

***Question and Answer Session during the Special Session of the Council:
Evaluation of the Annual Progress Reports under the 2019 – 2024
Implementation Plans***

Nigel Milner (Institute of Fisheries Management): it's a question, I think, for Cathal and it's about the general APR process. Often resolving a problem requires understanding why it has arisen. I don't see anywhere in the APRs, any reasons when things are not completed, when things aren't done. Now, this may lie outwith your Terms of Reference for the APRs, I guess, the question I have. I wonder why there is never any explanation of why things aren't done. Do you see this as lying outside the IP / APR process?

Cathal Gallagher (Chair of the IP / APR Review Group): yes. That's an interesting point. We sometimes do. We've had a number of occasions in the last year, and we accepted it as an excuse, due to Covid, for example, we had a couple of actions that come to my mind that were like that. Yes, you're dead right, but, do you know what? The issue we have is that we're trying to look forward all the time, so what I'd love to get, as mentioned – if something's not started, when is it going to start? On the positive side, because the actions are failing.

But it's a very good point, and maybe something could be considered for the next cycle. But that just opens up an avenue, maybe, for excuses, which is something we're trying to avoid. I think the process as it is, is progressive, if we want to say that. So we're looking too, if someone hasn't done something, the question we ask is when is it going to be done?

Arnaud Peyronnet (President): thank you, Cathal. And I'll just add something to this because I think it's important, what you raised there, Nigel. It's also in relation to sometimes IPs being prepared, but then we don't have an APR. And I really don't see the point in going through all the difficult work in putting together an Implementation Plan if you don't report on the actions. That raises questions, there's no doubt. I think it's something that Parties need to keep in mind and really try to provide explanation as to why. Sometimes there are very good reasons, administrative reasons, others, but they should be documented. Absolutely.

Elvar Örn Fridriksson (NASF Iceland): my question is to the Norwegian delegation and it pertains to action A1-4 about a national programme for monitoring escaped salmon. The genetic pollution from escaped farmed salmon is one of the two biggest threats to wild salmon. This problem increases each year when escapees occur. The number of escapees is still too high, and the industries' promises for a tracing-program are repeatedly delayed. The 2021 assessment showed that in 10 of 13 production areas for farmed salmon, there is a risk for further genetic changes in wild salmon due to introgression from escaped farmed salmon. There is an urgent need for a tagging program designed to immediately detect and trace the source of escaped farmed salmon, usable for ordinary fishermen and with transparency for the authorities. What is the Norwegian government doing to design a tagging program to prohibit further escapees?

Raoul Bierach (Norway): I've checked with my delegation. Unfortunately, we are not able to answer that question fully either. We are aware of the problem, of course. We are concerned about it. I think everyone is. But to our knowledge, there is no immediate plan to have some sort of mandatory tagging of farmed salmon. But again, we have to check back. There might be something ongoing that we are not fully aware of. It could be. We'll have to answer that

also in writing. I'm sorry. ¹

Torfinn Evensen (Norske Lakseelver): the wild salmon in Norway were, in November 2021, for the first time put on the red list of endangered species, as a threatened species. In addition to that, we will credit the Norwegian Government for their new regulatory measures in rivers and especially, in the mixed-stock fisheries in the sea. In 184 out of 450 rivers, fishing for salmon is now prohibited.

To protect those weak stocks, it is crucial to give the salmon the same strong protection in the sea. So the question is, why are the mixed-stock fisheries still allowed in the Trondheim Fjord, where several rivers are closed? Thank you.

Helge Dyrendal (Norway): a river being closed doesn't necessarily mean that the stock is in bad condition. It might be due to lack of catch statistics from the river. Or lack of mandatory organization. The mixed-stock fisheries in Norway are based upon risk analysis conducted by the Scientific Advisory Committee. And they, under the formal regulation regime, calculated that the risk was moderate, 5.8 % for at least one stock being overharvested in a five-year period. As a result of that, we reduced the fisheries by 25 % fishing time, number of days allowed fishing. And a recent risk analysis concluded that the risk has been reduced to 1 % for overharvesting within a five-year period. So, that's the reason why. Thank you.

Lawrence Talks (United Kingdom): it really is a point or a question, I don't know if this is appropriate, to the Scientific Advisory Group, which is relevant to the tracing of escaped salmon, and also bycatch. I was wondering whether there's a role for NASCO, in terms of establishing a genetic baseline of salmon stocks across the North Atlantic that could help trace salmon, whether caught as bycatch, or whether intercepted as part of a scientific study, to see where those fish originate from? I know that there have been some advancements in genetic investigations, changes in approach, but I think that would be a really valuable role that NASCO could play.

Nora Hanson (United Kingdom): just to let you know, this was raised in the Board meeting as well, and the UK tabled a proposal on developing a more comprehensive SNP baseline that would greatly, hopefully, enhance our ability to assign, not only fish caught in high seas fisheries, but also those caught in other bycatch scenarios as well.

There's quite a good baseline on the North American side of the North Atlantic, but previous efforts, using micro-satellites haven't been able to resolve any more finer detail than regional assignments, especially for the British Isles. So that is something that's in development, hopefully in the coming year or two.

Nigel Milner (Institute of Fisheries Management): it's a question for Norway. Looking at the APR, under the F4 action on management of salmon, there's a provisional nominal coastal catch of 98 tonnes. And the estimated unreported catch is almost the same, at 94 tonnes. And I wondered, are these catches from mixed-stock fisheries? And are there any actions in place to reduce what appears to be a very high level of unreported catch?

Helge Dyrendal (Norway): yes, there are mixed-stock fisheries. For the 94 tonnes, the number consists of catches from unreported illegal fisheries, unreported legal fisheries and unreported angling in sea. And we established a system for reporting catch statistics during the season, but it's not mandatory. So, the system is there, the legalisation is almost there, but it's not taken into account yet.

Paul Knight (Salmon & Trout Conservation UK²): thank you very much. I've actually got

¹The response provided by Norway, in writing, following the Special Session can be found [here](#).

² Salmon & Trout Conservation UK is now known as Wildfish.

a question to ask on behalf of one of our Canadian colleagues, who can't be here for this meeting. And it's to be asked of the Canadian delegation. While Canada has committed to phasing out open net salmon farming off the Pacific coast of British Columbia, why has a similar commitment not been applied to salmon aquaculture off the Atlantic coast? Thank you.

Doug Bliss (Canada): yes, I guess the short answer to that one is, as you likely know, aquaculture in British Columbia and the Pacific Ocean is entirely within federal jurisdiction. And of course, there have been very big investigations, like the Cohen Commission and others. And it's a very different situation, about why the policy recommendation was to close open pen aquaculture there.

But all that's to say is, at the same time, given that regulation of aquaculture in the Atlantic Ocean is invested in provincial governments, discussions are ongoing on these kinds of policy questions. Thank you.

Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation): I have a comment and a question for Canada. My comment first. I just wanted to acknowledge that in Canada's APR this year, they have mentioned the development of a new conservation strategy for wild salmon, and an ongoing engagement programme. And Doug Bliss did mention that in his response to one of my questions in the previous Special Session this morning. I would say that we are encouraged by the approach that they are taking with the development of that strategy. And by the depth of the discussions that we've had with them, in the various engagement sessions. And so, I'm optimistic and hopeful that that process will lead to something very good for wild salmon. And I look forward to Canada continuing to report on the development of that strategy in their Annual Progress Reports and to seeing the results of that in Canada's IP.

And now for my question. I also note in Canada's APR, that they have indicated that science advice has been sought to underpin the development of a stocking policy, which I think is a positive development, but not much more information has been provided about the process, and when we might see something out of that process. So, my question is, will there be any opportunities for people outside of DFO, stakeholders and indigenous people, to engage in that process and to provide advice around that stocking policy? And, I guess, when might we expect to see something coming out of that?

Doug Bliss (Canada): the scientific peer-review process that we use in DFO, called the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat, is a peer-review process. That is on the schedule for our CSAS reviews: to go through the science elements of providing advice for stocking policy. I'm not sure exactly what the timeline is for that, but that's coming up soon, if it hasn't already somehow begun.

Similarly, once the science advice is received, there will be policy development going on. Certainly, as we move forward with the Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy, those kinds of policies will be part of consultation and engagement, as we move forward. Now, exact timelines, I can't give you, because there isn't, we have to wait for the science advice draft policy and this sort of thing. But arguably, I hesitate to even say that there are specific timelines, but there's going to be a lot of work done in the next three years. Thank you.

Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation): I think, in Canada, we all understand the difference between the east coast and the west coast. Well, many of us do, anyhow. And how it came to be that the federal government has jurisdiction over all aspects of the aquaculture industry on the west coast and not so much on the east coast.

I would like to just add though, that even though the provinces have jurisdiction over managing most of the aquaculture industry on Canada's east coast, the Government of Canada still retains exclusive jurisdiction over protecting wild fish and fisheries. So, while the situation may make

it more difficult for Canada to step in and simply say, we are transitioning away from open net pens, and I understand the constraints around that, I do think it is fair though, to expect the federal government to at least, on both coasts, be taking significant action to address the impacts of salmon farming on wild salmon. It is their jurisdiction on both coasts. And they are taking significant action on the west coast to address the issues and the impacts on wild Pacific salmon and we certainly believe that it is the federal Government's jurisdiction and responsibility to take equally strong action to address the impacts of the salmon farming industry on wild salmon on Canada's east coast.

Responses Received in Writing from the Parties to Questions Posed During the Special Session

Response Provided by Norway to a [Question](#) from Elvar Örn Fridriksson

The national monitoring program of escaped salmon shows that the share of escapees in Norwegian rivers is in decline, which is good news. It shows that the effort we put in to remove escaped fish in rivers before spawning season is working. However, we acknowledge that the escape of farmed fish is one of the great threats to the wild Atlantic salmon and that the genetic changes in the wild salmon stocks are accumulating. Norway is positively inclined towards establishing a tracking scheme, provided the administration is appropriate and efficient. The Norwegian government has expressed that it will establish a clearer strategy for tracking and preventing farmed salmon from escaping.