



Document title	Workplan for food webs in the future work on HELCOM indicators process
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Agenda Item	3 – Setting the scene: assessing food webs
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Reference	

Background

The work plan presented below represents a prior steps taken under the *Future work on HELCOM indicators* process, as summarised under [document 4-20](#) to HOD 57-2019, and is the topic specific work plans developed within that process.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Workplan for food webs in the future work on HELCOM indicators process

Foodwebs (Ecosystems)

The workshop discussed how this topic could be better addressed and reflected in HOLAS III and beyond.

The workshop considered that it would not be viable to provide an operational assessment by HOLAS III, but that work should be developed further.

The Workshop considered the discussions started to be highly valuable, though clearly at a very early stage, and recommended the following:

- The formation of a Correspondence Group on Foodwebs (CG FOODWEB).
- Maintaining discussion on the topic during the HOLAS III process.
- Improved contextual reflection of the topic in HOLAS III.
- Outcomes of work during HOLAS III would help define an appropriate direction.

Other aspects discussed or questions raised, included:

- Harmonisation between indicators and threshold values for the relevant component parts would be needed if indicators are to be combined in an overall assessment. Discussing a philosophical and practical level is important if there is to be a such an assessment.
- Could Seal-fisheries interaction be considered as a component of this topic. Is there a possibility to harmonise or coordinate between the assessments and or threshold values for seals and fish/fisheries. Could improved at-sea distribution of seals provide an initial source of information to begin addressing such issues.
- Can existing indicators be integrated/aggregated ('pulled together') to reflect a foodweb, and if so how. Is an umbrella approach more suitable.
- Does it require a disassembly of indicators to re-construct on overall foodweb assessment.
- Could approaches discussed in OSPAR and ICES be considered and have value, for example the Ecological Network Analysis (ENA) approach.
- OSPAR has ongoing test studies related to ENA that cover benthic and pelagic habitats, including one in the Kattegat region (that will conclude in 2020).

The Workshop discussed a way forward and considered that the following would be a valid approach, considering the ENA approach as a good aspect to explore further:

Step 1: Contact responsible persons in OSPAR to request information on ongoing work related to ENA (including contacting Ulrike Schüchel who is coordination the work).

Step 2: Establish a HELCOM CG FOODWEB group through which discussion across existing expertise (i.e. experts from existing species or habitat groups) could be furthered.

- Gather and review relevant information from national or scientific publications
- Consider what can be achieved in the Baltic Sea
- Plan workshop for further development

Step 3: Workshop to review information available (in 2020)

- Review test cases carried out in OSPAR
- Discuss project needs for additional test cases in the Baltic Sea
- Develop a plan for further work (including projects)

Step 4: Possible additional Baltic Sea test cases (in 2021), e.g. to give spatial coverage and testing.

Step 5: Review output and available information to provide initial overview and assessment based on possible test cases and collated information in HOLAS III.

Other aspects discussed included:

Additionally supporting the overview with project information, e.g. BOINUS XWEBS and BONUS BaltHealth.