

Lowri Evans
Director General
Directorate-General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Rue de la Loi, 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Pelagic RAC
Treubstraat 17
PO Box 72
2280 AB Rijswijk
The Netherlands

Tel: +31 (0)70 336 9624
Fax: +31 (0)70 399 3004
E-mail: info@pelagic-rac.org
<http://www.pelagic-rac.org>

Date: 6 September 2013
Our reference: 1314PRAC01
Subject: Fishing opportunities herring stocks 2014- part 1
CC: Ms Martine Aussems, Ms Evangelia Georgitsi (by email)

Dear Ms Evans,

At its latest Working Group I meeting on 2 July 2013 the Pelagic RAC discussed the ICES advice regarding fishing opportunities in 2014 for several herring stocks and agreed on a number of recommendations which were subsequently unanimously endorsed by the Executive Committee.

Please find the detailed recommendation in annex 1 and do not hesitate to contact me in case you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Verena Ohms
Executive Secretary Pelagic RAC

Annex 1: Recommendation on fishing opportunities for herring stocks in 2014-part 1

General comment

Based on its recent Working Group I meeting on 2 July 2013 in Amsterdam the Pelagic RAC is in a position to provide unanimous advice on fishing opportunities in 2014 for the following three herring stocks:

- West of Scotland herring (VIa North)
- Celtic Sea & South of Ireland herring (VIIa South, VIIg,h,j,k)
- Irish Sea herring (VIIa North)

It has further been decided to postpone providing advice for North Sea autumn spawning herring and Western Baltic spring spawning herring until after the Pelagic RAC October meeting. Reason therefor are the ongoing negotiations between the EU and Norway on a new management plan for North Sea autumn spawning herring and TAC setting in ICES area IIIa which affects the herring stocks both in the North Sea and the Western Baltic Sea.

It should also be noted that the Pelagic RAC is currently working on further revisions of the proposed rebuilding plan for herring in areas VIa South and VIIb,c together with the Marine Institute in Ireland to address some criticism raised by STECF. This stock will therefore be dealt with at the Pelagic RAC's October meeting again to finalize a recommendation.

1) West of Scotland herring (VIa North)

The Pelagic RAC recommends following the agreed long-term management plan and set the TAC in 2014 at 28.067 tons accordingly.

ICES will undertake a benchmark exercise of this stock during 2015. The Pelagic RAC believes this provides an opportunity to develop values for currently undefined reference points, especially in regard to SSB. MSC certification requires clients to provide an action plan which clearly demonstrates an objective of achieving a stock size which is consistent with B_{msy} .

Therefore, the Pelagic RAC advises the Commission to request ICES to undertake the work required to establish SSB reference points in advance of the 2015 benchmark meeting.

2) Celtic Sea and South of Ireland herring (VIIa South, VIIg,h,j,k)

The Pelagic RAC advises following the long-term management plan for this stock which has been evaluated as precautionary by both ICES and STECF. This implies setting the TAC in 2014 at 22.360 tons. In addition the Pelagic RAC seeks clarification why the Commission has asked ICES to provide advice based on MSY for this stock even though a precautionary management plan has been agreed upon by all relevant parties. This behaviour is in strong conflict with the Commission vigorously promoting long-term management plans in the past.

3) Irish Sea herring (VIIa North)

Over the past year the Pelagic RAC has in collaboration with scientists from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Newforge, the Marine Institute Ireland and CEFAS in the UK worked on developing a management plan for this stock. While progress has been made the model applied as such does not deliver the expected results and additional work is needed. Reference points have to be re-evaluated and the assessment possibly has to be adjusted. Until a long-term management plan is available the Pelagic RAC therefore advises following MSY for this stock and to set the TAC at 5.251 tons in 2014.