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Date: 2 September 2015
Our reference: 1516/PAC 04
Subject: Response to NWW letter regarding MCE

Dear Dr Mossink,

I appreciate you taking time to respond to my letter of 18 June regarding a meeting to discuss our concerns in relation to how control and enforcement will be applied in pelagic fisheries across the regions. The next meeting date of the High Level Group on 24 September is noted, and we look forward to receiving an official invitation in due course.

In your letter, you refer to the recommendations submitted by the Control Expert Group (CEG) to the HLG, this is new information to the Pelagic AC which we need to consider. To help us formulate Pelagic AC advice in advance of the meeting on the 24th of September it would be extremely useful if you could forward a copy of the recommendations submitted by the Control Expert Group to the HLG. In addition the Pelagic AC requests that a representative of the CEG could provide us with a presentation on the specific recommendations at the next meeting of the Pelagic AC's Executive Committee, which will be held on Thursday, 8 October in Edinburgh. Our Pelagic AC recommendations on implementing the EU landing obligation in pelagic fisheries did not provide specific advice on which control measures should be used as the instrument to control and monitor pelagic fisheries. However, we did commit ourselves to carefully scrutinising the results of ongoing trials and recommendations from the Regional Control Expert Groups. The AC is aware that trials are ongoing in a number of Member States, but to date we have not had any feedback on the conclusion of these projects. Neither have we received any recommendations from Regional Control Expert Groups. Therefore, it will be impossible to submit a position paper by 15 September on specific MCE measures until we have appraised the recommendations report. I appreciate this is not a particularly helpful response to your second point, but members need to discuss this issue first before arriving at any conclusions. Developing a good working relationship with the Regional Groups is high on the

agenda of the Pelagic AC, as a first step, it would be really useful and worthwhile to have an open discussion on control matters with representatives of your CEG.

Having said this, however, one opinion of the stakeholders represented in the Pelagic AC seems to stand out in all circumstances, which is the need to deliver a level playing field concerning the harmonisation of rules and the MCE measures and instruments applied across the regions. This was the overarching concern expressed in our April 2014 “Recommendations on implementing the EU landing obligation in pelagic fisheries” and by industry stakeholders during the July meeting of the Pelagic AC when discussing the implementation of the landing obligation within the various Member States. The nature of pelagic fishing means that many skippers will fish some of their quotas outside their own waters in other Member States EEZs, quite often in more than one MS in a single trip. Therefore, a uniform application of the rules and use of MCE measures and instruments is imperative.

The Pelagic AC has also consistently highlighted the importance of third country vessels fishing in EU waters being included in control and monitoring schemes. If the policy is to be successful and also not disadvantage EU vessel operators it must include third country vessels in any new or additional MCE measures. The level of pelagic fishing opportunity Norway and Faroe Islands enjoy in EU waters is not trivial, between them for 2015 they are permitted to catch 511,000 tonnes. To put that into context, this is roughly equitable to the combined pelagic quotas of the UK and Ireland, where most of the Norwegian and Faroese quotas will be caught.

The first point you raise in terms of trans-regional fisheries is relatively straightforward to answer.

NWW – SW fisheries interaction

- Mackerel – the fishery begins in Scotland during January, the fleets fish on the South West migrating stock during February and into March as it transits through Irish, French and Spanish EEZs.
- Blue whiting – The main migratory blue whiting fishery begins in International waters during January, the stock migrates north into the Irish EEZ during late February and into Scottish waters in March through early April, before the stock moves into the Faroese sector. Blue whiting is also fished by French and Spanish vessels in the Bay of Biscay and Cantabrian Sea throughout the year.
- Horse mackerel – the main fishery takes place in the Western Channel, Bay of Biscay, West of Ireland and West of Scotland during winter months from September to April. An artisanal fishery takes place in the Bay of Biscay and Cantabrian Sea throughout the year.
- Boarfish – the early fishery takes place January to March and a second season from September to December. Most of the fishing activity takes place SW of Ireland and in the Bay of Biscay.

NS – SW/NW fisheries interaction

- Mackerel – Most of the autumn catch is taken in the North Sea (MAC/2a34), however, during December it is quite common for the stock to move into the NWW region during December in preparation for the spawning migration.
Moreover, a substantive part of the mackerel caught in area IVa is flex mackerel, i.e. mackerel caught in IVa but accounted against western mackerel quota (MAC/2cx14).
- North Sea horse mackerel (JAX/4bc7d) is mostly caught during the second half/end of the year in area VIId.
- Herring in VIa North (HER/5b6an) is caught during the second half of the year and often the vessels taking this herring stepping out of their North Sea (IVa) herring fishery to take their quota in in the adjacent VIa North area.

I appreciate your kind invitation to the next HLG meeting to discuss these important issues and hopefully we can also establish a basis for a fruitful cooperation on pelagic fisheries matters going forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ian Gatt' with a small flourish below it.

Ian Gatt
Chairman Pelagic AC