

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 3RD MEETING OF THE ASCOBANS COMMON DOLPHIN GROUP

(Adopted by the Advisory Committee)

These recommendations were made at the 3rd Meeting of the Common Dolphin Group (CDG, 15-16 November 2022), which reviewed the latest information related to bycatch and other significant threats. The CDG made the following recommendations:

Surveys

1. Parties and Non-Party Range States are encouraged to allocate adequate funding to future SCANS surveys in a timely manner to ensure that such surveys are ideally undertaken in June-July, and in as short a time as possible, noting the common dolphin is a highly mobile species and the abundance in an area may vary greatly between summer and autumn.

Strandings

2. Considering the increase in cases of infectious disease and starvation reported in the UK and Ireland, Parties should ensure sufficient funding is available for stranding programmes to assess health status, and monitor changes in causes of death. The CDG also recommends this to Non-Party Range States. The need for a consistent and holistic approach to collection and analysis of data and samples from stranded animals should be borne in mind.
3. Parties should include trace metals in national pollution monitoring programmes, given the increasing temporal trends in cadmium and mercury observed in individuals in France.
4. Parties are recommended that North-east Atlantic-wide information on life history parameters be collected and analysed from strandings and bycaught animals to assess for evidence of temporal changes in those parameters at the population level that may have resulted from anthropogenic activities. (CDG2/Rec7)

Bycatch

5. Parties are encouraged to continue to review and test a range of mitigation options to reduce bycatch of common dolphins, including acoustic deterrents, gear modifications, fishing practices, time-area closures, move-on procedure etc., mitigation measures that could be implemented at the fleet level. (CDG2/Rec4)
6. Parties and non-Party Range States should better target their bycatch monitoring efforts at the areas and métiers of high bycatch risk for the common dolphin. These include particularly static net fisheries (GNS and GTR) over the Biscay shelf (subareas 8a and 8b) and the coastal zone of the Iberian Peninsula (subareas 8c, 9a, 9b) where current monitoring effort covers only a very small fraction of fishing effort.
7. Portugal and Spain are encouraged to actively increase observer coverage and remote electronic monitoring in small vessel fisheries for estimating bycatch and also monitoring the effectiveness of mitigation measures, given the increase in strandings of bycaught common dolphins in recent years.
8. The Secretariat to establish a Working Group to further explore potential bycatch mitigation measures for beach seine and static gear small scale coastal fisheries operating in Portuguese

waters. Members include Catarina Eira, Fiona Read, Graham Pierce, Marina Sequeira, Mark Simmonds, Sinéad Murphy. Others are welcome to join.

9. Parties and other relevant EU Member States should continue efforts to harmonize and coordinate assessments for common dolphin and other cetaceans under the MSFD, as presently underway in France, Spain and Portugal under the EU CetAMBICion project.
10. Parties and other relevant EU Member States should seek mechanisms to continue current bycatch mitigation trials and pilot projects, aimed at reducing bycatch of common dolphins and other cetaceans (sometimes also benefiting other PET species), for example those carried out in the EU CetAMBICion project by Spain and Portugal.
11. Further to Recommendation 10, Parties and other relevant EU Member States should take into account, even where results have been promising, the need for further efforts to implement the findings (for example to ensure ongoing industry collaboration and seek mechanisms to cover added costs associated with mitigation) and to continue data collection until sufficient data are available to show whether a (statistically) significant reduction in bycatch is achieved.
12. Parties are encouraged to continue to conduct further analysis towards fine-scale risk-mapping to better understand factors determining high bycatch and to direct resources to high-risk areas and times. (CDG2/Rec5)

Other

13. Letters of invitation to be sent from the Secretariat to request Non-Party Range States' participation in implementation of the SAP on Common Dolphins. (CDG2/Rec10)
14. SAP Range States to complete the 'Achievements Table' by end of the year to identify data gaps, as well as actions and funding that are required going forward. The Steering Group should then set priorities for each country. (CDG2/Rec11)