Review of monthly landings statistics

1. The aim of this project was to review the monthly landings statistics release prior to UK Stats Authority review, including development of commentary.

Objective

2. The MMO monthly landings statistics release has not been reviewed in terms of its content and structure at any time during the last decade. While its production is largely automated and as such there were not thought to be issues with regards to the production process, it is long overdue a review especially given the fact that the annual publication has been reviewed and revised during that period. It also contains no commentary to inform users, contrary to guidance from the UK Stats Authority. As such the objective was to work with the HStO in SAT (Lucy Radford) to carry out a full review of this output including:
   (i) Contacts with users to identify key use of the current output that should be preserved and also to identify additional data sets that might be useful.
   (ii) Consideration of options to develop the release further – e.g. possible inclusion of effort and other data in addition to landings data to make it more of a monthly digest.
   (iii) Work to develop a structure for commentary to accompany the release consisted with UKSA guidance and best practice.
   (iv) As part of this, review the production process to ensure that production is consistent with processes adopted for the annual publication and are as efficient as possible, and that final outputs are available in a range of formats in addition to the current PDF format.
3. Delivery deadline for the work was for a revised format to be agreed and in place ready for the release of data covering January 2014 due for release in early April 2014. [In fact the release date for the January data was March, therefore the revised format to be in place was instead for the release of data covering February 2014]

Project Management

4. Light touch project management was used and the project plan follows on the next page.

REVIEW OF MMO MONTHLY LANDINGS STATISTICS — PROJECT PLAN

Done :-)

W/C	User Consultation	QS peer review	Commentary	Production process	Implementaiton	Post implementation
13-Jan-14	Plan, identify users, what has been done already?	Use ONS QMHT tool to identify issues.				
20-Jan	Compile user list, tailor personalised communication ti incl. KP.	Review issues identified by QMHT tool.				
27-Jan	Go out to consultation, research DA/others approach.	Review against aspects of QS		Demonstration of monthly production process		
03-Feb	Go out to consultation, research DA/others approach.	Follow up issues identified		Analysis of issues		
10-Feb	Analysis of user consultation	Follow up issues identified		Follow up issues identified draft tables based on recommendations & amend process		
17-Feb	Presentation of user consultation results- decide recommendations	Research aspects of UKSA assessment		draft tables based on recommendations & amend process		
24-Feb	Consolodate and consult (plans) with core set of key users	Include in considerations for new notice	Research of good practice	draft tables based on recommmendations & amend process		
03-Mar	Consolodate and consult with core set	Follow up issues identified		draft tables based on recommendations & amend process		
10-Mar	of key users	Follow up issues identified		recommendations & amend process		
17-Mar			Draft			
24-Mar	Finanlise consultation and report back to users		Re-draft		Publish January stats notice in old style (flag change for Feb)	
31-Mar				Finalise tables and dataset		stats authority assessment
07-Apr	Include feedback facility on new notice				prepare report and documentation for input to UK	
14-Apr	Alert users to new release				Publish February notice in new form	UK stats Authority assessmeny

Project Methodology

5. The review was conducted with the support of Lucy Radford, MMO Higher Statistical Officer with input from other MMO staff. It consisted of: a wide ranging user consultation exercise; and self-assessment with peer review.

<u>User consultation</u>

6. User consultation took the form of: analysis of web hits; self-selection consultation; targeted consultation; and consultation with a key user group.

7. Web statistics indicated a few hundred hits a month but could give no qualitative information. An invitation was put on the MMO website seeking contributions to the review during January and February; this attracted one contributor.

8. It proved much more effective to target individuals and ask for input using the list of recipients of "Sea Fisheries Statistics" and a list of people who have in the past emailed inquiries about monthly landings statistics. The exercise gained support from a wide range of users including:-

o CEFAS - Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

o SEAFISH - a Non-Departmental Public Body set up to improve efficiency and raise standards across the seafood industry.

o IFCAs - Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities.

o NUTFA New under tens fishermens association - NUTFA is a non-profit making organisation and represents its members in the under 10m and non-sector at local, UK and EU levels, defending their rights and fighting for their future.

o Industry (fish buyers, sea angling sector, British Ports Association, Producer Organisation).

o Marine coastal staff.

o OECD, other Member States, Channel Islands, Isle of Man.

<u>Self-assessment peer review</u>

9. The self-assessment was steered by using the ONS Quality Methods and Harmonisation Tool (QMHT) that helps to identify good practice and areas for improvement by asking the questions that a methodologist would ask. Use of the tool was followed up with peer discussion of issues. There were also recommendations from the UK Statistics

Authority review of "Sea Fisheries Statistics" that could be applied to the monthly landings stats.

Summary of findings from user consultation and self-assessment

Uses of the monthly landings notice

10. One very important finding was how much use is made of these statistics:-

o Research and reference tool for checking UK landings and prices.

o Informing on long term trends and promoting the importance of the fishing industry.

o Timely supplement to the annual publication.

o Provision of a clearer picture of who is landing what and where, to understand fishing pressures and opportunities.

o Comparisons of profitability to see which species are improving in value.

o Updating stakeholders on current trends.

o Supplement to Ecosystems modelling to inform on catch value and optimal fishing strategies.

11. An interesting finding was that some of those contacted in the user consultation were previously unaware of the monthly statistics but were keen to use them.

Areas for improvement

12. A list of areas considered, from both the user consultation and the self-assessment review, is given in annex 1.

13. The areas could be grouped into: points of clarification; improvements to the process and calculations; requests for additional information; and general issues.

14. It is worth acknowledging that a frequently quoted area for improvement was with the timeliness and accuracy of the raw data. This was reported to the MMO staff working on an end to end review of data.

15. The list at annex 1 covers all areas considered whilst the following specific changes were proposed to the key user group:-

i. Provide the standard tables in Excel format and make the dataset available to allow users to meet any additional specific requirements.

ii. Update datasets monthly so that more complete information is made available for previous months. A clear concern was that the data are marked "provisional" but never

updated. The data are not really "provisional" so the current labelling is misleading; they are as complete as possible according to how many returns have been entered onto the system. Each month the system will have been updated, so the data become more complete.

iii. Improve clarity of notes.

iv. Provide an explanation of the statistics; how they are compiled and what are their limitations.

v. In the standard set of tables: include a breakdown by vessel length; and amend the breakdown by port to show major ports, other, and total.

vi. Amend prices (£/tonne) to align with the method used for the annual publication. The current method includes zero values (where fish are landed but not sold) and this is falsely lowering the price.

vii. Re-order standard tables and publish at the UK level (the country split will be available in the breakdown by port tables).

viii. Consider providing an appropriate level of commentary/analysis.

These received a positive response.

Conclusions and recommendations

<u>Conclusions</u>

16. The clear conclusions of this review are that: the monthly release on landings statistics can be improved; it should be supplemented with Excel tables and by provision of a dataset; and improvements can be made to the production process. These are all happening.

17. A *draft* of the new notice is included at annex 2, along with the announcement made on the MMO website to alert users to the changes.

18. Returning to the specific points for this review:-

i. *Contacts with users to identify key use of the current output that should be preserved and also to identify additional data sets that might be useful. Done – additional data made available in dataset form and added to standard tables.*

ii. *Consideration of options to develop the release further – e.g. possible inclusion of effort and other data in addition to landings data to make it more of a monthly digest. Done – additional data made available in dataset form and added to standard tables. Whilst some users asked for inclusion of effort and quota statistics others preferred separate use of MMO weekly spreadsheets for these.*

iii. *Work to develop a structure for commentary to accompany the release consisted with UKSA guidance and best practice.* *Done – user consultation showed a preference to give priority to tables and to keep commentary brief.*

iv. *As part of this, review the production process to ensure that production is consistent with processes adopted for the annual publication and are as efficient as possible, and that also final outputs are available in a range of formats in addition to the current PDF format.* *Done – Output to be available as PDF of notice, standard Excel tables and database for interrogation.*

Further recommendations

19. Actions identified above are either complete or nearing completion. The following recommendations need some further action.

Recommendation 1 – further simplify the production process, where there are currently more than necessary Access queries. Build additional validation into the process and introduce statistician sign off.

Recommendation 2 – apply spreadsheet good practice, including provision of producer notes and guidance.

Recommendation 3 – finalise standalone methodology note and include species list.

Recommendation 4 – check consistency of disclosure rules between publications.

Recommendation 5 – seek to keep key user group for future ad hoc consultations.

Recommendation 6 – consider means of promoting new notice.

Recommendation 7 – include feedback facility on new notice.

Recommendation 8 – pre-announce publication time and date.

Christine Holleran

Defra, Office of the Head of Profession for Statistics

March 28, 2014

Annex 1

Areas for improvement, drawn from user consultation and self-assessment

General

- Provide note for website: pdf stats notice; standard tables; and database for further analysis.

- Tighten up on publication time and date (e.g. 9.30 third Thursday of the month).

- General point – some of the people I consulted commented in a way that suggested they weren't aware of the monthly stats, but that they would make use of them. Increase awareness. Maintain user consultation.

- Change title.

Clarification

- Include a note to explain level of completeness and the effect on year on year comparisons. The later year's figures will be less complete, due to delays in getting all landings data onto the system, and this will have an effect on the percentage change figures shown. Whilst the size of this effect varies by species, a rough guide is that at the total levels, the percentage change shown could be out by up to 5 percentage points (based on an analysis of past data).

- The notice is always "provisional" – this needs to change, provisional is the wrong term. Explanation of "fitness for purpose" to take account of timeliness, accuracy, lag.

- Remove the note about "*Difficulties in collecting statistics on shellfish landings*" – it is no longer relevant.

- Add an explanation of how the statistics are produced; a standalone methodology note.

- Species list needs improving – add species list to the methodology note.

- Add map showing location of major ports.

- Re-order tables.

- Add a note on the inclusion of Islands.

- Make reference to other data sources.

Process and calculations

- Build more QA into the production process to avoid error. Include cross checks between tables. Simplify the production process, adhere to spreadsheet good practice. Add statistician sense check and sign off.

- Include notes on database (database to show cumulative landings to current month and updated cumulative to previous months). Database to be refreshed monthly (rather than appended.

- Remove zero values from average price calculations.

- Carry over improvements already made to Sea Fisheries Statistics.

- Check application of disclosure routine.

Requests for additional information

- Nobody has suggested anything to drop. Or any big changes, so don't alter too much. One suggestion that landings by species sufficiently provided for by quota uptake stats, but other feedback supports keeping monthly stats as they are.

- It should be possible to sort the data by landings port and the published data should show average price per tonne, per month, per species, and per landing port etc.

- Make the monthly data available in Excel.

- Include a table of species of interest to anglers.

- Useful to have a breakdown of landings by under and over tens, by port.

- Add additional columns in the by port table, for "others" and "total" to account for landings into smaller ports.

- Include Scallops (Pecten maximus) in table 1.

- Dataset to show the nationality of foreign vessels.

Commentary

- Keep brief, tables are the main interest.

- Include a one page of key facts.

- Link/make reference, to annual publication and what it includes.

- Where things are being landed and how the prices vary might usefully be included in a commentary.

Areas considered but not taken forward.

- Annual quota allocations and year to date quota updates in addition to landings? *Weekly spreadsheets are used for quota management. They allow assessment of landings against quota to identify possibilities for a swap.*

- Report data (volume and price) by size of fish, not just by species. *Not readily available.*

- Can we include exports and imports. M*ake reference to other data sources in notes. Add link for HMRC.*

- Display information about gear type and vessel length too in relation to landings? This may indicate any changes in gear type use, over time, which may be useful at a seasonal level as well as from year to year? *Refer to annual publication.*

- Separate flag vessels i.e. foreign vessels that fly the UK flag but in all other respects are foreign vessels? *Information not readily available.*

- include additional info on TAC and effort data. *Refer to weekly spreadsheets.* *http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/fisheries/statistics/effort.htm*

- Inlcude annual quota allocations and year to date quota uptakes . *Refer to weekly spreadsheets.* *http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/fisheries/statistics/quota.htm*

Annex 2

A copy of the new notice can be found at this link.

http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/fisheries/statistics/documents/monthly/2014/february.pdf

The following announcement was made on the MMO website to alert users to the changes:-

User consultation results

Following consultation with users in January and February, we are changing the monthly statistics notice. This will be from the February 2014 statistics, published in April and significant changes include:

- providing tables in Excel format
- making a dataset available for user analysis
- updating previous months' data

Changes will also be made to the standard set of tables, like including breakdown by vessel length, and to amend the breakdown by port to cover all ports – major, other and total.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the consultation.