsula were discussed at the 1st International Workshop on the Biology, Conservation and Sustainable Development of Sturgeon in Southern Europe ("BIORESTURGEONS"). Some papers regarding conservation of Eurasian sturgeon were presented in accordance with the WP terms of reference.

Since 2004, good progress has been made with some sturgeon projects that involve Greek, Bulgarian and Turkish members of the WP and the WP also linked its activities with the Black Sea Sturgeon Management Group (BSSMAG). A long-term project on mass tagging of sturgeon juveniles in the Black and Azov Seas has been brought forth by the Russian members of the WP in late December 2005. This new initiative of the Russian Federation for the basin was supported by some sturgeon experts from Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania in order to develop a joint basin programme. There is also interest to conduct a related workshop in Krasnodar, Russia, presumably in late July 2006. The corresponding request has been forwarded to the EIFAC Secretariat.

The WP also contributed to the preparation of an Action Plan for Danube Sturgeons the goal of which is to secure and restore, through national action and international cooperation, viable populations of all Danube sturgeon species and forms by sustainable management and restoration of their natural habitats and migratory ways. In 2006, the WP assisted in the development of sturgeon culture and restocking programmes in Spain. The WP is also involved in developing a new (2006) version of the IUCN Red List Assessment – Eurasian Sturgeon species. Cooperation with the World Sturgeon Conservation Society (WSCS), which has become the recognized body in the international conservation arena since its organization in 2004, has been very productive.

The important publications, i.e. "Sturgeon Breeding and Rearing Handbook" and "A field guide: Early Sexing and Staging Maturity in Live Sturgeons by Using Ultrasound Technique" were compiled.