



Southern Squid Jig Fishery Resource Assessment Group Meeting

**SQUIDRAG MEETING 17
11 OCTOBER 2012
TELECONFERENCE
FINAL MINUTES**

CHAIR: Lianos Triantafillos

1. PRELIMINARIES

1.1 Welcome

The 17th meeting of SquidRAG was held via teleconference. The meeting opened at 10am with the Chair welcoming participants.

Table. 1.1 ***Participants present and declaration of interests:***

Member	Position	Interest declared
Lianos Triantafillos	Chair, PIRSA	Employed by Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA). No pecuniary interests.
Neil Hughes	AFMA member	SSJF manager. No pecuniary interests in the fishery.
Melissa Schubert	State representative, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria	Employed by Department of Primary Industries Victoria. No pecuniary interests in the fishery.
Sally Weekes	Executive Officer, AFMA	RAG EO and AFMA Senior Management Officer. No pecuniary interests in the fishery.
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Observers		
Simon Vieira	Economist, ABARES	Employed by ABARES. Author of SSJF section in Fishery Status

		Report, general interest in fisheries research including data-poor fisheries. No pecuniary interests in the fishery.
Corey Green	Scientist, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria	Employed by Department of Primary Industries Victoria. Specific interest in squid research but no current projects. No pecuniary interests in the fishery

Apologies:

Louis Hatzimihalis	Industry SquidRAG member, Commonwealth squid fishing concession holder.
Ian Rule	Commonwealth squid fishing concession holder.
Phil Sahlqvist	SquidRAG science member, ABARES

Members noted that no industry members were present; however, it was agreed that the meeting should continue as industry had been given ample opportunity to attend. This included a letter to all SSJF holders from AFMA on 11 September 2012 informing them of the proposed SquidRAG and Economic meeting to be held in Portland. Only one industry member expressed an interest in attending the economic meeting, but not SquidRAG. Consequently the Portland meeting was cancelled.

When the date for the SquidRAG meeting was set, the industry member was unsure if they could attend due to other commitments. To obtain additional industry views for the meeting a second concession was contacted and agreed to participate. However, on the day, no members of industry were able to participate.

SquidRAG attendees noted there was a tight timeframe to get the TAE recommendation to SEMAC and subsequently to the AFMA Commission to ensure it was determined in time for the start of the fishing season on 1 January 2013 which made re-scheduling the SquidRAG meeting difficult.

Action 17.1 AFMA to circulate the SquidRAG meeting summary, in particular the recommendation on the TAE for 2013, to the industry member for any comments to be provided with their advice.
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1.2 Declaration of Interests

Participants declared their interests as documented in Table 1.1.

1.3 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted with minor amendments to the order of items under Agenda Item 2. Items 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 were discussed before 2.1.

1.4 Actions Arising from previous meeting

Action No.	Action Required	Status
SquidRAG 16.1	AFMA to investigate a date in November for a face to face meeting to review the Harvest Strategy.	Ongoing. AFMA tried to organise a meeting for October 2012 however it was cancelled due to lack of interest from industry. AFMA will consider rescheduling for 2013.
SquidRAG 16.2	AFMA to circulate SSJF budget to RAG participants when finalised	Not completed. AFMA will circulate the current budget to members
SquidRAG 16.3	AFMA to investigate a port visit and industry meeting in November to discuss the industry proposal to improve economic efficiency of the fishery. This is to be coupled with a SquidRAG face to face meeting to review the Harvest Strategy. AFMA to canvass member's availability ASAP.	Ongoing. AFMA tried to organise a meeting for October 2012 however it was cancelled due to lack of interest from industry. AFMA will consider rescheduling for 2013.
SquidRAG 16.4	AFMA to investigate Corey Green from UTAS to attend next SquidRAG face to face meeting to present his PhD research on squid abundance and environmental factors.	Ongoing. Corey was scheduled to present at the face to face in Portland that was subsequently cancelled. Corey will be invited to the next face to face meeting.

2. Business

2.2 Managers Report

Mr Hughes updated members on recent issues for AFMA with the key one being the use of large mid-water trawler in the Small Pelagic Fishery and the review of the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* as a result of this matter. Mr Hughes indicated the implication of the review was unlikely to have significant consequences for the SSJF. Mr Hughes also noted the ongoing reviews of Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy and Commonwealth Bycatch Policy. Mr Hughes also noted a proposal in the Small Pelagic Fishery to allow jigging as an approved fishing method in that fishery. If approved, this might give squid jig operators an additional option to fish for mackerel outside the usual squid season.

2.3 Industry Report

While no industry members were present to give an industry update, the Chair highlighted the point that fishing operations in the SSJF were linked to price they can get for their product

from fish processors.. If squid fisheries in other parts of the world have a good season, the price decreases for Australian product and there is little incentive to go fishing. Australian operators are currently getting a relatively good price, \$3/kg for jig caught squid because squid fisheries such as the Falkland Islands have had a poor season. This has resulted in effort increasing in the fishery.

2.4 Research report

Dr Corey Green provided an overview of his recently completed work, report *Arrow Squid: Stock Variability, Fishing Techniques, Trophic Linkages – Facing the challenges*. Virtue P, Green C, Pethybridge H, Moltschaniwskyj, Wotherspoon S and Jackson G. (2011) *FRDC Final Report 206/12, 205pp*. Key findings were:

- Squid caught inshore by the jig fishery were larger, consisted of more males than females ratio and had a greater percentage of mature females than those caught in the offshore trawl fishery.
- Seasonal patterns in growth rates were similar for males and females in each location.
- Squid grew faster and larger and matured later in the cooler waters off Victoria than those from the warmer waters in the GAB.
- Squid hatch all year round with no distinct breeding season.
- There was little genetic differentiation between GAB and Victorian stocks.
- Increased fishing pressure on squid is likely to have positive effects on principle prey groups and a negative effect on predators (New Zealand fur seals and predatory fish).

Potential implications of this work for management are that the jig fishery tends to catch more mature females than the offshore trawl fishery which could become important if the stock was heavily fished, and that although size and growth rates vary between the two areas, genetically they are considered one stock.

Dr Green has agreed to provide a presentation on his work at the next face to face RAG meeting.

2.1 TAE recommendation for 2013

Members considered the background paper AFMA had circulated “Total Allowable Effort for the 2013 Season”. This included including catch and effort data for the SSJF and the South East Trawl sector of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery. Total Squid catch by the Tasmania commercial sector was also considered (although it was not provided for current season due to its unavailability).

Key points:

1. In 2012, CPUE in the southern squid jig fishery and SE trawl fishery increased by 23% and 86% respectively. This is the second consecutive year that CPUE had increased in both the southern squid jig fishery and SE trawl fishery and suggests there are no sustainability concerns for this resource.
2. Catch in both fisheries has increased for last two years, but are still well below the trigger points of the Harvest Strategy for jig, trawl and combined catch.
3. Ecosystem impacts resulting from this fishery were considered minimal.

4. Approximately only 10 of the 46 concession holders fished in 2012, suggesting a large amount of latent effort in this fishery. While this is not ideal, the cost of management is spread across a larger number of concession holders, reducing the average cost per concession holder.
5. In terms of the economic performance of the fishery, it is generally understood that the reason few operators in the SSJF fish is because of the high cost of fishing and low return. The RAG noted that AFMA had attempted to organise a meeting with industry, at the request of some operators, to discuss options for improving the economic efficiency of this fishery. However, due to limited interest from the rest of the industry, the meeting did not proceed. Until discussions can be held with industry about potential changes to the way the fishery is managed, the RAG were reluctant to recommend any changes to the fishery in this regard. Little else is known about the economic performance of the fishery.
6. The RAG noted the review of the Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy will be finalised in March 2013 may provide some guidance on how to maximise the economic efficiency of highly variable fisheries such the SSJF.
7. Since there is no biological or economic reason to change the TAE, the RAG recommended that the TAE remain at the same level as 2012 at 560 jigging machines. The RAG also recommended the number of SFRs required to operate one machine should be set at 10 SFRs, the same as in 2012.

Given the absence of industry members at the meeting, it was agreed that AFMA would circulate RAG recommendations to the industry members for comment at the conclusion of the meeting (Action 17.1 identified under Agenda Item 1).

3. Other Business

The RAG noted the email from ABARES member, Phil Sahlqvist (Attachment A), particularly the point that the deliberations of the RAG could be better documented. However, they agreed that without significant investment into the collection of more data a more rigorous assessment is not likely to be undertaken, particularly given the healthy status of the stock and poor economics of the fishery.

**Action 17.2 : RAG to consider the development of a stock assessment report to better document the stock assessment process and develop a research plan for squid.
Timeframe – no set timeframe but logical to occur after the face to face meeting with industry as outcomes of that discussion are likely to feed into the process.**

The Chair thanked all participants for attending and closed the meeting.

Meeting Closed at 9:45 am

Actions arising from previous SquidRAG meetings

Action No.	Action Required	Responsibility	Status
SquidRAG 15.2	AFMA to canvass members for a date in 2011 for a face to face meeting to review the Harvest Strategy.	AFMA Manager	Ongoing, AFMA organised a meeting for October 2012 but cancelled due to lack of industry interest.
SquidRAG 16.2	AFMA to circulate SSJF budget to RAG participants when finalised	AFMA Manager, RAG EO	Not complete
SquidRAG 16.3	AFMA to investigate a port visit and industry meeting in November to discuss the industry proposal to improve economic efficiency of the fishery. This is to be coupled with a SquidRAG face to face meeting to review the Harvest Strategy. AFMA to canvass member's availability ASAP.	AFMA RAG EO, RAG industry members and representatives	Ongoing, AFMA organised a meeting for October 2012 but it was cancelled due to lack of interest from industry.
SquidRAG 16.4	AFMA to investigate Corey Green from UTAS to attend next SquidRAG face to face meeting to present his PhD research on squid abundance and environmental factors.	AFMA RAG EO with assistance from Melissa Shubert	Ongoing, Cory had been scheduled to present at the face to face meeting in October 2012 that was cancelled. Cory has agreed to attend when it is re-scheduled.

Actions arising from SquidRAG 17 – Current meeting

Action No.	Action Required	Responsibility	Status
Squid RAG 17.1	AFMA to circulate the SquidRAG meeting summary, in particular the recommendation on the TAE for 2013, to the industry member for any comments to be provided with their advice.	AFMA	Completed 11 October 2012
SquidRAG 17.2	RAG to consider the development of a stock assessment report to better document the stock assessment process and develop a research plan for squid. Timeframe – not set timeframe but logical to occur after the face to face meeting with industry as outcomes of that discussion are likely to feed into the process.	RAG	

Attachment A

From: Sahlqvist, Phil [mailto:Phil.Sahlqvist@daff.gov.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 9 October 2012 5:44 PM
To: Hughes Neil; lhfishing@hotmail.com; lianos.triantafillos@sa.gov.au;
melissa.schubert@dpi.vic.gov.au
Cc: Vieira, Simon
Subject: RE: SquidRAG Effort determination for 2013 (now with smaller attachment)
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Dear Neil,

Unfortunately I won't be able to participate in the teleconference. I've scanned the background paper and I don't see any major problems with rollover of the present TAE for the next year. Basically, the status of this fishery is unchanged from last year.

A couple of comments on the information in the paper:

1. I think the catch rate statistics are quite variable between seasons particularly for the jig fishery. Until this current year, the trawl CPUE was more stable. It would be valuable to explore the trawl data more to tease out whether there is targeting of squid or reduced discarding that might influence the high recent CPUE.
2. I think there might be some gaps in the information to assess performance against the management plan (attachment 3). We don't have a recent research plan that I am aware of but I think that a more rigorous process for assessment would be valuable. A fishery assessment report wouldn't have to be a large document but I think it could be a product from the RAG that would summarise the evidence around stock status, likelihood of reaching triggers in the near future, economic status and statement about any need for TAE adjustment on biological or economic considerations. Something for consideration after the meeting with industry I would suggest.

regards

Phil Sahlqvist
Scientist | ABARES | Fisheries and Quantitative Sciences