

Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Assessment Group Meeting 19  
18-19 November 2003  
Old Woolstore Apartment Hotel, Hobart

## MINUTES

### Attendance

#### Members

Mr Bruce Wallner – Acting Chair  
Ms Viki O'Brien – AFMA  
Mr Martin Exel, Industry  
Mr Les Scott, Industry  
Dr Geoff Tuck, CSIRO  
Dr Campbell Davies, AAD  
Dr Nick Gales, AAD  
Mr Dick Williams, AAD  
Mr Graham Love, ABARE  
Dr Rosemary Gales, DPIWE

Mr Peter Neave, Executive Officer

#### Apologies

Dr Keith Sainsbury, CSIRO  
Dr Andrew Constable, AAD  
Dr Graham Robertson, AAD  
Mr Barry Baker, AAD  
Mr Stuart Richey, Industry Member

#### Observer

Ms Barbara Wienecke, AAD  
Mr David Williams, Industry

### Introduction

#### Agenda item 1 - Preliminaries

The 19th meeting of SAFAG was opened at 10.30 am. The acting Chair, Mr Bruce Wallner, welcomed members and observers to the meeting. Mr Wallner, AFMA's Senior Manager for Research and Data, agreed to chair the meeting in the absence of the regular Chair, Dr Keith Sainsbury.

Mr David Williams attended the second day of the meeting as an observer. Dr Rosemary Gales, Dr Nick Gales, Mr Dick Williams and Ms Wienecke attended the meeting from 10.00am on 19 November.

#### 1.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Sainsbury, Dr Constable, Dr Robertson, Mr Richey and Mr Baker.

#### 1.2 Adoption of agenda

The agenda for SAFAG 19 was adopted with the addition of the following items,

- inclusion of the Australian industry comments on the outcomes from twenty-second meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR XXII) under agenda item 2;
- discussion on the CCAMLR New and Exploratory fisheries allocation model prepared by the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) under agenda item 4;
- discussion on the use of one Australian boat at any one time in CCAMLR Statistical Divisions 58.4.3(a) and 58.4.3(b) under agenda item 4;
- feedback to the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) on sub-Antarctic work undertaken by CSIRO under agenda item 13; and
- an update on Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification of mackerel icefish under agenda item 13.

### 1.3 Adoption of Minutes from SAFAG 18

The draft minutes from SAFAG 18 were circulated to members on 12 November 2003. Comments were received from Dr Davies, Mr Exel and Mr Scott and incorporated into the minutes. Following the changes, the minutes from SAFAG 18 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

### 1.4 Action arising from SAFAG 18

SAFAG discussed the status of incomplete action arising items from SAFAG 18.

#### General

1. **Provide an update on the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) website information package on the CCAMLR process:** Dr Davies advised that the AAD website link to information on the CCAMLR process is still under construction. He informed the Group that the issue is being addressed by the AAD Corporate Data Manager.

**Action arising**

#### Economic

The Group agreed to combine action arising items 2, 3 and 4 and consider the issue under agenda item 6. The items were:

- further development of a simple model to determine the economic value of the sub-Antarctic fisheries;
- provide current economic data for longlining and trawl to incorporate into economic model; and
- discuss the confidentiality of the economic data provided to put into the economic model.

#### Stock assessment and fisheries issues

2. **Following the outcomes from the stock assessment workshop, re-work stock assessments for the HIMI Fishery prior to CCAMLR XXII:** this item was completed, but members sought access to two additional AAD papers on the results of tagging and the comparative total allowable catches (TACs) using trawling and longlining in the HIMI Fishery. The issue was further discussed under agenda item 2. Dr Davies undertook to provide the papers to members.

**Action arising**

3. **Discuss the possibility of incorporating longline fishing in the 2003/04 Fishery Assessment Plan for the HIMI Fishery:** this issue was discussed under agenda item 9.

#### Environmental Issues

4. **Determine the level of seal biological information required in order to establish an appropriate sampling protocol:** Dr Nick Gales advised the collection protocols circulated out-of-session apply to seals taken incidentally in the HIMI Fishery. He advised for any seals taken incidentally in the Macquarie Island Fishery the observers should retain the whole carcass.
5. **Provide AFMA with a copy of the framework for seabird mitigation priorities from an Australian perspective that was developed at seabird workshop held in January 2003:** Not completed. Mr Baker agreed at SAFAG 18 to provide AFMA with the framework.

**Action arising**

- 6. Provide SAFAG with an update on gear loss reporting arrangements with AMSA:** Not completed. Mr Neave advised that he had followed up the issue with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) in November 2003. He advised that AMSA had again undertook to provide a written response to AFMA.

**Action arising**

- 7. Redraft wildlife interaction summary tables to include target fish, method, shot number and other recommendations made at SAFAG 17:** Not completed. Mr Wallner reported that Mr Anthony De Fries had been employed by AFMA to get the environmental data onto the database and that the task should be completed by the end of the year. He advised the data would be available to researchers, and he undertook for the AFMA Data Section to prepare some draft reporting formats for consideration by SAFAG.

**Action arising**

## **Research**

- 8. Determine the minimum number of otolith samples required in each fishery:** Not completed. Dr Davies advised that he and Steve Candy, a new statistician who had commenced with AAD and will be undertaking the request.

**Action arising**

- 9. Develop protocols for the tagging of skates and rays.** Not completed. This issue was discussed under agenda item 7.

- 10. Investigate changing the research funding split from 50/50 to 75/25 (AFMA and industry):** Mr Wallner advised that AFMA had agreed to altering the research funding split from 50/50 to 75% AFMA (using AFMA Research Fund monies) and 25% industry for Macquarie Island research in 2004/05. He also noted that the AFMA Research Committee was looking at SAFAG as a funding model for Fishery Assessment Group activities in other Commonwealth managed fisheries.

## **1.5 Correspondence**

SAFAG noted correspondence dated 25 September 2003 from Sam Nelson, AFMA Research Manager to the Chair of SAFAG concerning progress with the draft AFMA 5-year Research Plan.

## **Stock assessment and Conservation Measures**

### **Agenda item 2 – Report on the outcomes of CCAMLR XXII**

Ms O'Brien provided SAFAG with a written report on the key outcomes from CCAMLR XXII, held in Hobart from 27 October to 7 November 2003. This report and a press release issued by Australian industry operators on the outcomes are provided at Attachment A.

A number of issues were highlighted by AFMA from the report. SAFAG noted that the HIMI Patagonian toothfish stock may be a straddling stock. This follows the recapture of 11 tagged HIMI toothfish in the French Exclusive Economic Zones of Crozet and Kerguelen Islands.

Dr Davies advised that there is no tagging program in place around Crozet and Kerguelen Islands currently. He commented that toothfish generally recruit in shallower waters, before moving to deeper waters. The evidence from the tag returns indicate that some fish then appear to move to grounds north-west of the HIMI Fishery.

He noted the genetics work undertaken on toothfish showed strong differences between ocean basins but not within ocean basins, which would be consistent with some mixing among populations in the Indian Ocean sector. He suggested that existing information from these genetic studies could be used to estimate the number of samples required for a genetics study to specifically address the question of stock structure on the Heard Plateau.

SAFAG agreed that this issue would be discussed at the next SAFAG meeting where the tagging results, available genetic information and the results of collaborative work being undertaken between Australian and French scientists, would be available. It was also agreed to invite the relevant researchers from AAD and CSIRO to discuss their findings with SAFAG at the meeting.

#### **Action arising**

Mr Exel noted there were important management implications if the HIMI stock was determined to be a shared or straddling stock with fish from adjacent areas. He raised concern at the possible future allocation between Australia and France should it be shown that a shared stock did exist between the Australian and French zones. It was agreed that this would be a matter for SouthMAC to consider.

SAFAG also noted that the single stock scenario, which was currently applied to the Patagonian toothfish stock assessment in the HIMI Fishery, was currently considered to be more precautionary than the straddling stock scenario with adjacent areas.

Ms O'Brien also advised that an analysis undertaken by the CCAMLR Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment (WG-FSA) had shown that a long term yield of 3731 tonnes for toothfish would be appropriate for the HIMI Fishery if the catch were all to be taken by longline. The primary reason for this was that catch by longline would take larger fish, reducing the fishing mortality on young fish. Dr Davies noted that this analysis was run as part of the sensitivity analyses done by WG-FSA on the HIMI assessment. As such this estimate of long-term yield for a longline only fishery should not be considered a full assessment.

Mr Exel noted the annual total allowable catch (TAC) for toothfish in the HIMI Fishery had been similar over the past three years, and that it may create an impression of a stable fishery. He requested that AAD scientists run the current HIMI stock assessment model using data from five years ago to determine whether the TAC would have been different. Dr Davies noted that the fact that the TAC for the HIMI Fishery had stabilised over the past three years was consistent with what would be expected given the nature of the GYM assessment and is not due to refinements in the overall assessment procedure in recent years. The increased stability is due to the increasing number of recruitment surveys reducing the influence of any one survey on the estimated precautionary long-term yield. He undertook to do this work in order to demonstrate this affect.

#### **Action arising**

Mr Exel commented on the mackerel icefish TAC and the two size limits introduced for the Fishery. He expressed concern at the addition of a new 290 mm size limit to be introduced from May 2004. He advised his intention was to investigate using size limits as a mechanism to allow for two year TACs. This would allow his Company to better manage the natural annual fluctuations in ice fish abundance from a marketing perspective, which had gone from 2980 tonnes in 2002/03 to 292 tonnes in 2003/04.

Dr Davies advised the 290 mm size limit was introduced to avoid harvesting of the unassessed age 2 cohorts entering the Fishery during the season. He advised from an AAD perspective the intention was to try and minimise the high variability between annual TACs, and that this issue was identified at CCAMLR XXII to be considered in July 2004 by the sub-group on

assessment methods, which is a sub-group of WG-FSA. He suggested that this issue be further considered at the next SAFAG meeting.

### Action arising

Dr Tuck commented on the results of assessments of yield from the mackerel icefish population presented in the AAD paper submitted to CCAMLR. He was concerned that an amalgamation over two years may not pick up missing cohorts, and this should be a consideration when looking at this issue in future. Dr Davies noted that this was a result of doing an assessment and survey every year and the highly variable nature of icefish populations. As a result there is information available in the current assessment that was not available to the previous assessment which is projecting forward to that year.

SAFAG noted the record low number of seabirds which had been taken by legal longliners across the CCAMLR Convention Area during the 2002/03 season, that is 15 seabirds. No seabirds were killed during the season by Australian longliners.

### Agenda item 3 – Stock assessments and Conservation Measures for the HIMI Fishery

SAFAG considered the outcomes of CCAMLR XXII when considering catch limits for the HIMI Fishery. Catch limits for the HIMI Fishery are recommended annually to CCAMLR by Australia, following analysis of the results from the annual trawl survey. SAFAG reviewed these results prior to their submission to CCAMLR. WG-FSA met in Hobart from 13 to 23 October 2003. The HIMI assessments were thoroughly reviewed and re-run by WG-FSA and the outcomes supported the proposed limits and assessment methods used.

CCAMLR prescribed the catch limits for the HIMI Fishery which were recommended by Australia, and shown in the following table. SAFAG reviewed these limits and agreed to recommend to SouthMAC 19 that they be adopted for the 2003/04 season, commencing on 1 December 2003.

Target species (tonnes)		Bycatch Limits (tonnes)				
Patagonian toothfish	Mackerel icefish	Skates and rays	<i>Macrourus</i> spp.	Unicorn icefish	Grey rockcod	Each other species
2873	292	120	360	150	80	50

SAFAG noted the catch limit recommendations for toothfish, mackerel icefish and bycatch species are consistent with the biological reference points as required by *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery Management Plan 2002*.

In relation to the catch limits, SAFAG noted:

- **Patagonian toothfish** – the catch limit be decreased by 6 tonnes from 2879 tonnes for the 2002/03 season to 2873 tonnes for the 2003/04 season. The assessment took into account an estimated Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) catch of 1512 tonnes from the HIMI Fishery.
- **Mackerel icefish** - CCAMLR's Scientific Committee reassessed the catch limit for mackerel icefish in HIMI Fishery and agreed to recommend a TAC of 292 tonnes for the 2003/04 fishing season, for the area known as the Heard Island Plateau. This is a substantial decrease from the 2980 tonnes TAC prescribed for the same area in 2002/03, and is due to large, natural fluctuations in icefish abundance. The TAC for icefish in 2001/02 was 885 tonnes. The decrease is based on the May-June 2003 survey results and is

attributed to the high level of recruitment variability of this stock. Icefish stock surveys are conducted annually to ensure proper consideration of this high natural variability in the assessment and setting of TACs. The Scientific Committee considered ways of providing for stable catches from one year to another given the large fluctuations in the abundance of this species. To avoid harvesting the age-2 cohort entering the Fishery during the season that have not been assessed a minimum length of 290 mm was recommended to apply from May 2004.

- **Macrourids** - WG-FSA recommended that the catch limit for macrourids be decreased from 465 tonnes for the 2002/03 season to 360 tonnes for the 2003/04 season. This was based on a revised assessment of precautionary yield completed at WG-FSA which adopted the population parameters for the slowest growing macrourid species (*Macrourus carinatus*), as the expectation was that catches would be of both species.
- **Other bycatch species** - no new assessments were undertaken for other bycatch species and therefore catch limits prescribed by CCAMLR for grey rockcod (80 tonnes), unicorn icefish (150 tonnes), and each other species (50 tonnes each) remain unchanged.

Ms O'Brien outlined the requirements of CCAMLR Conservation Measure 25-03 (Minimisation of the Incidental Mortality of Seabirds and Marine Mammals in the Course of Trawl Fishing in the Convention Area) which would apply in the HIMI Fishery. She advised that given the nature of the Conservation Measure the requirements would be adopted as guidelines, rather than placed as conditions on Statutory Fishing Rights. SAFAG noted that while this is a new Conservation Measure the majority of the mitigation measures were already in place in the trawl fishery at HIMI.

SAFAG discussed the requirements of CCAMLR Conservation Measure 41-08 (Limits on the fishery for *Dissostichus eleginoides* in Statistical Division 58.5.2 in the 2003/04 Season). This measure allows for an extension to the longline season for an additional two weeks (to 14 September 2004) in the HIMI Fishery for operators of vessels which had demonstrated full compliance with CCAMLR Conservation Measure 25-02 (Minimisation of the Incidental Mortality of Seabirds in the Course of Longline Fishing or Longline Fishing Research in the Convention Area) in the 2002/03 season. SAFAG noted that the issue would be discussed by SouthMAC the following day, and require consideration by the 'Longline Fishing Threat Abatement Plan' Team when they meet in early 2004.

#### **Action arising**

Mr Scott noted that observations from AFMA observers had shown the white-chinned petrel appeared around 24 September this year in the HIMI Fishery, and this data supported an extension to the season.

SAFAG discussed the consultation process undertaken for stock assessments in the lead up to CCAMLR XXII. The industry members expressed a preference for a stock assessment meeting along the lines of the one held last year where skippers and other industry were able to provide input into the stock assessment process prior to CCAMLR. Dr Davies indicated support for this approach noting that results from the WG-FSA sub-group on assessment methods could be included in the discussions.

SAFAG agreed to schedule a stock assessment meeting for the first week in September 2004 in Fremantle.

#### **Action arising**

#### Agenda item 4 - New and Exploratory fisheries

SAFAG noted that all Australian proposals to operate in CCAMLR New and Exploratory fisheries in 2003/04 were endorsed by CCAMLR XXII, as shown in the following table.

Proponent	Vessel	Statistical Divisions			
		58.4.1	58.4.2	58.4.3(a)	58.4.3(b)
HIMI (Longline) Fishery Management Pty Ltd	Eldfisk	longline	longline	longline	longline
Petuna Sealord Pty Ltd	Janas		longline	longline	longline
A Raptis & Sons Pty Ltd	To be advised		longline	longline & trawl	longline & trawl

SAFAG agreed to recommend to SouthMAC that the catch limits set by CCAMLR as outlined in the following table, should apply to Australian flagged vessels in the 2003/04 season.

Area	Method	Target species limits (tonnes)	By-catch limits (tonnes)		
		<i>Dissostichus</i> spp	Skates & Rays	<i>Macrourus</i> spp.	Other species
58.4.2	Longline	500t total (with a max. of 100t per SSRU (5 SSRUs))	50	80	20
58.4.1	Longline	200t north of 60°S	50	32	20
		600t south of 60°S with 200t in 3 of 6 SSRUs	50	96	20
58.4.3(a)	Longline and trawl	250	50	26	20
58.4.3(b)	Longline and trawl	300	50	159	20

SSRU means small scale research unit.

SAFAG noted that no assessment of stocks in these areas has been undertaken and these limits are considered to be very precautionary.

SAFAG noted that for New and Exploratory fisheries, vessels from a number of other CCAMLR member countries were also given approval to operate in the various CCAMLR Statistical Divisions, and the catch limits for each Division will be on a competitive basis.

Ms O'Brien advised that access to Elan Bank (CCAMLR Statistical Division 58.4.3(a)) and BANZARE Bank (CCAMLR Statistical Division 58.4.3(b)) would be conditional on only one

Australian flagged vessel operating at any one time. She requested and industry members agreed that Australian operators who have received CCAMLR approval to operate in these areas reach agreement among themselves to meet this requirement.

Ms O'Brien also advised that under CCAMLR Conservation Measures 41-06 and 41-07 vessels could operate in Elan and BANZARE Banks outside the prescribed season (1 May to 31 August 2004) provided they could comply with experimental line-weighting trials requirements outlined in CCAMLR Conservation Measure 24-02 (2003).

SAFAG noted the requirement under some CCAMLR Conservation Measures to conduct 20 research sets five miles apart when longlining in the small-scale research units. Australian industry expressed serious concern at this requirement, which may force operators to conduct research in potentially dangerous conditions of ice and rough seabed terrain. AFMA informed members that at the briefing for 'Eldfisk' the vessel operator was advised that they should endeavour to comply with the requirements of the Conservation Measures but not to undertake the work if there was any risk to crew or vessel. Ms O'Brien advised that this issue would be taken up at the next CCAMLR Consultative Forum meeting scheduled for December 2003.

**Action arising**

## **Macquarie Island Fishery**

### **Agenda item 5 – Review of the draft Macquarie Island Strategic Assessment Report**

SAFAG noted that a draft Strategic Assessment Report had been prepared by AFMA for initial consideration by SAFAG. Dr Davies and Dr Tuck undertook to provide comments on the stock assessment methodologies to AFMA by Christmas.

**Action arising**

Ms O'Brien advised that AFMA would prepare a further draft following receipt of the information from SAFAG.

**Action arising**

### **Agenda item 6 – Bioeconomic model**

Mr Love introduced a paper 'A simple bio-economic model of the Macquarie Island fishery' and acknowledged the assistance and data provided by Dr Tuck and Mr Exel. Mr Love outlined the three key elements to the model:

1. a yield function (which relates catch to effort)
2. a price (which allows the yield function to be transformed into a revenue function); and
3. a cost function.

Dr Tuck advised that two yield curves were appropriate for the Macquarie Island Fishery, one for the resident stock and the other for the transient stock, and work was continuing on this aspect.

Mr Scott commented that the costs included in the model should include endurance days, and not just the time spent on the fishing grounds. Mr Love advised that he had used information on catch costs previously supplied to ABARE by industry.

Mr Exel expressed concern about specific data from his Company being used and preferred a more generic approach regarding costs. He advised that a figure of \$30,000 per day is an accepted industry figure.

Mr Wallner stated that the model provided a very useful template for Macquarie Island (and other Commonwealth fisheries) and would be useful for the FAG in testing a range of scenarios. He noted there was an issue of sensitivity with data confidentiality and that Mr Love's paper should remain confidential to the FAG and not be released more widely. He also noted that further work was to be done by Dr Tuck on the yield curves.

### **Agenda item 7 – Summary of tagging activities**

Dr Davies outlined the results of recent tagging results and in particular noted the recapture of 11 toothfish (tagged in the HIMI Fishery) in adjacent French zones (this was also discussed under agenda item 2).

SAFAG agreed to a request from Mr Scott to look at the results from archival tagging. It was agreed that this would be included on the agenda for the stock assessment meeting in September 2004.

**Action arising**

### **Agenda item 8 – Bycatch management arrangements**

SAFAG discussed the bycatch management arrangements adopted for the HIMI Fishery in 2002/03, and agreed that similar arrangements should apply for the 2003/04 season.

The tag and release protocols for skates and rays were discussed. It was noted that for longline operations, skates and rays should be cut loose while still in the water to enhance survivorship. Ms O'Brien undertook to ensure this was reflected in clear instructions to observers.

**Action arising**

Mr Exel sought clarification on the protocols for tagging skates and rays in trawl operations. Ms O'Brien undertook to follow this up with the AFMA Observer Section.

**Action arising**

Dr Davies undertook to clarify how the total mortality for skates and rays was determined and report back to SAFAG at its next meeting.

**Action arising**

## **Agenda item 9 - Fishery Assessment Plan 2003/04**

SAFAG discussed the requirements of the Fishery Assessment Plan for the HIMI Fishery for the 2003/04 season.

Mr Exel advised that the vessel 'Austral Leader' had been under repair and that this had disrupted the fishing plans for his Company. As a result the planned research work scheduled for December 2003, which was to be undertaken in conjunction with work by the AAD vessel 'Aurora Australis', may not proceed. He undertook to discuss the issue with AAD scientists with a view to determining how to best meet the research survey requirements.

**Action arising**

SAFAG noted the longline vessel 'Janas' will undertake some research sets to look at the abundance and age structure of toothfish at different depths. The results of this work will be assessed and incorporated in the Fishery Assessment Plan for 2004/05. The work undertaken in 2003/04 may be a potential credit in research days in future seasons.

**Action arising**

## **Environmental issues**

### **Agenda item 10 – Review of environmental interactions and gear loss**

Mr Wallner advised that Mr Anthony De Fries had been employed to get the environmental data onto the database and this task should be completed by the end of the year. The data would be available to researchers.

Dr Nick Gales advised it would be beneficial to produce a summary table on interactions similar to one provided to the Working Group on Incidental Mortality Associated with Fishing (IMAF). Ms O'Brien undertook to get a copy of the table format and forward it to AFMA's Research and Data Section.

**Action arising**

Mr Scott raised the issue of seabird interactions and sought clarification in the definition of what constitutes a 'death' in relation to seabird limits. He expressed the view that the definition between CCAMLR and that adopted by the Threat Abatement Plan team should be consistent.

Dr Rosemary Gales advised that IMAF had adopted some text which clarified the situation and this could be provided to SAFAG.

**Action arising**

Mr Exel sought a general discussion on the levels of environmental interaction in the HIMI Fishery. Dr Rosemary Gales advised that all stakeholders working together from the outset of the development of the Fishery had been very important, and adherence to the full suite of mitigation measures has resulted in minimal interactions. Ms Wienecke advised that the collection of environmental data by observers had been important and that the next step would be to try and determine what happens under water when birds dive for baits.

Mr Scott stated that the data collected on interactions was very valuable and it was important that transparency was maintained. He noted that the data collected on seabirds had been important factor in getting an extension of an additional two weeks to the longline season for 2003/04 in the HIMI Fishery. This also provided an incentive for industry to continue to trial new measures and initiatives to address bycatch issues.

Dr Nick Gales advised that a potential issue for Antarctic fisheries in the future may be with the habituation of marine mammals through interactions with IUU vessels, and that learned and taught behaviour from these encounters may impact on the operations of the legal fleet.

Mr Scott stated it would be very useful to have a presentation on bycatch issues from Barry Baker, as Chair of IMAF, prior to the annual IMAF meeting. It was agreed that Mr Baker would be invited to the stock assessment meeting scheduled for September 2004.

**Action arising**

### **Agenda item 11 - Bycatch Action Plan update**

SAFAG noted that the draft Antarctic Fisheries Bycatch Action Plan had been given endorsement by AFMA's Environment Committee, and it will be considered by the AFMA Board at its meeting on 8 and 9 December 2003.

### **Agenda item 12 – Use of one observer**

SAFAG discussed the issue of using one observer on some trips, noting it had been discussed at a number of previous meetings. Mr Dick Williams provided background information on the discussion, and was of the view that one observer could be used on a 'standard' toothfish trip where there were no other research requirements and there was a full time crew member dedicated to assisting the observer to collect all the fisheries information currently being collected.

SAFAG considered a paper prepared by Rosemary Gales and Barry Baker in response to discussions at SAFAG 18. The paper pointed to potential seabird interactions with fishing gear during the trawl operation, and that this needed to be monitored. Mr Exel welcomed the paper and was of the view the present trip being undertaken by his Company's vessels provided an opportunity to amend the observer protocols to observe the wires during trawling operations. Mr Wallner undertook to take this up with AFMA's Observer Coordinator, Bob Stanley.

**Action arising**

Mr Wallner also advised that AFMA's Observer Section would seek to contact Ben Sullivan from the Falkland Islands and obtain a copy of their protocols for seabird observations during trawl operations.

**Action arising**

Mr Exel requested a timetable be developed to look at the sampling regimes, including the sampling levels required. Dr Davies and Dr Tuck advised that AAD and CSIRO were working on the issue. SAFAG agreed to place the issue on the agenda for the next SAFAG meeting.

**Action arising**

Mr Wallner provided the meeting with an update of available video technologies for monitoring fishing operations. He noted that some demersal longline and pot fisheries internationally had instigated video technology, and an Australian Company was interested in developing an application in the East Coast Tuna Longline Fishery.

Mr Wallner raised the issue of data formats used by AAD and CCAMLR and sought advice on whether the requirements could be harmonised. SAFAG noted that AFMA and AAD would look at the issue out-of-session.

**Action arising**

## **Other**

### **Agenda item 13 - Other business**

SAFAG discussed a number of additional items under 'other business'.

Dr Tuck advised that the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) were seeking beneficiary comments on the work CSIRO had been undertaking on 'Stock Assessment and Management Strategy Evaluation for Sub-Antarctic Fisheries'. SAFAG noted the benefits and accuracy of the research and agreed to write to FRDC in support of the work that had been undertaken.

#### **Action arising**

Mr Exel thanked SAFAG members from AFMA, AAD and CSIRO for the assistance provided to the Marine Stewardship Council certification team in their assessment of mackerel icefish. He advised the team were expected to release their report and ranking scheme in early 2004, at which time there would be a further opportunity for comment.

SAFAG thanked Dick Williams for his very valuable contribution to SAFAG since its inception, and to his past and ongoing role with Antarctic research over many years. Messrs Exel and Scott, in particular, highlighted the professional assistance and guidance provided by Mr Williams to their operations in the HIMI Fishery. SAFAG noted Dr Davies would be replacing Mr Williams on SAFAG.

### **Agenda item 14 - Next meeting**

The next meeting of SAFAG was scheduled for 28 April 2004.

SAFAG members thanked Mr Wallner for chairing the meeting in the absence of Dr Sainsbury.

The meeting closed at 12.55pm on 19 November 2003.