

# Resource Depletion group – Resolution on Food Availability and Resource Depletion

9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties  
Online, 7 - 11 September 2020

ASCOBANS/MOP9/Doc.6.2.4  
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Agenda Item 6.2.4 Further Implementation of the Agreement  
Conservation Issues  
Resource Depletion

Document 6.2.4 Draft Resolution:  
Resource Depletion

Action Requested

- Review the draft resolution
- Introduce amendments as needed
- Adopt the resolution

Submitted by Resource Depletion Working Group



## DRAFT RESOLUTION: RESOURCE DEPLETION

*Noting* that small cetacean distribution is influenced by the distribution of main prey species and prey diversity, and that small cetacean health is influenced by the quality of prey,

*Concerned* that resource depletion may represent a significant threat to populations of small cetaceans within the Agreement Area, as evidenced by the poor status of several fish stocks that are important prey for small cetaceans (e.g. Iberian sardine, western Baltic spring spawning herring; historically, North Sea sand eel; general deteriorated status of the Baltic ecosystem); evidence of poor condition and/or starvation in some stranded animals; range shifts (for example in North Sea porpoises) thought to be linked to prey availability, and the known susceptibility of small cetaceans to prey depletion, particularly those with high metabolic rates (for example common dolphins) and limited fat reserves (such as harbour porpoises),

*Acknowledging* the international efforts under the European Union, ICES and other organisations to move towards an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and an integrated ecosystem approach to marine monitoring, assessment and management,

*Recalling* Resolution 8.9 *Managing Cumulative Anthropogenic Impacts in Marine Environment*, Resolution 8.3 *Revision of the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan)*, Resolution 8.4 [(Rev.MOP9)] *Conservation of Common Dolphins, and Resolution 7.1 Conservation of Harbour Porpoises and Adoption of the Conservation Plan for the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat*, and further recalling ACCOBAMS Resolution 2.25 *Prey Depletion*.

### *The Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS*

1. *Encourages* Parties to prioritize and support relevant monitoring, assessment and research and in particular to:
  - a) ensure adequate monitoring of dietary consumption, preferences and requirements, overall health status, condition, life history parameters, distribution and abundance, and trends therein, in small cetacean species across the ASCOBANS range, with particular emphasis on species considered to be susceptible to negative impacts of resource depletion such as harbour porpoises and common dolphins, on evidence of poor condition and/or starvation (accounting for the underlying health status of such animals);
  - b) develop appropriate nutritional/condition indicators for the cetacean species concerned (drawing on existing environmental monitoring and assessment, e.g. under the MSFD, where appropriate);
  - c) report on declines in key prey species (e.g. fish, cephalopods) and on changes in fish size or nutritional content that might adversely affect predators, and on geographic areas where such changes have been recorded;
  - d) be aware of current fishery management advice for exploited marine fish and invertebrates, in particular information on stock status, trends and distribution, especially for those species of importance as prey to cetaceans and in particular for cetacean species known to be impacted by fishery bycatch or climate change;
  - e) report on the extent to which management advice for fishing on key resource species is successfully implemented, especially if there are issues with quotas being exceeded or instances of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;
  - f) work to improve monitoring and assessment of the status of data-deficient and non-commercially exploited marine fish and invertebrate species of importance to

# Interim report

9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties  
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ASCOBANS/MOP9/Inf.6.2.4  
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Agenda Item 6.2.4 Further Implementation of the Agreement

Conservation Issues

Resource Depletion

Information Document 6.2.4 Interim Report of the ASCOBANS  
Resource Depletion Working Group  
(August 2020)

Action Requested

Take note

Submitted by

Resource Depletion Working Group



Note:

Delegates are kindly reminded to bring their own document copies to the meeting, if needed.

## Interim Report of the ASCOBANS Resource Depletion Working Group

August 2020

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### Background and Terms of Reference

The ASCOBANS area hosts a high diversity of small cetaceans (36 species – Evans, 2020). This includes a large number of delphinids, the most common of which are common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), white-beaked dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*), Atlantic white-sided dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*), Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*), long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*), and killer whale (*Orcinus orca*). Other small odontocetes present include several beaked-whales: northern bottlenose whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*); Sowerby's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon bidens*); and Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*). Within the family Phocoenidae, only one member is present: the harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) (see, for example, Weir et al. 2001, Hammond et al. 2002, Kinze et al. 2003, Reid et al. 2003, Camphuysen & Peet 2006, Hammond et al. 2013, Goetz et al. 2015, Hammond et al. 2017, Rogan et al. 2017, Crawley et al. 2020, Evans, 2020, Evans & Waggitt, 2020, Waggitt et al. 2020).

Resource depletion is one of many potentially important threats to cetacean populations in the ASCOBANS area, an issue that has to date received relatively little attention.

The 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee requested the establishment of a Working Group on resource depletion to (i) review new information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetacean populations and (ii) make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action. The Resource Depletion Working Group (RDWG) is to report to Meetings of the Advisory Committee, as necessary. Its work is intersessional, by e-mail and video conference.

RDWG was envisaged as including veterinary and fishery science expertise as well as cetacean biology, ecology and conservation expertise (e.g. collection and analysis of samples from stranded animals and determination of causes of death, dietary and feeding ecology studies, management and governance). Links with HELCOM, OSPAR, ICES and IWC were proposed. A list of members is provided as an Annex to the present document.

The Terms of Reference are as follows:

- A. Review/summarise recent information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetaceans and identify additional research needed.

# ToR of the Resource Depletion Group - Interim Report

- Review/summarise **recent information on resource depletion** and its impacts on small cetaceans and identify additional research needed;
- **Liase with other ASCOBANS initiatives to develop health/condition indicators for small cetaceans, based on information from live animals and/or necropsies**, with the ultimate aim to improve the resolution of these indicators for identifying impacts of prey depletion and other cumulative stressors;
- **Review and collate information on diet of small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS area** (including long-term dietary variation) and foraging behaviour, to improve understanding of likely responses to changes in prey availability;
- **Review relevant information from emerging technologies** (technologies contributing to novel information on available prey quantity and quality, on predator-prey interactions, and on the nutritional status of small cetaceans);
- **Mitigation of pressures affecting cetacean prey availability** – fisheries.