



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Director-General

Brussels, 21.10.2008 D 11854
D(2008)

Mr Ian McSween
Pelagic RAC Secretariat
PO Box 72
2280 AB Rijswijk
The Netherlands

Subject: Policy Statement on Fishing Opportunities for 2009

Dear Mr McSween,

Thank you for your letter of 13 August regarding the Pelagic RAC's response to the Commission's Policy Statement on Fishing Opportunities for 2009. We welcome the comments and support from the Pelagic RAC. However, we may have different opinions on a few aspects.

I would start with what the Pelagic RAC considered to be the negative tone of the Policy Statement. The Policy Statement begins with a review of the status of European stocks, based on scientific advice provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) over the years. The result of this analysis is that around four-fifths of stocks remain outside safe biological limits. The poor state of stocks is both regrettable and indisputable. A further issue, as you mention, relates to the control system, where there is a high number of stocks with unknown status, due to poor catch reporting. It is crucial that the industry, as the main data provider, realises the implications of poor fisheries data and its consequences for the scientific advice provided, and that it takes responsibility for improving it.

I would now turn to the rules for setting annual TACs, and particularly the change from a 15% to a 25% variation for stock exploited at MSY. This rule was changed to allow the industry to take advantage of increases in available catches from stocks that have recovered, as stocks may be able to recover faster than 15% per year. In relation to stocks for which the TACs have not being fully utilised, the Commission proposes reducing the TAC with the objective of preventing an expansion of the fishery with respect to a stock about which little is known, and thus where an increase in fishing pressure may not be sustainable. Nevertheless, a reduction may not be warranted if Member States develop an implementation plan to provide advice within a short period of time.

I agree that it would be useful to provide information in the Policy Statement regarding industry-science collaborations, as well as other initiatives, such as Natura 2000. These suggestions will be taken into account in next year's Policy Statement. I look forward to future dialogue and co-operation with the Pelagic RAC regarding the setting of future fishing opportunities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fokion Fotiadis', written in a cursive style.

Fokion Fotiadis