



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE C.5/CB/il/Ares(2021)

Dear Mr Raakjær,

Thank you for your letter of 4 May 2021, regarding the rebuilding plan for the Western horse mackerel stock.

We acknowledge the valuable work done by the PELAC in the development of this rebuilding plan, and we are pleased that ICES found this plan precautionary. As you know, we share with you the concerns regarding the dire situation of the Western horse mackerel stock and the same objective to bring this stock back to sustainable levels as soon as possible.

At this stage however, we cannot anticipate the outcome of the Commission's 2022 TAC proposal for the Western horse mackerel, for which the scientific advice will only be published in the autumn. When analysing the advice and deciding on our proposal for the way forward for this stock, we will take the rebuilding plan TAC into careful consideration. The ensuing TAC proposal will then be discussed in the framework of the annual consultations process with both the Member States and the United Kingdom. The Commission will do its utmost to seek acceptance on the proposed TAC with its counterparts.

Regarding your request that the EU and the UK ask ICES to use the rebuilding plan TAC as its headline advice, I will refer to our previous exchanges on this question. As we had mentioned in our correspondences on the Southern horse mackerel management plan, under Article 2(2) of the CFP Regulation, the basis for managing stocks is the maximum sustainable yield ('MSY') exploitation rate. This objective is echoed in Article 494(2) of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom. Therefore, to be consistent across the board with other stocks, we continue to ask ICES for the MSY figure in the headline advice for all stocks where MSY assessment is available. The rebuilding plan will therefore be part of the catch options table of the ICES advice for 2022.

Having said that, I would like to reassure you that the Commission takes into consideration other relevant catch options from the ICES advice when proposing fishing opportunities. In previous years, the Commission proposed alternative catch scenarios

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from the ICES advice that were lower than the MSY headline advice for Celtic Sea herring and for the Southern horse mackerel, which corresponded respectively to a PELAC rebuilding plan and a management strategy.

Thank you again for the hard work that the Advisory Council put into this rebuilding plan. Should you have any further questions regarding this letter, I invite you to contact Ms Pascale Colson, coordinator of the ACs (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu; +3222956273).

Yours faithfully,

Charlina VITCHEVA