

## **GBYP Steering Committee Meeting (online, 4 November 2021 14:00-16:00)**

### **Participants:**

Steering Committee (SC) members: Gary Melvin (SCRS Chair), Miguel Neves dos Santos (ICCAT Assistant Executive Secretary in representation of ICCAT Executive Secretary), John Walter (W-BFT Rapporteur), Enrique Rodriguez-Marín (E-BFT Rapporteur) and Ana Parma (SC External Member)

Invited: Haritz Arrizabalaga (future SCRS Vice-chair), Francisco Alemany (GBYP Coordinator), Stasa Tensek (GBYP Assistant Coordinator) and Alfonso Pagá García (GBYP Database specialist)

In line with the SC request from the last meeting and in order to facilitate the decision-making process, the GBYP Coordinator prepared a simplified table listing all points on which decision should be taken (**Annex 1**). The table was distributed to the SC members ahead of the meeting.

The meeting was chaired by the SCRS Chair, following the order of items in the aforementioned table.

Regarding the electronic tags data recovery, the SC acknowledged it would be useful to acquire data from younger fish in the Western Atlantic and therefore instructed the Coordinator to make preliminary contacts with Dr. Molly Lutcavage to obtain more information on available data (number of tags, average duration etc.) and accordingly modify the budget for this activity. If possible, the biological samples of the tagged fish should be acquired as well, in order to perform the genetic analysis for stock assignment.

With reference to the data management, the SC committee recommended to continue the internal work for the creation of biological and e-tagging data bases. It was agreed to coordinate the work with the Department of Research and Statistics, which should always supervise the whole process and, if necessary, hire external technical assistance to develop some activities. The work will be conducted within GBYP Phase 11 and, if needed, extended to Phase 12. It was noted that this work depends largely on the direct engagement of the Secretariat staff, which is currently involved in many other priority activities, and hence the timing for the implementation of these databases should be adapted to the ICCAT Secretariat departments availability.

With respect to the conventional tagging, it was agreed to keep the current programme as it is, maintaining the support to external teams.

In relation to the electronic tagging, the SC noted that clear priorities needed to be established before moving further. It was agreed to try to tag in the Levantine Sea, because this activity had already been identified as priority in previous years, but its implementation was postponed due to logistic problems caused by the pandemic. Further areas where tagging will take place will be decided in the short term by the SC considering the movement matrices used within MSE to identify the gaps in transitions for different age classes and seasons (for example, current gaps in younger age-classes in both stocks). . Also, the existing MSE framework can be used to make a quantitative analysis and explore the value of additional tagging information. In the mid-term the priorities will be established considering the outputs from the SCRS *ad hoc* subgroup on

tagging, led by Enrique Rodríguez-Marín, and from the further workshops on e-tagging organized by GBYP. Regarding the types of electronic tags to use, it was discussed if it would be worth investing in new technologies such as acoustic tags, to be deployed in parallel with the PSATs, given the great value of the information they can provide in the long term. It was acknowledged the high potential of this type of tags, but it was agreed that more info on the latest improvements in this technology and the European network of acoustic receivers should be gathered and investigated in order to reach an informed decision. It was also acknowledged that using archival tags on younger fish would be beneficial as well. So, it was agreed that the SC would further define the needs and make the final decision on which types of tags to purchase by the end of the first trimester of 2022.

Regarding the aerial survey, the SC acknowledged the concern from the EU regarding the lack of fishery independent indices in the Central Mediterranean. It was decided to resume in 2022 the GBYP aerial survey campaigns in the main spawning areas of Western and Central Mediterranean, as in previous years, and continue the efforts to improve the modelling tasks to improve the reliability and representativeness of available aerial survey index time series, to allow SCRS to make use of the indices from all the surveyed areas for stock management within the framework of MSE. The exception would be the Levantine Sea, since it has been confirmed that the results from previous surveys are not representative of the abundance of spawners in the area due to lack of accessibility of these spawners to aerial observations at the time when the aerial surveys are performed. In addition, due to the limitations in the available funds and other logistic constraints, it was recommended to concentrate the effort in the core areas, instead of extended areas as well, and explore the use of the model-based approach for extrapolating the data to the extended areas. As for the methodology, it was recommended also to follow the approach from 2021 using both digital images and human observers-based systems. Also, it was decided to contract CREEM for aerial survey data analysis and further refinement of the model-based approach. It was noted that hopefully the model-based approach incorporating relevant environmental variables would provide more reliable indices for all the surveyed areas.

As for the acoustic surveys, the SC agreed it may represent an useful method for assessing the reliability of data from the aerial survey and hence it was agreed to explore the feasibility of designing and developing a calibration survey in 2022. Nevertheless, the SC has still not made the final decision on this issue.

Due to time constraints, the SC could not take the decision on all scheduled items. Given the busy schedule of SC members in the forthcoming weeks, it was decided that further decisions would be made by email. Each SC member will prepare his/her comments on each particular pending issue and the GBYP Coordinator will incorporate them in a consolidated document, which will be further distributed for the final SC approval.

Annex 1.

GBYP Line of research	Short term actions	New decisions to be taken by SC	Specific GBYP related actions		Related 2021 SCRS recommendations
			Phase 11	Phase 12	
<b>Data recovery and management</b>					
Data recovery e-tags	Contact Molly to ask her again to provide "recent" etags data sets; contact CLS to evaluate the possibility of recovering old ICES tags data	keep some budget for data recovery in Phase 12?	4.1.1. (25000)	None by now	
Data management	Continue internal desk work for the implementation of new ICCAT etags and Biological data databases; contact external expert (Tim Lam) for assessing implementation of etags DB	Move contract for supporting Biological Data DB to Phase 12?	4.1.2. (30000) and 4.1.3. (30000)	None by now	
<b>Tagging</b>					
Conventional tagging	Purchase more equipment	Keep current program as it is (support to third parties asking for it) or resume own conventional tagging program?	5.4.(16000) and 5.5. (14.000)	5.4.(15000) and 5.5. (10.000)	

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Electronic tagging	Purchase new tags for 2022 campaigns; organize on line meeting focusing on defining priorities; resume contacts for tagging activities in the Eastern Med in 2022; monitoring of Phase 11 MoU.	Establish priorities based on already known gaps from MSE (tagging younger fish)...? Keep some support to-e tagging in the Atlantic in 2022? Provide some support to new acoustic tagging initiatives in Eastern Atlantic? Confirm budgets?	4.3.1. (85000), 4.3.2 (138000), 5.9 (0, moved to Phase 12)	4.3.1. (95000), 4.3.2 (160000), 5.9 (35000)	Establish a SCRS subgroup including modelling experts to address questions where and when to tag and reactivate the ad hoc tagging working group at SCRS (Tagging workshop (SCSR/2021/024) and SCRS BFT Species Group intersessional meeting April 2021)
<b>Abundance indices</b>					
Aerial surveys	Elaborate ToR for 2021 survey data analysis, development of improved model-based approach and 2022 aerial surveys design	Surveys only in Weastern and Central Med, skipping Levantine sea? Core or extended areas? Incorporate again digital systems? Continue contracting CREEMS, or CREEMS lead consortiums, for further aesisil survey data analyses?	4.2.1.(50000) and new yyy action for refinement of Model-based approach to the whole series (50000)	4.2.1. (50000) and 4.2.2. (350000)	Continue explorations of factors that may account for differential availability or catchability affecting abundance indices (SCRS report 19.1.5. BFT work-plan )
Acoustic surveys (include calibration of aerial surveys)	Elaborate ToR for potential 2022 new calibration survey	Carry out a calibration of aerial survey sightings based on acoustic techniques? Provide any support to development of new acoustic based indices?	xxx Possible new action within Phase 11 (60000)	None by now	Consider revisions to trap indices and possible inclusion of other indices (Technical Subgroup on abundance indices) (SCRS report 19.1.5. BFT work-plan )

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Larval surveys	Organize larval surveys coordination workshop	Confirm, any other action?	5.8. (15000)	None by now	Consider revisions to trap indices and possible inclusion of other indices (Technical Subgroup on abundance indices) (SCRS report 19.1.5. BFT work-plan )
<b>Biological studies</b>					
Usual biological sampling and analysis tasks	Elaborate ToR	Continue these studies (genetic, microchemistry, ageing), focused on stock structure issues?	4.4.1. (305000) and 4.4.3. (70000)	4.4.1. (260000)	
Growth in farms (final analyses for determining environmental influence on growth rates)	Elaborate ToR for external expert	Confirm	4.4.2. (20000)	None by now	To continue with the studies to identify growth rates in weight and size during the fattening period (Growth in farms Subgroup) (SCRS report 19.1.5. BFT work-plan)
Close Kin	Get epigenetic ageing feasibility study results; elaborate background document on relevant current knowledge on stock structure (guidance from CSIRO required); Elaborate contract for Guidance document;	Confirm work-plan	4.4.4. (60000 - workshop+contract CSIRO)	5.8 (25000 further coordination meetings)	5 recommendations from CKMR workshop (SCRS 2021/023), endorsed by SCRS BFT Species Group intersessional meeting April 2021

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	organize second Close-kin meeting.				
Sampling coordination	Organize on line meeting	Confirm	5.11 (0, presential meeting substituted by on line meeting	5.7 (25000)	
<b>Modelling</b>					
Support subgroup indices standardization	??	Keep or skip this activity?	5.10 (30000)	None by now	
Support alternative stock assesment models development	Elaborate ToRs	Increase budget for this activity? Decide on the way this activity should be addressed, open call?	5.12 (90000)	None by now	Research to develop alternative assessment models for EBFT (Technical Subgroup on Assessment Models) (SCRS report 19.1.5. BFT work-plan and 20.2.5. other general recommendations)

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MSE	Elaborate ToR for Phase 12 modeller contract and external review; support MSE technical Group and communication to the Commission meetings	Keep current funding for modeller? Keep funds for meetings along first semester 2022? Decide on the way the external global review should be organized.	4.5.1 (105000-Tom's contract), 4.5.2. (30000 -code review), 4.5.3. (5000-communication MSE) and 5.6 (25000 meetings)	4.5.1 (105000-Tom's contract), 4.5.2. (30000 -global review), and 5.6 (20000 meetings)	Support MSE refinement and dialogue with Panel 2 meetings (3) and Support Ambassadors meetings (SCRS report 20.1.5. SCRS recommendations with financial implications)
Eastern Stock assessment	Elaborate ToR reviewer, organize and fund expert's travel	Decide if GBYP must fund external experts contracts and travels	None, first time GBYP would do it	4.5.3. (20000) and 4.5.4. (20000)	External expert to review EBFT assessment to attend both DP and SA meetings in 2022 and Support attendance to EBFT data prep meeting and travels for attending modelling (stock assessment) subgroup (SCRS report 20.1.5. SCRS recommendations with financial implications)