

NAMMCO



**PLANNING GROUP MEETING
MARINE MAMMALS AS FOOD RESOURCE**

REPORT

3 November 2017

Please cite this report as:

NAMMCO Report MMFR, 3 November 2017

NAMMCO

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Planning Group on project Marine Mammal as Food Resource 3 November, Greenland representation, Copenhagen, Denmark Report

Present: Jóannes V. Hansen (FO), Amalie Jessen (GL, chair), Geneviève Desportes and Charlotte Winsnes (Sec)

1. Chair's opening remarks

Jessen welcomed the participants to the meeting. It was noted that Iceland and Norway were unable to attend.

2. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda (appendix 1) was adopted without changes.

3. Update on Communication events

a. Presentation at the World Seafood Congress 2017, 11-13 September, Reykjavik

Desportes attended the Congress and gave a presentation on marine mammals as food resource – the only marine mammal focussed talk of the conference; Sealing & Whaling and “Blue Growth”: Coherence or Paradox? The talk questioned why, marine mammals – an important & multifaceted marine resource, remains consequently ignored in the discourse on blue growth, although many MM stocks have recovered and are considered healthy and able to sustain controlled removals. It examined the potential of North Atlantic marine mammals is meeting the criteria of blue products.

Discussion

The meeting agreed that it might be worth attending future WSC. The WSC represents a forum that is quite different from what NAMMCO normally attends and as such the outreach effect may potentially be higher. It was noted that in order for this kind of activity to have any real effect it is often beneficial to attend more than one time. Any attendance at future WSC should explore possibilities for coordination with other projects such as the Arctic as a food producing region”

An interesting side effect of the attendance was the introduction to the concept of life cycle assessment (LCA) and her discussion with one of the Swedish expert who presented the talk. The definition of LCA from Wikipedia: *Life-cycle assessment (LCA, also known as life-cycle analysis, eco-balance, and cradle-to-grave analysis) is a technique to assess environmental impacts associated with all the stages of a product's life from raw material extraction through materials processing, manufacture, distribution, use, repair and maintenance, and disposal or recycling. LCAs can help avoid a narrow outlook on environmental concerns by:*

- *Compiling an inventory of relevant energy and material inputs and environmental releases;*
- *Evaluating the potential impacts associated with identified inputs and releases;*
- *Interpreting the results to help make a more informed decision.*

The group agreed that it would be interesting to do this kind of analysis for marine mammal products from the different NAMMCO countries and compare with products which could be used as alternative. The Swedish expert had shown lots of interest in doing that with marine mammal products and Desportes was charged to contact her and see whether an analysis could be initiated in the framework of NAMMCO.

b. BOS at Arctic Circle 2017, 13-15 October, Reykjavik

Desportes reported from the BOS organised jointly by NAMNMCO, WWF Arctic Programme, NITI and ICC (ICC did not participate at the end): *Arctic Sealing: Threat or Blue Prospect*, and gave the presentation that she gave at the BOS «Is Arctic sealing responsible in an ecosystem perspective? ». The talk presented Arctic sealing in a global ecological and blue growth perspective and examined whether Arctic sealing and the EU ban of seal product respond to the criteria/definition of blue growth: sustainability, low carbon, resource efficiency and optimisation, social inclusion. Clearly the first is while the second is not. See in the appendices for the programme of the BOS (appendix 2), and a summary of the presentations and of the following discussion (appendix 3).

Discussion

The BOS had had a very good and varied (age and origins) attendance of around 120 people, and was very well received by the Inuit communities, all those of Alaska, Canada and Greenland being represented.

c. Lesson learned

With reference to the Arctic Circle BOS, Desportes pointed out that the number of talks and panellists were too high, as the time for discussion is short. In future any BOS or similar activity would benefit from being even more focused in subject matter and having a smaller panel.

In general, it was noted that the organising of such events is time-consuming, and more so when it is a cooperation with external organisations.

Maybe an interesting subject for a future BOS would be storytelling through interventions by the hunters and stake holders themselves. See under point 5.

4. Update on Implementation of the Communication and Outreach strategy of MMFR

a. Secretariat

Reference was made to the reports under agenda item 3. Generally, it was noted that marine mammal as food resource is a good “door opener” for talking about utilisation of marine mammals and what NAMMCO represents and does.

b. NAMMCO member countries

Jessen reported from the project “the Arctic as a food producing region” where she is participating for Greenland. The project which is under the auspices of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) under the Arctic Council is a collaboration between Norway, Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Denmark and the Faroes Islands. The project tries to assess the potential for increased production and added value of food from the Arctic. The underlying notion is that consumers generally prefer food that is healthy, with good taste and produced in a sustainable manner. And increasingly they prefer food with a unique story. Food from the Arctic has a potential to score high on all these properties, especially with marketing based on properties highlighting the characteristics (green/blue) of Arctic food.

Jessen is participating in the part of the project that deals with products from marine mammals and reindeer. As an example of the importance of the project she explained that for instance the description of the infrastructure related to food in Greenland is mostly tuned towards import of food and not so much on internal, local food supply.

Jessen also reported on the upcoming meeting 29 November in the European Parliament, Brussels where the European Parliament Intergroup on “*Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development*” and MEP Jørn Dohrmann, is organising a conference entitled “*How can we support indigenous people's sustainable hunt in the Arctic? The initiative of a QR Code for Seal Skin*”.

A QR-Code for seal products has been developed by Great Greenland that verifies that the product originates from Inuit hunting and complies with the conditions specified by the EU through EU Regulation from 2015.

The conference will inform about the new QR Code initiative, while also ensuring dissemination of knowledge that it is legal (and sustainable) within the EU to sell/buy seal products within the boundaries of the Inuit-Exemption. Participants will be representatives from the European Institutions, Member States, Customs, Retail sector and Stakeholders including a high-level delegation from Greenland with the participation of the Minister for Fisheries and Hunting.

Jessen informed that she was on the organising committee and it was agreed that Desportes should be invited to give a presentation in line with what she did at the BOS and WSC.

c. Background document

The meeting agreed that it would be a good idea to publish the background document “Marine mammals a multifaceted resource”. The Secretariat was asked to investigate the possibilities of getting it published in the IGWIA journal.

d. Website

The meeting noted that the background document is available on the NAMMCO website. It was especially acknowledged that the MMFR project and background document were used as inspiration when organising and presenting a lot of the information given on the website.

e. Dissemination kit

The funded MMFR project description stated the two following main goals:

- I: to develop a background document highlighting all aspects of marine mammals (MM) as food resources
- II: to communicate the message that MM are food resources. This involves identifying how this best can be communicated, the idea being to use the background document actively on different arenas like conferences, seminars, hearings etc.

The aim was to normalise and increase the awareness that MM are resources for food. And target groups were very broad: politicians, civil servants, decision makers, managers, consumers, distributors, media, NGO’s and general public.

One aim of the project was to communicate that MM are underused food resources, and through this create an acceptance for a higher, more extended utilisation of MM.

It was furthermore stated that the project should be visible on the website, it would develop folders and handouts for distribution at conferences and meetings. It was also envisaged to develop presentational kit that could be used by interested stakeholders for presenting at different arenas.

Stine Leth-Nissen had been asked to make a proposal for a possible presentation. She was specifically asked to not make THE presentation but rather a script giving the story with its main points and how such a story may be built up. The draft was presented as document 05-NAMMCO/MMFR-2017-01.

Discussion

The meeting agreed that the goals had been reached. It was also agreed that instead of developing entirely new presentations and try to tune it for different target groups, the Secretariat would make the exiting presentations available for all interested parties to use as they see fit.

f. Kid/youth project

The Secretariat had, with no result, reached out to the University in Tromsø and specifically to the faculty for future teachers informing about NAMMCO's plan to develop information with kids/youth as the target audience, inviting students to be involved.

As inspiration Jessen drew attention to the yearly food festival in Nuuk in relation to development of interactive schoolbooks and other materials for kids on wildlife in Greenland and being in the nature (Asimi=being in the nature).

Also for inspiration was mentioned EDUARCTIC – a web based EU-funded project focused on using Arctic research as a vehicle to strengthen science education curricula across Europe.

The meeting felt that it was important to target this age group and hoped that the idea would be followed up by NAMMCO. The Secretariat was encouraged to continue its efforts to engage the teacher school and communication (any kind) department of universities/high schools.

5. Discussion on the future of MMFR

With reference to the discussion under agenda item 4 e, the group reiterated that the main goals of the project were successfully reached and agreed to finalise the project by the end of 2017.

It was agreed that the remaining money on the budget for 2017 should be used to initiate a small Life Cycle Assessment (see agenda item 3a) project comparing for instance production of whale meat and chicken meat. The Secretariat was asked to identify and contract someone to undertake such an assessment.

The meeting agreed that it was important to continue to flag marine mammals as food resource. The convening of events such as BOS was encouraged, and it was recommended that the next such event should focus more on the human dimension and storytelling through interventions by the hunters and stake holders themselves more than managers/scientists. One should also explore the possibilities for a food event based on marine mammals.

The planning group agreed to recommend to Council:

- To consider the project as finalised.
- To continue with organising side events or meetings/conferences with an emphasis on marine mammal as food resource, in particular from a story telling perspective.

6. AOB

There were no issues raised under this agenda item.

7. Next meeting

The group agreed to ask the Secretariat to prepare the project report to the Nordic Council of Ministers that would be discussed and finalised via a skype meeting. Time and date to be decided.

8. Adoption of report

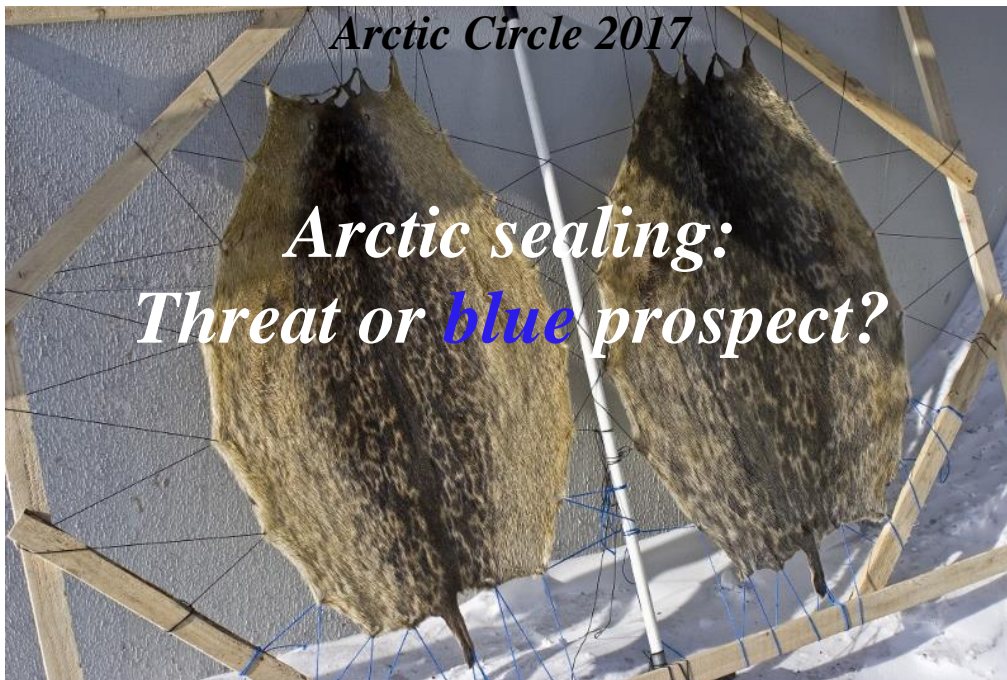
The report was adopted by correspondence on 7 December 2017.

AGENDA and LIST OF DOCUMENTS**AGENDA**

1. Chair's opening remarks
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Update on Communication events
 - a. Presentation at World Seafood Congress 2017, 11-13 September, Reykjavik
 - b. BOS at Arctic Circle 2017, 13-15 October, Reykjavik
 - c. Lessons learned
4. Update on Implementation of the Communication and Outreach strategy of MMFR
 - a. Secretariat
 - b. NAMMCO member countries
 - c. Background documents – what now
 - d. Website
 - e. Dissemination kit
 - f. Kid/Youth Project
5. Discussion on the future on MMFR
6. AOB
7. Next meeting.

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Reference	Subject	Agenda item
01-NAMMCO/MMFR-2017-01	Draft agenda and list of documents	
02-NAMMCO/MMFR-2017-01	MMFR budget	4,5
03-NAMMCO/MMFR-2017-01	Meeting Report from NAMMCO/MMFR-2016-03	4
04-NAMMCO/MMFR-2017-01	MMFR Background document	4
05-NAMMCO/MMFR-2017-01	MMFR Background document summary	4
06-NAMMCO/MMFR-2017-01	KIT proposal	4
13-NAMMCO/MMFR-2017-01	Proposal for Kid/Youth project	4



Saturday 14 October, 17.30 – 19.00, Culture House / Þjóðmenningarhúsið

Can (some) populations of Arctic seals qualify as blue resources contributing to food security? Do they represent a sustainable resource with a low ecological cost that meets the dietary needs and food preferences of Arctic communities? Is sealing responsibly managed? Do bans on seal products protect Arctic seals?

NAMMCO, NTI and WWF will explore these issues with the public. Chaired by Danish journalist Martin Breum, the debate will feature:

Gabriel Nirlungayuk, Director of Inuit Programs and Services Division, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

[Importance of sealing for Arctic communities](#)

Genevieve Desportes, General Secretary, North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission

[Is Arctic sealing responsible in an ecosystem perspective?](#)

David Lee, Wildlife Biologist, Department of Wildlife and Environment, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

[Expectations of the Nunavut Agreement in Sustaining Wildlife Populations.](#)

Gert Polet, Head of Forests & Wildlife Unit, WWF

[Perception and reality: threats to ice seals in a changing Arctic.](#)

Adamie Alaku, Vice President-Resource Development, Makivik Corporation, Quebec, Canada

Aaja Chemnitz Larsen, Member of the Danish Parliament, Greenland

Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, Producer of Angry Inuk, Canada

Dwayne Ryan Menezes, **Director**, Polar Research and Policy Initiative (PRPI), UK

Eggert Jóhannsson, Furrier, Iceland

Geir Oddsson, Senior adviser, Nordic Council of Ministers

[Organised by: NAMMCO, ICC, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and WWF Arctic Programme](#)

Output of the AC 2017 breakout session

Arctic sealing: threat or blue prospect?

With 100 to 120 participants, besides the 10 members of the panel, and a full room, the session “Arctic Sealing: threat or blue prospect” was particularly well attended for a BOS at the Arctic Circle Assembly and its 13 concurrent sessions.

Inuit communities from Alaska, Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Greenland were represented; other participants came from Canada, several European countries, Iceland, Norway and USA; with overall a wide age span.

Very appropriately, the screening the evening before of the documentary “The Angry Inuk” from Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, constituted as a good introduction to the debate. The documentary presents the dire consequences of the seal ban for communities in Nunavut and the general misinformation vehiculated and consequent lack of knowledge on the realities behind Arctic Sealing.

Focussing on the human and societal aspect of sealing, the two representatives of Nunavut illustrated the invaluable importance Arctic sealing has for Arctic communities, both as food resource, cash income giving access to everyday commodities, and societal and cultural links. Inuit sealing provides food security and promotes the use of sustainable food sources at minimal global ecological cost. Nunavut representatives also underlined the importance of the effective inclusion and active participation of local communities and indigenous peoples in the management of wildlife. In this regard the Nunavut Agreement (NA), protected by the Canadian Constitution, acknowledges and reflects the primary role of Inuit in wildlife harvesting and is an important step in this recognition. In its Article 5.1.5 – Principles of conservation, the NA also strongly promotes the maintenance of vital, healthy, wildlife populations capable of sustaining harvesting needs.

NAMMCO presented Arctic Sealing in a global ecological and blue Growth perspective. The talk illustrated the absolute low ecological footprint (with reduced or absent collateral environmental costs) associated with Arctic Sealing (when sustainable) and underlined how low its was compared to that of any imported resources. Arctic Sealing appears clearly as a resource extraction well in balance with the environment and ecologically responsible. If seals were not the target, it would be difficult for anyone not to consider this resource extraction as an ecological ideal well in tune with the blue growth principals of sustainability, low carbon, resource efficiency and optimisation and social inclusion. Finally, the talk challenged bans of seal by-products of corresponding to a blue approach, as seals are hunted for human food and the bans generate waste (skins) and decrease food security and wellbeing, while impoverishing the overall Arctic ecosystem by generating a loss of knowledge, skills and cultural traits.

WWF Arctic Programme emphasized that economic development will also take place in the North, but that some developments were associated with great risks for the Arctic environment and its people. Great caution should be taken with the fragile Arctic environment so that it could continue to sustain the life of its people. Indigenous and local peoples have the right to utilise and manage the natural resources that traditionally are a part of their cultures, but also the duty to do it sustainably. Ice seals were not threatened by the present level of sealing and the present management framework, but other threats were on the rise that needed to be accounted for, taking into account the cumulative effects of all human activities.

The representative of the Nordic Council of Ministers reiterated that for the NCM the key element in Blue Growth was sustainability, and that any sustainable extraction of marine resources should be taken as an element of Blue growth / Blue economy. NCM, therefore, acknowledges a sustainable Arctic Sealing as one component of the Arctic Blue Economy.

Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, the producer of the documentary *Angry Inuk* underlined very strongly that, Arctic communities belong, as all other communities worldwide, to the world cash economy and needed cash for surviving and developing their economy and society. Talking about and requiring pure subsistence economy gave no meaning in the 21st century and the development of the Arctic. Depriving Arctic community of one of their income opportunities - that they themselves have control over - was pushing them towards other cash sources, like income from oil exploration and exploitation, mining, shipping and tourism, economic activities they will have little control over if any and that may generate serious, rather uncontrollable and irreversible threats to the Arctic Environment.

The vital importance of Arctic sealing for Inuit communities and the importance of the importance of the effective inclusion and active participation of local communities in the management of wildlife were also underlined by the Nunavik representative. An Alaskan Inuit person also commented that the situation in Alaska is similar to other places in the Arctic with respect to the importance of sealing and seal by-products to the Inupiat. [There was no Alaskan representative in the panel, but ICC, as representative of all Inuit Communities, participated in the organizing committee. However, the ICC chair, who should have represented the organization, withdrew her participation at the last minute.]

On point of the discussion from the public was the industrial sealing, which was not acceptable, while Inuit sealing was. The answer was provided by Alethea, supported by other Inuit Representatives. She underlined that there was no industrial sealing any longer, that the big bulk of the sealing was done by Arctic/Inuit communities and not by Newfoundlanders. She again refuted the fact that Arctic sealing was not commercial and underlined that all sealings, including Inuit sealing, had a commercial aspect, besides the sharing of food. The cash it brought was needed to cover the cost of hunting and local extraction of country food and access to other commodities in a place where prices of the most common daily items were extremely high. Inuit have been engaged in the market economy since the fur trade commenced with Europeans and Inuit should not be restricted by the technology or methods that they utilize to harvest. At the contrary, hunting methods should keep improving, as they benefit animal welfare.

There were some general statements made on perception of sealing and the seal hunt (driven mostly by the images of the Newfoundland hunt). It appears to be very challenging to change the perception because of the images that are typically provided of the seal hunt by NGOs contain lots of blood. Also, NGOs continue referring to the hunt of baby seals, although the hunt of young of the year has been prohibited the last 20 years. These images evoke emotions from people who are not accustomed to it and do not know about the hunt and its regulation. Statements were made that there was an ethical problem when Europeans impose their emotional values on Inuit, disguised as environmental concerns, but ignoring facts regarding the sustainability and management of the hunt.

NAMMCO concluded the session by underlining that for NAMMCO the only keywords were sustainability and ecological responsibility and that NAMMCO did not make any differences between Inuit or other coastal communities, not recognising the notion of indigenous sealing or whaling. All had the same right and duties, especially the duty of improving hunting methods for example and that for the sake of the hunted animals. The hunting activity (time, place, target) as such represented the traditional aspect, not the hunting method.