

Issues for consideration by the SARC identified at a meeting of the Ocean Hauling Garfish Working Group held 5 August 2015

Important note: *The issues below were raised by members of the WG as expert individual views for consideration by SARC. They are not considered to be the representative view of any particular group of fishers or shareholders. The issues raised will be considered by SARC in formulating the final recommendations on linkages that will be provided to the Minister for his consideration.*

Comments on linkage recommendations

General issues:

- SARC made the clarification that the draft recommendation should have read that quota transfers (leasing) would be permitted when quota commences.
- A suggestion was made that DPI database records may need validating; some individuals had concerns about variation between log books and the database.
- Concern over lack of costings for draft recommendation.
- Concern that there's been no decision on resource sharing.
- Uncertainty was voiced over how to best address sustainability issues, and some indicated that they are not sure whether the recommendation is the best way to deal with this or whether there are some other mechanisms that should be used.

Ocean Hauling Garfish:

i) Enforce current minimum

- General agreement, almost irrelevant as many already hold the minimum.

ii) Catch quota/ITCAL:

- Overall, fishers suggested that if the ITCAL was right, there may be support for the catch quota recommendation.
- Garfish season starts in February, so fishers generally agreed that it would be better to commence quota on 1 January 2017 (if quota is implemented), so that it could be used effectively from 2017, and that leasing should be permitted at this point.
- Currently there is concern over the ITCAL being too low
 - The peak catch was removed from dataset and fishers indicated that this shouldn't be taken out.
 - It was also suggested that the 15yr average data is better than the shorter time frame used.
- Concern also that the ITCAL doesn't reflect the catch. Catch varies year to year, up to 12 tonne per fisher some years, other seasons it was more viable to fish other species.
- Some indicated that catch history shouldn't be considered to be a reflection of stock abundance – as fishers are multi-gear/multi-fishery.
- Suggestion was made that some fishers are diversified, but have been caught up by management arrangements that have limited their ability to carry out multiple activities; some fishers weren't able to work for a period (10yrs) owing to lack of crew – therefore catches were low. This variation (period of non-fishing by diversified fishers) should be

considered in setting the ITCAL and TAC. So, need science/data but also need consideration of the limitations placed on fishers that meant catches were low – this doesn't mean fish stocks weren't there.

- Issue about reduction in ITCAL to account for ongoing recovery of Garfish, and how this was factored in. Suggestion that ITCAL shouldn't include automatic reduction because of the need for recovery, rather the ITCAL should be based on principles set by the SARC and the Department.
 - Industry claimed that in the options paper/last working group meeting the ITCAL was suggested to be ~60 tonnes (for ocean haul + 14% for estuary), this was then reduced to around ~40 tonnes as arbitrary recovery plan (and industry wasn't supportive of the 40 tonne recovery plan – this conservative approach was carried through when the recovery plan was no longer needed as stocks moved to fully fished). This was then reduced further in the draft recommendations. Fishers suggested that this should be looked at as the ITCAL has gone down while the stocks are recovering.
 - The SARC indicated that it would review the basis for the ITCAL.
 - Some would like to see feedback on the SARC's consideration of the ITCAL prior to the release of final recommendations.
- It was suggested that a reasonable assessment of stock in the fishery is needed, based on science and good information. A view was expressed that currently the species is managed with over reliance on the precautionary principle. Some indicated that this isn't good enough – better information is needed so that fishers aren't penalised in terms of reduced ITCALs.
- The shift from overfished to fully fished was discussed, and an example of 700kg in one shot that was caught last year was given. The fisher indicated that it had never been caught like this before; other examples were mentioned of a tonne per shot being caught. Because of this potential, small quota allowances could result in dumping if more fish is caught in one shot than quota available to fisher.
- It was suggested that if fishers end up with a small TAC, high grading will become an issue.
- Most agreed that there needs to be consistency between ocean and estuary management for Garfish. Must apply a catch cap in the estuary so that ocean haul quota regime isn't undermined.
 - Fishers clarified that they aren't suggesting quota in the estuary, but if two different regimes are proposed for common stock, then the allocation to estuary fishers must be managed as a catch cap. Ocean Haulers don't want to see increasing amount of stock being taken by estuary users. However, also need to be mindful that changes have occurred through time so that catches have shifted from estuary to ocean based fishers.
 - A suggestion was made to consider whether there should be transferability between ocean and estuary garfish quota. In considering this the following example was presented: If an estuary fisher used his catch cap, but also held ocean hauling garfish quota can he then fish this quota in the estuary? And vice versa, can estuary fishers catch in ocean?
- Question was raised over the cost effectiveness of going to quota (based on the current ITCAL) in a fishery that is currently worth around \$200,000 p.a. It was suggested that"
 - Financial costs may outweigh the gains based on current prices.
 - Under the draft recommendations there will be a viability issue.
 - One fisher's view was that options are to either manage the fishery through a harvest strategy, quota (with better TAC) or to default the fishery.

- Concern that Department needs to start including indigenous fishing; some want a fishery managed by Aboriginal people and feel that Aboriginal commercial fishers may be disadvantaged under the draft recommendation for quota. A detailed submission has been made to SARC on this issue.

ii) Crewing

- Issue of priority of shot and unendorsed crew – discussed at Ocean Hauling meeting and suggestion that crew shares be used as block licence package in that meeting.
- Suggestion to remove the minimum for 2 endorsement holders to operate a net – does this mean you can go on your own– needs clarification. SARC confirmed that the current draft recommendation would allow 1 person to operate a net solo if they chose to.

Other fisheries management issues raised for consideration by DPI

- Should the quota season should start in July or Jan?
 - Depends on where you are in the State as to when significant Garfish recruitment starts (depends on where/when 20°C waters (isotherm) are present).
 - Fishers suggest that recruitment cycles and how the harvest period impacts this need to be considered in deciding the period.
 - Some suggest most catch is taken from July.
- Suggestion was made that if there are social conflict issues with beach fishers and estuary commercial fishers, generally this is a regional issue and should be worked out at the regional level not have something brought in (more management rules/closures) that affects all regions, when the issue is only in one region. Solutions need to be worked out locally/regionally.
- Questions about whether unlimited unlicensed crew would be permitted in this fishery?

Exit Grant issues

- Some prefer buyout not exit grant, indicating:
 - a buyout is simple
 - set up a fund per fisher that's matched by Government and the shares (when fishers leave) would go into pool which were then divided equally to remaining fishers.
- Concern that exit grant won't reduce share prices.
- Concern that the fixed price for empty fishing businesses in the exit grant process is unknown so can't make decisions.
- There is uncertainty about who will end up holding the shares and whether the shares will be available to buy.
- Fishers had lots of questions about the mechanics of the exit grant process and more information is needed to understand how the exit grant system will work.
 - The SARC advised that the Department had yet to finalise many of the details of the operation of the exit grant and undertook to make the Department aware of the questions being asked by industry.

Stock status

Garfish – was overfished (2002/03 – 2014/15) RAC2, Classified as fully fished as of April 2015.