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MSC SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES CERTIFICATION

Reduced Surveillance – Review of Information for:

Scottish Pelagic Sustainability Group Ltd Atlanto Scandian herring Fishery



3rd Annual Surveillance

February 2013

Prepared For: **Scottish Pelagic Sustainability Group (SPSG)**

Prepared By: **Food Certification International Ltd**



Assessment Data Sheet

Certified Fishery	Scottish Pelagic Sustainability Group Ltd Atlanto Scandian herring
Fishery Management Agency	Marine Scotland under the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)
Species	Atlanto-scandian herring – (<i>Clupea clupea</i>)
Fishing Method	Pelagic Mid-water trawl
MSC Registration Number	F-FCI-0006
Certification Date	09.03.2010
Certification Expiration Date	08.03.2015
Certification Body	FOOD CERTIFICATION INTERNATIONAL Ltd Findhorn House, Dochfour Business Centre Dochgarroch, Inverness, IV3 8GY, Scotland, UK Tel: +44(0)1463 223 039 MSC Fisheries Department Email: fisheries@foodcertint.com Web: www.foodcertint.com
Certificate Holder:	SCOTTISH PELAGIC SUSTAINABILITY GROUP LTD 1 Firthside Street, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, AB43 9AR Tel: +44 (0) 1346 510 714 Web: www.scottishpelagicsg.org Contact: Mr Ian Gatt (Secretary/Director)
Surveillance Stage:	3rd Annual Surveillance
Review of Information Date:	04.02.13

1. Introduction

This is the third surveillance audit for the SPSC Atlanto Scandian herring fishery. At the time of the original assessment of the SPSC Atlanto Scandian herring Fishery, the standard assessment model was used, the fishery achieved comparatively high scores and there were no conditions. As a result, the fishery meets the reduced surveillance level category of monitoring. This requires that on-site surveillance audits are carried out on 2nd and 4th surveillances and in intervening years, such as this, the third surveillance, only an off-site review of new information need be undertaken.

The purpose of the Review of Information is therefore to:

1. Determine if there have been any changes in the certified fishery's management systems
2. Determine whether any changes or additions/deletions require a full off-site surveillance
3. Determine whether there have been any personnel changes in science, management or industry that would require the team to evaluate impact on the management of the fishery
4. Determine whether any potential changes to the scientific bases of information which will warrant a full off-site surveillance audit

2. Review of Information

2.1 Fishing Patterns / Allocations / Uptake

The involvement of the Scottish (SPSG) fleet in the 2012 Atlanto Scandian herring fishery was fairly typical, and operationally no different from the time of the original assessment, as such there are no operational changes that require reporting or rescoring. As with previous years, not all of the eligible boats in the UoC took part in the fishery, with some choosing to swap their individual allocation for opportunities in other fisheries. In 2012 the following 11 boats took part in the fishery:

- Chris Andra FR 228
- Christina S FR 224
- Forever Grateful FR 249
- Resolute BF 50
- Taits FR 227
- Pathway PD 165
- Adenia 11 LK 193
- Antarctic LK 145
- Charisma LK 362
- Research LK 62
- Zephyr LK 394

This is slightly more than in previous years. This reflects the fact that herring prices have been good. The increase in numbers of vessels taking part in the fishery does not impact on scoring as overall level of fishing effort is unchanged.

The overall TAC for the fishery fell in 2012 in line with the management plan (see 2.2 for update on stock status and management response). The UK allocation was again determined at a coastal states level on an unchanged proportional basis. The fall in TAC therefore translated into a fall in catch opportunities for the UK (Scottish) fleet. The small overshoot of UoC quota compared with final allocation is permitted by the terms of the Coastal States Agreement and there is facility for minor overshoot to be taken off the following year's allocation or be covered by international swaps. Again there is no need for rescoring of the fishery as a result of this. The TAC and resulting catch opportunities is expected to further decline in 2013.

	2011	2012
Agreed TAC (t)	988,000	833,000
Initial UoC Allocation (t)	14,089	11,923 tonnes
Final UoC allocation (t)	14,089	11,923
Catch / Quota uptake (t)	14,045	12,310

2.2 Stock Status and Stock Management

The following comments on stock status are largely drawn from the September 2012 ICES advice for Herring in the Northeast Atlantic (Norwegian Spring Spawning Herring)¹. The latest advice shows that the dominant feature in the fishery in recent years appears to be a relatively low level of recent recruitment to the fishery (following stronger year classes in 2003, 2004, 2005). This appears to fit the historic pattern of significant variations in stock abundance following the irregular occurrence of very strong year classes. The absence of recent strong year classes has led to a stock decline which is expected to continue, even in the absence of fishing. For now SSB remains above $B_{\text{trigger}} / B_{\text{MSY}}$ so there is currently no requirement to rescore PI 1.1.1. However, it is anticipated that this may be required next year, which would in turn trigger a requirement to score 1.1.3 (recovery plan). Note that the SSB is expected to fall below the B_{trigger} even if no fishing takes place in 2013.

The declining SSB has led to a fall in the TAC in accordance with the agreed management plan. This has ensured that fishing mortality remains below F_{MSY} , and indeed fishing mortality has reduced in recent years. It is also worth noting that target fishing mortality is set at $F_{\text{mgt}} = 0.125$, lower than $F_{\text{MSY}} = 0.15$, but that the target fishing mortality has been fairly consistently exceeded due to bias in the stock assessment. So although the TAC is set in line with scientific advice, it will still tend to exceed the target F in retrospect. Nevertheless, the bias has not resulted in F exceeding F_{MSY} . It is expected that next year, if SSB is shown to have fallen below $B_{\text{trigger}} / B_{\text{MSY}}$, then the coastal states should agree to apply the restriction required under the agreed management plan (namely a linear reduction in F from 0.125 at B_{pa} (5,000,000t) to 0.05 at B_{lim} (2,500,000)).

For this third surveillance audit there is no consequential rescore required as a result of stock status and the management response is appropriate and in line with the agreed action plan. At the time of the next (4th) surveillance audit it will be important to see that the TAC is still applied in accordance with the plan, which may include a reduction in F should spawning stock biomass fall below B_{MSY} .

2.3 International Division of TAC

At the time of this 3rd surveillance audit, there are early signs of a potential dispute in the international division of TAC among the Coastal States. Although it is thought that all parties continue to agree with the management plan, there is disagreement about how the resulting TAC is divided. The Faroes have not signed the Coastal States Agreement for the 2013 Atlanto Scandian herring fishery. It is understood that the Faroes requested a larger allocation of the TAC, but that the other Coastal States did not agree to this. Consequently, the remaining coastal states have agreed a division of the TAC in line with previous years, which includes an allocation for Faroes. Faroes have not yet declared their intention for the fishery, so it is not yet known if they will set an allocation which leads to an increase in F above F_{mgt} . The Faroese fishery for Atlanto Scandian herring is a summer fishery when the fish are in their Western feeding grounds, so it will not be known until after that fishery whether there have been catches in excess of the management plan.

The exact reasons for the dispute are unclear and it is not thought that the Faroese delegation at the coastal states presented a supporting rational or evidence. However, it is thought that this is connected in some way to the dispute in relation to mackerel, and the resulting restrictions placed on the Faroese fishery. This is perhaps a worrying sign that the mackerel

¹ <http://www.ices.dk/committe/acom/comwork/report/2012/2012/her-noss.pdf>

dispute is spreading into other fisheries, although it is currently too early to state that definitively. There seems to be an increasingly urgent need for coastal states management authorities to consider how best to resolve these disputes for straddling stocks before damage is done to fisheries, perhaps through some form of binding independent arbitration process, perhaps administered by the RFMO.

For now, there is no requirement to rescore the fishery as a result of this dispute. Firstly, because MSC certification does not guarantee that disputes will not happen, but it does require “timely resolution”. Within just a month of the completion of the coastal states negotiations, it is therefore too soon to score the fishery down on a failure of timely dispute resolution. Secondly, it is not yet known what the consequences of the dispute are, and the dispute has not yet led to an increase in fishing pressure. However, this is an area which will require careful scrutiny at the time of the next surveillance audit, and may indeed require a harmonised approach across all Atlanto Scandian / Norwegian Spring Spawning MSC certified fleets, should it become apparent that the dispute is rumbling on, and more critically, that the dispute is leading to catches which cause fishing mortality to rise above F_{mgt} .

2.4 Bycatches of Mackerel

The 2012 ICES advice for Herring in Northeast Atlantic (Norwegian Spring Spawning Herring) states that the distribution of mackerel has moved north and west and overlaps the distribution of the herring in the summer months leading to an increasingly mixed fishery – with the potential to discard and (from an MSC point of view) the potential to require mackerel to be included as either a main retained or discarded species under P2. In fact, for the Scottish (SPSG) fleet the fishery takes place entirely in the first quarter of the year and entirely in the Norwegian zone (between 60 – 62°N), when the fish are in Norwegian waters to spawn. This issue in relation to mackerel mixing in with herring therefore does not apply for this fishery. The SPSG discard and slippage logs do not indicate an increase in mixing or the need to slip and the processors have not indicated an increase in mackerel in catches, therefore every indication is that the catch remains clean.

It has been suggested that the demand for the Faroese increase in herring quota allocation relates to their need for herring quota to cover the bycatches of herring in the mackerel fishery, which now takes place in Faroese waters, but this is unconfirmed.

3. Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

There are no changes to scores as a result of this reduced surveillance audit and therefore there are no new conditions or recommendations. **As a result the fishery remains certified to the MSC standard.**

At the time of the next (4th) surveillance audit, as well as the usual checks and updates it will be important to pay particular attention to:

- Any requirement for consequential rescoring of 1.1.1 and 1.1.3 in event of SSB falling below B_{MSY} .
- Whether the management plan has been adhered to, in bringing F down, in event of SSB falling below B_{MSY} .
- The status of the coastal states agreement – whether the apparent disagreement, in particular in relation to the Faroese allocation has been resolved, or not.
- And if not, whether this has led to an actual catch in excess of the TAC determined by the management plan.

Appendix 1 – Written Submissions from Stakeholders

None.