

**Control Union (UK) Limited**

**SFSAG Northern Demersal fishery**

**MSC Variation Request**

## Marine Stewardship Council variation request

Table 1 – Variation request

<b>1</b>	<b>Date submitted to MSC</b>
	08/06/2022
<b>2</b>	<b>CAB</b>
	Control Union (UK) Limited
<b>3</b>	<b>Fishery name and certificate number</b>
	SFSAG Northern Demersal Stocks (MSC-F-31244 (MEC-F-034))
<b>4</b>	<b>Lead auditor or program manager</b>
	Hugh Jones
<b>5</b>	<b>Request prepared by</b>
	Hugh Jones
<b>6</b>	<b>Scheme requirement(s) for which variation requested</b>
	GCR 2.4.1. – 7.5.6 – The CAB shall issue fishery certificates with a maximum validity period of 5 years from the issue date.
<b>7</b>	<b>How many times has a variation for this requirement been accepted for the same assessment of the same fishery?</b>
	None, this is the first VR on GCR 2.4.1 for this assessment.

Table 2 – Variation justification

<b>1 Proposed variation</b>	
The CAB is requesting an 8 month extension from the certificate anniversary for the North Sea Whiting UoA in order to maintain certificate continuity for the client, whilst they undertake a scope extension for this UoA which was not included in the original reassessment.	
<b>2 Additional time requested</b>	
<b>Original deadline date</b>	12/06/2022
<b>Modified deadline date requested</b>	12/02/2023
<b>Length of additional time requested</b>	8 months
<b>3 Justification</b>	
<p>At the time of the reassessment Application Form submission (11<sup>th</sup> May 2020) North Sea whiting (WHG) was suspended in the existing certificate for this fishery. A full scoring rationale for the fail in Principle 1 (FR V1.3) is given in the Expedited audit report published 24 Sep 2019. As such the client group choose not to include the WHG UoA in the reassessment process which began in 2020.</p> <p>In 2021 ICES published their WHG benchmark and subsequent advice (June 2021 - <a href="https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Whiting_Merlangius_merlangus_in_Subarea_4_and_Division_7_d_North_Sea_and_eastern_English_Channel_/18639035?backTo=/collections/ICES_Advice_2021/5796932">https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Whiting_Merlangius_merlangus_in_Subarea_4_and_Division_7_d_North_Sea_and_eastern_English_Channel_/18639035?backTo=/collections/ICES_Advice_2021/5796932</a>) which changed the reference points and the overall perception of the stock (PI 1.1.1 now scoring &gt;80) allowing the suspension to be lifted. This was completed for the SFSAG fishery in the Year 4 surveillance report (published 18 Aug 2021) and hence this UoA was reinstated to the current SFSAG northern demersal certificate which expires 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The new certificate from the ongoing reassessment for the fishery, without the WHG UoA, will become effective from the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022.</p> <p>The client, as of, June 2022 has started a scope extension with CU UK to include the WHG UoA into the new certificate under MSC process Annex PE (FCP2.2). It is expected that this process will take approximately eight months to complete, given the MSC process timelines required. The expedited assessment will use the same advice from ICES in 2021 for WHG as this advice remains the latest available from ICES with new advice expected in later 2022, and therefore the P1 outcome will likely be similar (accounting for V1.3 to V2.01 differences) to those found in the Year 4 audit.</p> <p>This VR seeks to provide a bridge between the current UoA held in the fishery certificate and which expires on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and the certification decision from the new scope extension for the UoA, by allowing the current certified UoA to have an eight month extension.</p>	
<b>4 Implications for assessment</b>	
If the Variation Request is accepted, the client would benefit from an extra 8 months of certification, which would allow them to complete the expedited assessment. Other than an extension to the expiry date of the certificate, the CAB does not see any implications to the assessment, or other MSC requirements unless the 2022 advice from ICES changes the perception of the WHG sufficiently for CU UK to be required to apply FCP2.2 – 7.29.	

<b>5 Mitigation of the implication for assessment</b>
<p>This VR is in itself an attempt to mitigate risks of the timelines to the scope extension assessment and continuity of the certificate and access to the UoA for the supply chains. MSC process FCP2.2 – 7.29 mitigates any likely change in WHG status resulting from a new ICES stock assessment during process ANNEX PE. MSC harmonisation requirements (one other certified fishery (Joint Demersal)) are already accounted for in the 2021 harmonisation which saw the UoAs recertified and would be actioned again if needed under FCP2.2 – 7.29.</p> <p>The CAB welcomes any comment from the MSC on this matter, but the CAB does not believe any significant implications to the assessment will arise from this VR, and so mitigation is not required.</p>
<b>6 How many conditions does the fishery have and will their progress be affected (positive or negative)?</b>
<p>The UoA currently has two conditions open on the current certificate for Principle 1. Both are afforded the 12 month extension to their timelines (MSC COVID-19 Derogation 6) and pass into the reassessment period should the UoA be recertified. Condition 1 (PI1.2.1) was considered behind target at the year 4 surveillance (following the UoA's suspension) and progress against this condition milestone will need to be considered at the scope extension stage.</p>
<b>7 What is the status of the current assessment?</b>
<p>Certified until 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022</p>
<b>8 Further comments</b>
<p>NA</p>
<b>9 If applicable, additional information added after MSC's request</b>
<p>NA</p>