Key Industry Concerns and Requests to the 2025 IWS Panel on DFFE Regarding Demersal Fishery-Independent Surveys

Robert Landman (South African Deep-Sea Trawl Industry Association)

Background

The South African hake trawl industry has maintained **MSC certification since 2006**, with fishery-independent surveys serving as a critical benchmark for resource health. These surveys provide:

- **Independent, near real-time data** that complements industry catch records, which often lag behind current-year trends.
- **Stability and confidence** in TAC (Total Allowable Catch) recommendations.
- **Essential bycatch and ecosystem data** supporting MSC Principle 2 requirements.

Industry Concerns Over Reduced or Discontinued Surveys

1. Increased variability or conservatism in TAC recommendations.
2. Potential challenges to the **OMP model's credibility** from NGOs and stakeholders.
3. Risk of **MSC certification status changes** due to perceived governance gaps.
4. Loss of resolution on hake stock structure and species differentiation.
5. Inability to meet MSC Principle 2 standards for ETP species, bycatch, and habitat impacts.
6. Greater burden on industry to collect supplementary data for stock assessment models.

Key Questions for the Panel

- **Certainty of Resource Status:** How will reduced survey frequency affect confidence in hake stock assessments?
- **Industry Role:** What data should industry collect to compensate for fewer surveys?
- **Global Practices:** How do other nations manage stock assessments without regular surveys?
- **Collaborative Sampling:** Could industry vessels, using standardized gear and protocols, assist in survey grid sampling

Small Pelagic Industry Input relating to Value/Need for Vessel-based Surveys

Mike Copeland (Small Pelagic Fishing Industry Association)

Background

The small pelagic sector in South Africa is a purse seine fishery targeting anchovy, sardine, redeye herring and associated by-catch. Successful rights holders in the fishery share a % of the anchovy and sardine TACs and are permitted to target redeye against a PUCL These catch limits (including TACs, PUCLs and TABs) are determined from OMPs (either in place or being revised or developed) and survey information provides vital information to inform the outputs from the OMPs.

The critical importance of these species in the marine food web is recognized not only as the conduit of energy in the system but also considering the needs of dependent and related species. This is a subject of a separate topic in this workshop and is also receiving much attention specifically in the EIMTG (Ecosystem Inputs to Management Task Group).

The products produced by the sector are both for direct human consumption and for indirect human consumption. Direct human consumption in the form of canned sardines providing affordable, nutritious and healthy protein to South Africans and an important provider to the school feeding schemes. Indirect human consumption in the form of fish meal and fish oil which are important ingredients in aquafeed producing some of the greenest proteins on earth derived from Life Cycle Assessments.

Certification schemes are essential components in the value chain providing comfort to consumers and to aquaculture producers. Canned sardines in South Africa are certified under the SASSI scheme informing consumers to make sustainable seafood choices, whilst MarinTrust certifies responsible sourcing, traceability and production of marine ingredients. Any loss of certification in the small pelagic sector will have serious market implications.

Key Considerations for the Panel

1. Do vessel hydroacoustic abundance survey results in the small pelagic sector provide the best information to manage the fishery optimally and responsibly?
2. In the absence of available vessels to conduct hydroacoustic abundance surveys what other methods can be used to inform TACs/TABs/PUCLs?
3. Is there any reliable way in which suitably equipped industry purse seine vessels can be used to provide useful scientific information in the normal operation of their activities.
4. Would it be possible to use industry purse seine vessels to conduct at least the spawner biomass hydroacoustic surveys?