

***x - xi) Consideration for reopening stocks under moratorium (Item 12a) and sustainable harvest rates for healthy stocks (Item 12b)***

*With regards to stocks without reference points and that cannot be developed, the Fisheries Commission requests the Scientific Council to provide advice on:*

- a) considerations for reopening stocks under moratorium.*
- b) what would constitute a sustainable harvest rate for healthy stocks.*

Scientific Council responded:

A full answer implies the existence of reference points for the stocks in question. Scientific Council recommends high priority is given to the development of limit reference points within Scientific Council. Scientific Council also recommends that the current NAFO Precautionary Approach framework be revised and that this should be conducted in close cooperation between Scientific Council and the proposed joint FC-SC Working Group on Risk-Based Management Strategies.

Reference points are needed to delineate sustainable levels of exploitation. Reopening of fisheries would occur when the stock has increased to a level where there is low risk of impeded recruitment. This level is typically marked by the reference point  $B_{lim}$ , and at a minimum, this reference point should be defined before a fishery is reopened. A sustainable harvest rate of a “healthy stock” – e.g. when the stock is in the Safe Zone of the PA Framework – would be no greater than  $F_{msy}$ . To fully answer the questions therefore implies the existence of reference points.

In theory reference points can be defined for all stocks either derived quantitatively or as proxies. However, this has to be done on a stock by stock basis as each stock is a special case. For a few stocks particular circumstances – for example indices that do not adequately cover the stock distribution – might in the interim prohibit this.

Scientific Council is in the process of developing reference points for all stocks. This is time consuming, and has to be done in addition to all other commitments of SC and FC and is therefore not yet finalized.

Scientific Council recognizes the need to speed up the definition and assignment of PA (and/or other) reference points to all NAFO stocks. Scientific Council further notes that the current PA framework has been in place for some time and would benefit from review and recommends that this be given high priority in the work of the new FC/SC WG on risk-based management strategies. This work would be the first step in the process of developing management plans for all stocks as intended by Fisheries Commission.