

Agenda item 7.2(b)
For decision

Council

CNL(08)16

Liaison with the North Atlantic salmon farming Industry

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1. Since NASCO's establishment, the salmon farming industry in the North Atlantic has grown dramatically from a production of under 30,000 tonnes in 1984 to more than 800,000 tonnes in 2006. While the industry has brought some benefits to the wild stocks there are concerns about adverse genetic, disease and parasite and other impacts. Scientific understanding of these impacts initially lagged behind the rapid growth of the industry but in response to information presented at three international symposia convened or supported by NASCO, the Council developed guidelines, the 1994 Oslo Resolution and the 2003 Williamsburg Resolution which provided recommendations to the Parties on measures to minimise adverse impacts on the wild stocks based on the best available scientific information. It is clear from information presented at the Bergen Symposium in 2005 that while the industry has made progress in addressing these impacts serious challenges remain particularly with regard to escapes of farmed salmon and sea lice. NASCO's Liaison Group with the salmon farming industry provides an international forum for cooperation between wild and farmed salmon interests that can make recommendations on wild salmon conservation and sustainable salmon farming practices to maximise potential benefits and to minimise potential risks to both.
2. In 2001 the Liaison Group developed Guidelines on Containment of Farm Salmon intended to achieve a level of escapes that is as close to zero as practicable. The following year a format was agreed for reporting on progress in developing Action Plans on containment, on the level of escapes and their causes and the effectiveness of the Action Plan. The Containment Guidelines were subsequently included, unchanged in the Williamsburg Resolution. While the development of these guidelines was a very positive step, it is fair to say that the Liaison Group has had some difficulties and, in 2004, a Statement of Commitment was developed in order to guide the future work of the group.
3. Last year the Liaison Group had agreed that, at its next meeting, it should share information on area management initiatives, hold a one-day session focussing solely on the level and causes of escapes and opportunities to minimise them, and encourage research into alternative sea lice treatments and make representations to the authorities urging that effective sea lice treatments are made available as quickly as possible where these are environmentally acceptable. A welcome development at this meeting was the participation of NGOs which NASCO had proposed for a number of years. The industry representatives had agreed to explore how they might support the SALSEA programme and they also indicated that they would develop a discussion document on how NASCO could support the salmon farming industry. This document, developed by ISFA and entitled 'Incentivising the Industry', CNL(07)30, was tabled at NASCO's Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting. The NGOs indicated that the proposals by ISFA made an assumption that the salmon farming industry had already achieved the condition where it posed no threat to wild salmon. They considered that this was not the case and urged the Council to make a robust response. The Council noted the findings of the Bergen Symposium, the continuing high level of escapes as presented to the Liaison Group and the suggestion by ISFA of support for disseminating information on best practice and collaborative problem solving. The Council agreed to respond to ISFA proposing that a joint technical Task Force be set up with membership from the two Secretariats and two or three nominated experts from

NASCO and ISFA. The Task Force would, for the time being, replace the Liaison Group. The Task Force's proposed Terms of Reference were:

“Taking account of the findings of the 2005 ICES/NASCO Bergen Symposium, the joint ISFA/NASCO Trondheim Workshop and any other relevant scientific information regarding impacts from aquaculture on wild stocks, identify and agree on a series of best practice recommendations to address continuing impacts of salmon farming on wild stocks (e.g. escapes, interbreeding, sea lice infestations, disease transfers to and from the wild). These recommendations will be designed to achieve the impact targets established by the NASCO Parties.”

4. In accordance with this decision the NASCO President wrote to the President of ISFA to express NASCO's concerns and to propose the establishment of the Task Force. At ISFA's request, I met informally with their President (Ms Nell Halse) and Secretary (Mr Knut Hjeltn) in London on 22 April 2008. I again expressed NASCO's concern that the response from the industry suggested that all the problems had been solved and that NASCO should now promote salmon farming. I indicated that NASCO did not believe that the problems had been solved and could not see how the Liaison Group could continue if that were the starting point. The Representatives of ISFA indicated that they regretted that their communication had been seen in that way. They offered to make a response to clarify the situation. This they have done in the attached letter (Annex 1).
5. In the letter, ISFA indicates that it is eager to continue the relationship but they have not commented on our proposal for a Task Force which was a condition of the Council for re-engaging with the industry on issues of mutual concern. Rather ISFA would prefer that a full Liaison Group meeting be held in the US in March 2009, in conjunction with the Boston Seafood Show. At this meeting ISFA proposes that there would be presentations on industry initiatives such as bay management, the coordinated regulation and management of sea lice and the current status of containment measures. NASCO would report on measures to conserve the wild stocks. This more or less maintains the *status quo*. In my own view, at least, the relationship with the international salmon farming industry could be valuable but only if it is properly focussed and an effective forum for exchange of information and development of measures that would eliminate damage to the wild stocks from sea lice and escapees. That was the Council's intention in proposing the establishment of the Task Force.
6. The Council is asked to decide on any action needed.

Secretary
Edinburgh
12 May 2008



INTERNATIONAL SALMON FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

*Canada, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Norway,
Scotland, Tasmania, United States of America*

Sir Malcolm Windsor
Secretary NASCO
11 Rutland Square
Edinburgh EH1 2AS
Scotland UK

Dear Malcolm

Both Knut Hjelt and I would like to thank you for your kind hospitality and for hosting us at a lunch meeting in London on Tuesday, April 22. It was unfortunate that the President, Ken Whelan, was not able to join us but we agreed that our meeting was valuable and helped to clarify some of the misunderstandings that have occurred over the past year. It became clear that our intentions in the document: "Incentivising the Industry" were not communicated effectively and were consequently not well received by NASCO.

As promised, I am writing this letter of clarification on behalf of ISFA to help dispel some of that misunderstanding and to clearly articulate our intentions. It is our hope that NASCO will consider this letter at the June 2008 meeting and will accept our proposal for confirming a Liaison Group meeting for March 2009 in Boston USA.

ISFA has been engaged in dialogue with NASCO through the Liaison Group since 1998. We agreed in London that this 10 year dialogue has been very beneficial to both the parties of NASCO and to ISFA. It is, in fact, the only real forum for the joint discussion and sharing of information on the status of wild Atlantic salmon and on best practices in the salmon farming industry. During those ten years, we agreed on Guidelines for Containment and member countries have been submitting annual Action Plans on how those guidelines are being met. Both industry and governments have taken the issues raised by NASCO on the potential interaction between salmon farming and wild Atlantic salmon conservation seriously and have maximized new technologies, applied innovative new methods and partnered with the science community in the development of best management practices to develop a more responsible and sustainable North Atlantic salmon farming industry.

At the Boston 2007 meeting of the Liaison Group, the industry raised the concern that NASCO was not recognizing the positive initiatives that have been taken to address issues of escapes and the management of sea lice and fish health. We also discussed the possibility of having NASCO support the industry's achievements in a more visible and proactive way. It was our intention to highlight the accomplishments that have been made by industry and by governments since the Liaison Group was first established, not to minimize NASCO's concerns over potential interactions between the farming sector and wild Atlantic salmon conservation. We recognize that potential interactions do exist and that it is our responsibility to manage diseases and parasites on our farms and to prevent escapes and that there is need for continued improvement.

*INTERNATIONAL SALMON FARMERS' ASSOCIATION
clo FH, Box 1214, Pirsenteret
N-7462 Trondheim
NorwayPh: +47 915 12890 • Fax: +4795 35 22 06*

Email: knuta.hjelt@fhl.no

INTERNATIONAL SALMON FARMERS' ASSOCIATION



*Canada, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Norway,
Scotland, Tasmania, United States of America*

ISFA has appreciated the liaison between our two groups as it has provided us with a good opportunity to build understanding and to share information about our responsibilities as they relate to our guiding principles. We would like to continue with this co-operation and invite NASCO to participate in a Liaison meeting with ISFA in Boston USA to coincide with the annual Boston Seafood Show in March 2009. This meeting will focus on two presentations: one by the International Salmon Farming Industry and one by NASCO. The industry will address the issues raised by Ken Whelan in his July 2007 letter. We will detail initiatives such as the Bay Management approach to farming, the subsequent dramatic reduction in the incidence of diseases such as the Infectious Salmon Anemia (ISA) on the east coast of Canada and the United States, the coordinated management and regulation of sea lice, the development of a DNA Marking system for farmed Atlantic Salmon in the United States, and the current status of containment and escapes in each of the jurisdictions around the North Atlantic. The presentation will also refer to various science and technical groups that exist to address ongoing issues and gaps in knowledge.

We invite NASCO to make a similar presentation on the measures that have been taken to conserve wild Atlantic salmon and their outcomes.

We believe these presentations will help to clarify both operational practices and the science base for these practices as well as the many mechanisms that already exist for pursuing and distributing the science expertise that is currently available. Such a liaison meeting will give us an update on actions taken, ongoing challenges and possibilities and expectations for the future. This would include a thorough discussion about the way forward for the liaison between NASCO and ISFA. We hope therefore that we can agree on such a meeting.

ISFA's President and Secretary will commit to a meeting with the President and Secretary of NASCO in the fall of 2008 at a location that is mutually agreed to prepare for the March 2009 Liaison meeting. This will ensure that the Liaison meeting agenda is well thought out beforehand and that all the necessary background work has been completed.

In keeping with the Guiding Principles of the Liaison Group, we welcome ongoing dialogue with NASCO and trust you will join us at a Liaison meeting in March 2009.

Nell Halse
President

cc: Knut Hjelt, FHL Norway ISF A members

*INTERNATIONAL SALMON FARMERS' ASSOCIATION
c/o FH, Box 1214, Pirsenteret
N-7462 Trondheim
NorwayPh: +47 915 12890 • Fax: +4795 35 22 06
Email: knuta.hjelt@fhl.no*