	<p>Council</p> <p><i>Planning for the Fourth Reporting Cycle</i></p>	<p>CNL(23)24</p> <p>Agenda item: 7d)</p>
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Planning for the Fourth Reporting Cycle

Purpose

This paper provides information to allow Council to consider and agree arrangements for a fourth reporting cycle. It includes draft proposed Terms of Reference for a Future Reporting Working Group.

Decisions

The Council may wish to agree:

- to continue the Implementation Plan process with a fourth reporting cycle;
 - a process and timetable for the fourth reporting cycle; and
 - Terms of Reference for the Future Reporting Working Group;
- or
- to extend the third reporting cycle for [one] year and defer the fourth reporting cycle until such time as NASCO’s priorities are clear; and (if possible)
 - a process and timetable for the deferred fourth reporting cycle.

Background

NASCO has adopted Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines that address the Organization’s principal areas of concern for the management of salmon stocks. In 2005, it was agreed that ‘NASCO will be committed to the measures and agreements it develops and actively review progress with implementation plans’, [CNL\(05\)49](#).

Each jurisdiction, therefore, develops Implementation Plans (IP) detailing measures to be taken over five-year periods in relation to three areas:

- Management of Salmon Fisheries;
- Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat; and
- Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics.

Annual Progress Report (APRs) are submitted to show progress each year in relation to the actions set out in the IP.

The Report of the Third NASCO Performance Review, [CNL\(23\)17](#), may be relevant to planning for the fourth reporting cycle. It states that *‘The IP/APR process is widely recognized as a substantial achievement for NASCO. The process ... can be fine-tuned as new technological developments for assessment, guidance and knowledge emerge.’*

The Third Reporting Cycle

The third reporting cycle began in 2019 and is due to end in 2024 (with the final APR to be submitted in 2025, reporting on the year 2024). All relevant documents are available on the [Third Reporting Cycle webpage](#). In addition, the ‘Report of the Meeting of the Future Reporting Working Group under Implementation Plans and Evaluation of Reports’, [CNL\(18\)12](#), which relates to the planning of the third reporting cycle, may be of interest. The key document for the third reporting cycle was ‘Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress’, [CNL\(18\)49](#).

Both the IPs and the APRs submitted during the third reporting cycle have been subject to

critical evaluation by the IP / APR Review Group. At the time of writing, 21 IPs have been submitted, with the following being considered to be fully acceptable in all areas by the Review Group: Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) – Greenland, EU – Finland, EU – Germany, EU – Spain (Navarra) and UK – England & Wales.

During the third reporting cycle, the IP / APR Review Group has reviewed both the IPs and APRs annually, in November and April respectively (although APRs were not reviewed in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic). The Review Group has identified a number of shortcomings in the third reporting cycle in its reports. Other lessons can be learned from the reports. Considerations from the Review Group for the fourth reporting cycle are included as bullet points in the sections below (see Annex 1 to see the full list collated).

Lessons from the First Year of the Third Reporting Cycle

In February 2019, the Review Group met for its first review of IPs under the third reporting cycle. The report highlighted the ‘high level of engagement...evidenced by the provision of 19 of the 21 Implementation Plans anticipated’, [CNL\(19\)14](#). In the first year, one IP (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) – Greenland) was considered fully acceptable.

- maintaining high engagement of NASCO’s Parties and jurisdictions is vital.

There appear to be two interlinked lessons from the first Interim Report from the Review Group, [CNL\(19\)14](#), related to the guidelines and timing. ‘The Review Group noted that, in many cases, the IP Guidelines had not been followed’. This led to delays in the process. The Council had requested that IPs be submitted by 1 February 2019. Fifteen plans were submitted by that deadline, but six of those were either draft versions, incomplete or in the incorrect template. They were returned to the relevant Party / jurisdiction for correction. In addition, the Review Group found that ‘considerably more work than anticipated’ was required to assess the IPs because ‘many Implementation Plans only loosely followed the IP Guidelines’. This led to a revised schedule being developed for the IP / APR process.

- guidelines for Parties / jurisdictions need to be clear, concise and accessible.
- timelines should build in contingency for (inevitable) delays.

In November 2019, the Review Group met to re-evaluate 16 revised Implementation Plans. It reported that there was ‘considerable progress by almost all Parties / jurisdictions from the first round to the second round’, [CNL\(20\)17](#). After the second round of review an additional IP, from EU – Sweden, was considered to be fully acceptable by the Review Group.

The Review Group noted that some Parties / jurisdictions had failed to adopt mandatory actions which were required for those Parties / jurisdictions that had aquaculture. In some instances long-term monitoring programmes were included as mandatory actions. The Review Group did not consider these to be in line with the ‘Ambitious’ SMART descriptor.

- for some Parties / jurisdictions, actions aimed at protecting wild salmonids from the adverse impacts of aquaculture were required, but missing; and
- monitoring programmes may not be considered to be actions. If agreed, this must be stated very clearly in the Guidelines.

The first review of APRs in the third reporting cycle should have taken place in April 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was no APR review that year.

Lessons from the Second Year of the Third Reporting Cycle

Due to challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, IPs were not considered during the Annual Meeting in June 2020. Rather, in September 2020, the process was considered in detail

by the Council during an inter-sessional meeting, [CNL\(20\)56](#), based on a number of issues that had been raised, [CNL IS\(20\)03](#). At this meeting:

‘All Parties agreed that the provision of IPs, together with annual reporting of progress on actions contained within the IPs, is one of the most valuable mechanisms that NASCO has developed. They considered it vitally important as a mechanism to strengthen implementation of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines...Parties confirmed their commitment to a strengthened IP process in the third reporting cycle.’

Additionally, Council agreed ‘Enhanced Guidance from the Council of NASCO for the Review of Implementation Plans’, [CNL\(20\)55](#). This provided additional guidance for the Review Group. It also made provision for the President of NASCO to write to the relevant Minister, or other nominated official, of all Parties / jurisdictions with IPs that were not yet considered to be satisfactory by the Review Group. The Report of the Performance Review stated it was a ‘commendable and rather extraordinary decision to strengthen this process...’, [CNL\(23\)17](#).

In November and December 2020, the Review Group met again, [CNL\(21\)07](#), to review all IPs in light of Council’s Enhanced Guidance. Of the 21 IPs evaluated, one was considered to be satisfactory in each section / area (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) – Greenland). However, for the other 20, the Review Group considered that further work was needed for them to be in line with the IP Guidelines and the Enhanced Guidance, and to demonstrate progress towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

The Review Group provided general feedback to the Council on a number of cross-jurisdictional issues, requesting that in future reporting cycles, [CNL\(21\)07](#):

- jurisdictions provide information on co-operative approaches to the management of salmon catchments that are shared with other jurisdictions. This would include information on how fisheries are managed for the full catchment (e.g. quotas, Conservation Limits, catch returns, habitat plans, regulations). Discussion focused on the following rivers: the Teno / Tena in EU – Finland and in Norway, for the Minho / Miño in EU – Portugal and in EU – Spain (Galicia), and for the Bidasoa in EU – France and in EU – Spain (Navarra);
- the Council gives consideration to requesting jurisdictions to identify any potential threats to wild salmonids emanating from salmon aquaculture that may exist from outside their jurisdiction;
- there should be consideration of whether the part of the IP pertaining to management of aquaculture should relate to conservation hatcheries as well as salmon farms and farming, since many Parties / jurisdictions did not acknowledge conservation hatcheries in the sections on containment, sea lice or *Gyrodactylus salaris*.

In April 2021, the Review Group met to evaluate 19 APRs for the first time under the third reporting cycle, [CNL\(21\)17](#). Given that the Review Group were meeting virtually with limited time, only satisfactory actions were reviewed. The Review Group noted, in general, that the actions that remained ‘unsatisfactory’ in the various IPs fell under the theme area ‘Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics’, particularly in the attainment of the international NASCO / ISFA goals for sea lice and containment.

The Review Group noted shortcomings with regard to the content of the APRs. Some minor APR template changes for subsequent years were, therefore, requested, to promote more effective reporting by Parties / jurisdictions.

Lessons from the Third Year of the Third Reporting Cycle

On 5 May 2021, an inter-sessional webinar Special Session was held to discuss the IPs, [CNL\(21\)56rev](#). During the meetings of the IP / APR Review Group, the inter-sessional correspondence period and the webinar, several issues were raised that were considered at the 2021 June Annual Meeting, [CNL\(21\)62](#). The Council made a number of decisions potentially relevant to the fourth reporting cycle:

- with respect to the inclusion of the terms ‘fish farms’ and ‘aquaculture’ in the IP template, the status quo should be maintained until the fourth reporting cycle, at which point the IP template should be revised to clarify what information is being requested;
 - Council had been asked to consider that where ‘fish farms’ were mentioned in the IP template, this relates to all forms of aquaculture, including conservation hatcheries, as per the definition given in Annex 1 of the [Williamsburg Resolution](#);
- national legislation should not be considered a mitigating circumstance to allow otherwise unsatisfactory IP actions to be satisfactory;
- the review process would be revised to enable a ‘dialogue’ between the Review Group and Parties / jurisdictions on the unsatisfactory elements of their IPs; and
- the Review Group should provide positive feedback to the Parties / jurisdictions on those aspects of the IPs that the Review Group considers are moving the Parties / jurisdictions clearly towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

Additionally, in June 2021, a Theme-based Special Session on aquaculture was held. The Council agreed to a recommendation from the TBSS Steering Committee of relevance to the IPs, i.e. that:

‘A renewed request be made from the NASCO Council that all Parties and jurisdictions with salmon farming produce SMART actions in their revised Implementation Plans for the management of lice and escapes. These actions should reflect strong and sustained progress towards meeting the goals of 100% containment of farmed fish, and for 100% of farms to have effective sea lice management. Monitoring of sea lice and escapes should only be a secondary activity to research or assess the effectiveness of the main action.’

In November 2021, following the ‘dialogue’ between the Review Group and Parties / jurisdictions, the Review Group met again to evaluate revised IPs, [CNL\(22\)15](#). It noted the general improved engagement in reporting and that the IPs were improved considerably.

During this meeting, the Review Group noted that it was unclear from the IP Guidelines provided by Council to Parties / jurisdictions, whether any / all revisions of IPs should ‘be prepared in consultation with NGOs and other relevant stakeholders and industries’, as was the case for preparation of the original IP. The Review Group proposed that this issue should be clarified during discussions for the fourth cycle of reporting.

- clarification of whether IPs should be revised (and not just originally prepared) in consultation with ‘NGOs and other relevant stakeholders and industries’ is needed.

In April and May 2022, APRs were reviewed, [CNL\(22\)16](#). Given that the Review Group were meeting virtually with limited time again, only satisfactory actions were reviewed. The Review Group suggested minor changes to the APR template to improve reporting further. The Review Group also noted some recommendations to / considerations for Council regarding the fourth reporting cycle. These included:

- that multi-part actions are difficult to review / comment on and often result in the Review Group being unable to determine progress. Simple, significant, single, actions that can easily be reviewed and reported on are requested in future IPs;
- a recommendation that actions be limited to those that are substantially relevant to wild salmon conservation and management; and
- for actions that will extend beyond the lifetime of the IP, that milestones for the current reporting period should be included in the action, to enable assessment of progress.

Lessons from the Fourth Year of the Third Reporting Cycle

In June 2022, Special Sessions on the evaluations of the IPs and the APRs were held, [CNL\(22\)53rev](#).

In November 2022, the Review Group met again to evaluate three revised IPs, [CNL\(23\)21](#). In light of these evaluations, the Review Group, again, recommended that Parties / jurisdictions with responsibility to regulate salmon farming industries need to adhere closely to NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines directed at the protection of wild salmon.

In April 2023, the Review Group met face to face (with just one member attending virtually) to evaluate the APRs. The Council had asked that all actions be reviewed in future APRs (with discretion provided if a virtual meeting was needed), [CNL\(21\)62](#). In 2023, the Review Group reviewed all actions, but for those deemed unsatisfactory in the review of the IP, the Review Group was unable to establish progress against NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines, and stated this in the evaluation feedback. 20 of the 21 expected APRs were submitted.

The Review Group agreed some additional recommendations to / considerations for Council regarding the fourth reporting cycle, as follows:

- it should be recognised that the third reporting cycle has increased engagement across NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions. The 21 IPs and associated reporting of progress have highlighted the common challenges for wild Atlantic salmon across the North Atlantic and provided a platform for sharing experiences and approaches to address these challenges;
- the Review Group found NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines to be very useful in supporting the development and evaluation of IPs / APRs. The relevant sections of those Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines should be referenced in each IP and the Parties / jurisdictions should state clearly how each action moves them towards their achievement;
- to enable a full understanding of what is expected of NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions for their IPs and APRs in the fourth reporting cycle, a workshop should be held in advance of IP development to inform the authors of the Plans;
- the impact of climate change on wild Atlantic salmon should be given more prominence;
- the development of a NASCO standardised risk assessment tool capturing the main threats to wild Atlantic salmon, such as presented in recent years by Norway, should be considered to inform an assessment of the highest priority threats / challenges to populate the IPs for all of NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions;

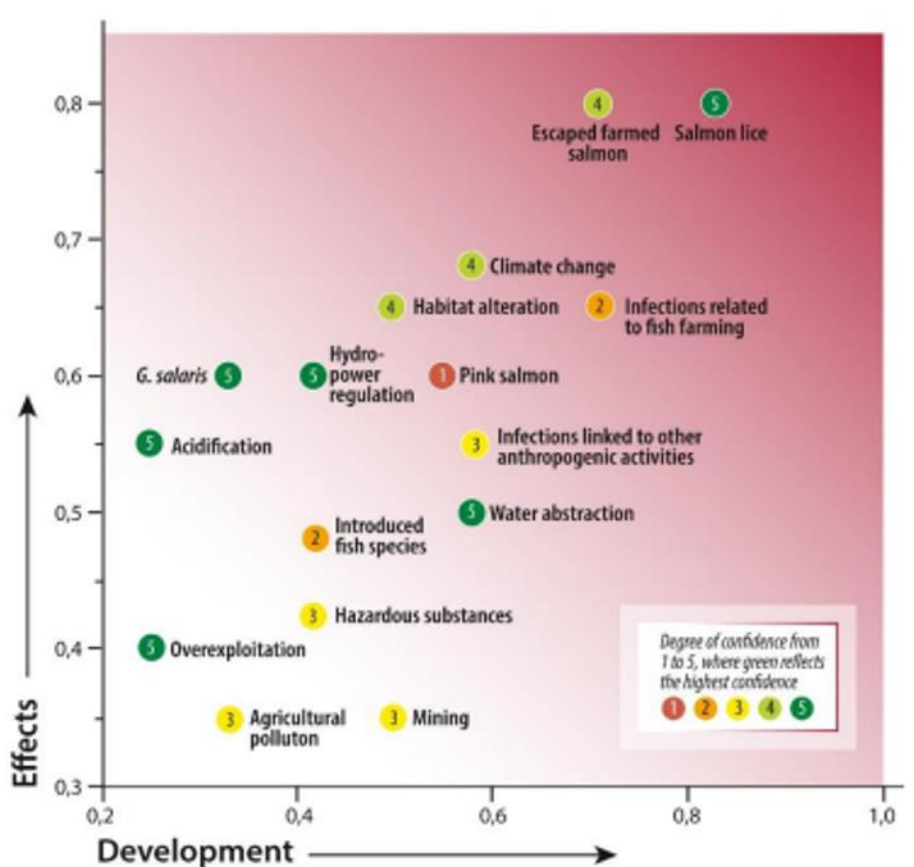


Figure 1. Norway’s risk assessment tool as an example of the kind of assessment tool that can be used to capture the main threats to wild Atlantic salmon ([Norwegian Scientific Advisory Committee for Atlantic Salmon \(SACAS\) 2022](#)).

- mandatory actions in the key reporting areas should be retained;
- where actions are qualitative, there must be a measurable outcome, with milestones, to determine movement towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines;
- for each quantitative action, wherever possible, a standard graph should be used, in each year of reporting, to show the annual results and associated trend over the life of each reporting cycle, together with the appropriate baseline / target;

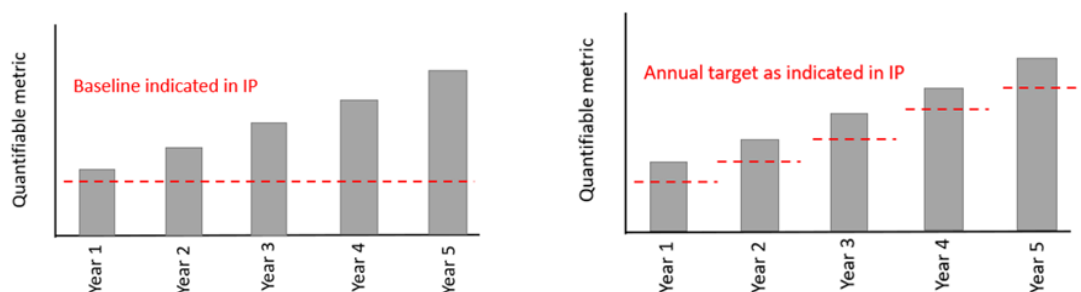


Figure 2. Examples of generic standard graphs to show annual results of a metric, together with the associated baseline / target, over the life of a reporting cycle.

- actions considered to be unsatisfactory by the Review Group should not be reviewed in the APRs; and
- the Review Group Chair and Secretary should be consulted if the Council wants to

make changes during the reporting cycle.

Planning for the Fourth Reporting Cycle

During the 2023 Annual Meeting, Council may wish to review progress of the third reporting cycle and the recommendations from the performance review of relevance to the fourth reporting cycle. It may also wish to agree:

- to continue the Implementation Plan process with a fourth reporting cycle;
 - a process and timetable for the fourth reporting cycle; and
 - Terms of Reference for the Future Reporting Working Group;
- or
- to extend the third reporting cycle for [one] year and defer the fourth reporting cycle until such time as NASCO’s priorities are clear; and (if possible)
 - a process and timetable for the deferred fourth reporting cycle.

The following schedule may assist in this consideration.

Date	Action
The remainder of the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)	
November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • submission of revised IPs • Review Group reviews revised IPs
April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • submission of APRs (reporting on 2023) • Review Group reviews APRs
April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • submission of APRs (reporting on 2024) • Review Group reviews APRs
April 2026 (if 3RC extended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • submission of APRs (reporting on 2025) • Review Group reviews APRs
<i>End of third reporting cycle</i>	
Fourth Reporting Cycle (2026 – 2031)	
2023	
June 2023	Council establishes process to address performance review recommendations inter-sessionally – output to feed into the fourth reporting cycle
2024	
June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council agrees what aspects of the performance review are to be combined into the fourth reporting cycle • Future Reporting Working Group is established to plan process and propose templates etc.
November 2024	Meeting of the Future Reporting Working Group
2025	
June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council agrees timeline and adopts guidelines and templates for fourth reporting cycle • Secretary requests Parties / jurisdictions to submit new IPs
2026	
	First year of new cycle – to be reported on in 2027

Proposed Draft Terms of Reference for a Future Reporting Working Group

These proposed draft Terms of Reference (ToRs) are based on the ToRs of the Working Group on Future Reporting under Implementation Plans and Evaluation of Reports, [CNL\(18\)12](#).

Taking into account:

- decisions of the Council related to the fourth reporting cycle;
- decisions of the Council relating to the third performance review; and
- the recommendations of the IP / APR Review Group over the third reporting cycle.

The Working Group is tasked with:

1. Reviewing the ‘Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress’, [CNL\(18\)49](#), and the ‘Enhanced Guidance for the Review of Implementation Plans’, [CNL\(20\)55](#). Advising on any changes required to streamline and improve reporting further in the fourth reporting cycle to ensure that reports are meaningful and that unnecessary burden is avoided;
2. Reviewing the templates for preparation of Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports. Advising on any changes to streamline and improve reporting further in the fourth reporting cycle; and
3. Proposing a schedule for the development and review of Implementation Plans and submission and review of Annual Progress Reports.

Secretariat
Edinburgh
4 May 2023

Collation of Recommendations from the IP / APR Review Group

The list below includes all considerations and recommendations from the IP / APR Review Group included in the main text of this paper. They are grouped according to: Positive Elements; IP / APR Process and Development; Ensuring Meaningful Actions; and Aquaculture.

Positive Elements

1. It should be recognised that the third reporting cycle has increased engagement across NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions. The 21 IPs and associated reporting of progress have highlighted the common challenges for wild Atlantic salmon across the North Atlantic and provided a platform for sharing experiences and approaches to address these challenges.
2. Maintaining high engagement of NASCO's Parties and jurisdictions is vital.
3. The Review Group should provide positive feedback to the Parties / jurisdictions on those aspects of the IPs that the Review Group considers are moving the Parties / jurisdictions clearly towards the achievement of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

IP / APR Process and Development

4. The Review Group found NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines to be very useful in supporting the development and evaluation of IPs / APRs. The relevant sections of those Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines should be referenced in each IP and the Parties / jurisdictions should state clearly how each action moves them towards their achievement.
5. Guidelines for Parties / jurisdictions need to be clear, concise and accessible.
6. Timelines should build in contingency for (inevitable) delays.
7. The review process was revised (in 2021 only) to enable a 'dialogue' between the Review Group and Parties / jurisdictions on the unsatisfactory elements of their IPs.
8. To enable a full understanding of what is expected of NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions for their IPs and APRs in the fourth reporting cycle, a workshop should be held in advance of IP development to inform the authors of the Plans.
9. The Review Group Chair and Secretary should be consulted if the Council wants to make changes during the reporting cycle.
10. Clarification of whether IPs should be revised (and not just originally prepared) in consultation with 'NGOs and other relevant stakeholders and industries' is needed.
11. Jurisdictions provide information on co-operative approaches to the management of salmon catchments that are shared with other jurisdictions. This would include information on how fisheries are managed for the full catchment (e.g. quotas, Conservation Limits, catch returns, habitat plans, regulations). Discussion focused on the following rivers: the Teno / Tena in EU – Finland and in Norway, for the Minho / Miño in EU – Portugal and in EU – Spain (Galicia), and for the Bidasoa in EU – France and in EU – Spain (Navarra).
12. The impact of climate change on wild Atlantic salmon should be given more prominence.

Ensuring Meaningful Actions

13. A recommendation that actions be limited to those that are substantially relevant to wild salmon conservation and management.
14. The development of a NASCO standardised risk assessment tool capturing the main threats to wild Atlantic salmon, such as presented in recent years by Norway, should be considered to inform an assessment of the highest priority threats / challenges to populate the IPs for all of NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions.

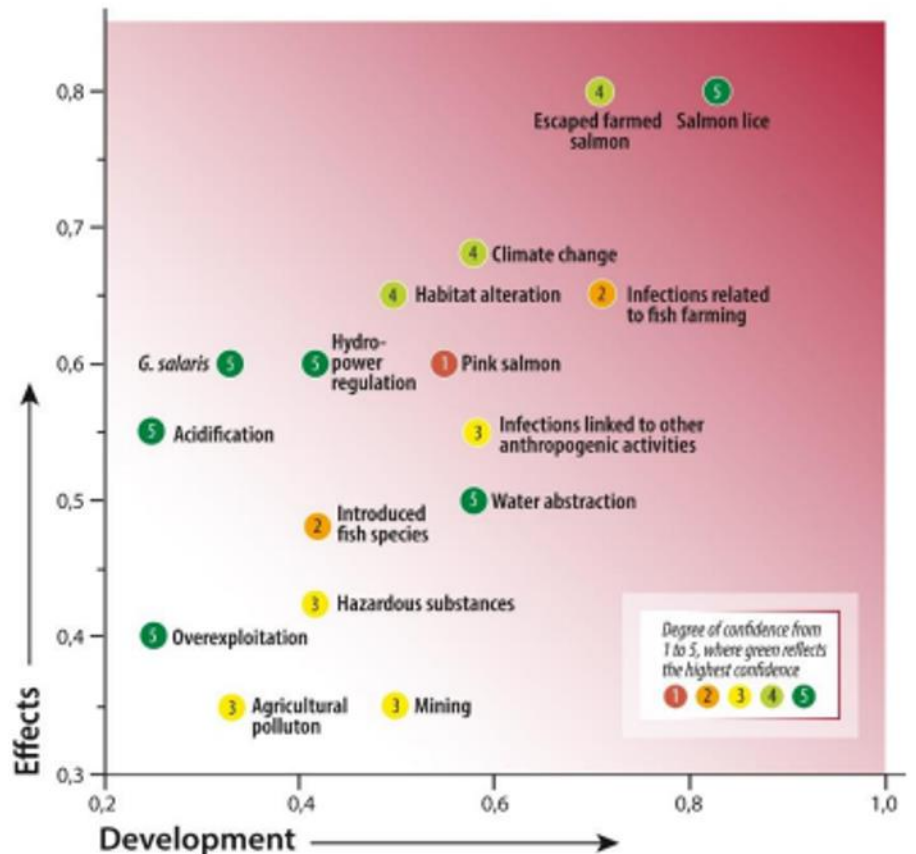


Figure 1. Norway's risk assessment tool as an example of the kind of assessment tool that can be used to capture the main threats to wild Atlantic salmon ([Norwegian Scientific Advisory Committee for Atlantic Salmon \(SACAS\) 2022](#)).

15. Mandatory actions in the key reporting areas should be retained.
16. Monitoring programmes may not be considered to be actions. If agreed, this must be stated very clearly in the Guidelines.
17. National legislation should not be considered a mitigating circumstance to allow otherwise unsatisfactory IP actions to be satisfactory.
18. Multi-part actions are difficult to review / comment on and often result in the Review Group being unable to determine progress. Simple, significant, single, actions that can easily be reviewed and reported on are requested in future IPs.
19. For actions that will extend beyond the lifetime of the IP, milestones for the current reporting period should be included in the action, to enable assessment of progress.
20. Where actions are qualitative, there must be a measurable outcome, with milestones, to determine movement towards the achievement of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

21. For each quantitative action, wherever possible, a standard graph should be used, in each year of reporting, to show the annual results and associated trend over the life of each reporting cycle, together with the appropriate baseline / target.

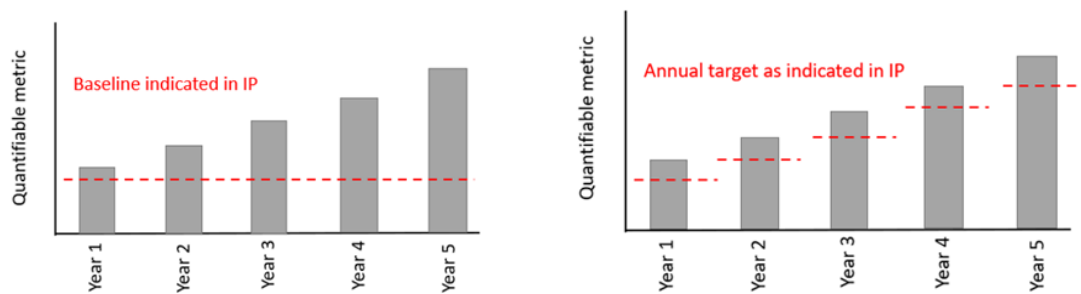


Figure 2. Examples of generic standard graphs to show annual results of a metric, together with the associated baseline / target, over the life of a reporting cycle.

22. Actions considered to be unsatisfactory by the Review Group should not be reviewed in the APRs.

Aquaculture

23. For some Parties / jurisdictions, actions aimed at protecting wild salmonids from the adverse impacts of aquaculture were required but missing.
24. The Council gives consideration to requesting jurisdictions to identify any potential threats to wild salmonids emanating from salmon aquaculture that may exist from outside their jurisdiction.
25. There should be consideration of whether the part of the IP pertaining to management of aquaculture should relate to conservation hatcheries as well as salmon farms and farming, since many Parties / jurisdictions did not acknowledge conservation hatcheries in the sections on containment, sea lice or *Gyrodactylus salaris*.
26. With respect to the inclusion of the terms ‘fish farms’ and ‘aquaculture’ in the IP template, the status quo should be maintained until the fourth reporting cycle, at which point the IP template should be revised to clarify what information is being requested.