

European Commission
Directorate General Fisheries
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Date: March 30th 2006
Our reference: PRAC06.04/RB
Subject: issues pelagic stocks

Dear Mr. Holmquist,

In this letter, we address different outstanding scientific and management issues concerning the various pelagic stocks covered by the Pelagic RAC.

General

We ask the Commission to undertake a scientific research into the consequences of the implementation of the MSY-approach for all pelagic stocks covered by the Pelagic RAC. The study should encompass biological, economic as well as the social aspects. Moreover, the position of the Pelagic RAC is that two elements should be part of all existing and future management plans of pelagic stocks: a limitation of the annual fluctuations of TACs of +/- 15% and a year-to-year flexibility of +/- 10% (in accordance with Regulation 847/96).

1. Herring (Division VIa South, VIIbc) (quota areas VIa South, VIIbc)

We request the Commission to ask ICES for advice to review the management targets/re-evaluate the reference points of this herring stock.

2. Herring in division VIa (North) (quota areas Vb, VIa North, VIb)

We understand that the Commission is preparing a management plan for this stock. Beside the points that were mentioned above under the heading General, we also advise a TAC based on the HCR that was proposed in the 2005 advice. We assume that the Pelagic RAC will be consulted on the draft management plan.

3. Herring in subdivisions 22-24 and division IIIa (spring spawners)

Confusion exists surrounding the categorization used by ICES. We request the Commission to ask ICES for clarification.

Furthermore, the advice from ICES is based on presumptions that differ from what is used by policymakers. We request the Commission to ask ICES to present the advice in way that is consistent with the approach of policymakers.

4. Herring in subarea IV, divisions VIId and division IIIa (autumn spawners) (quota area IV, VIId)

We propose a clarification between paragraphs 5 and 6 in the present management plan, in addition to an amendment of the management plan (see under General) .

5. Norwegian Spring-Spawning herring (Atlanto scandian herring) (quota areas I,II)

We request the Commission to ask ICES for advice to review the review the objectives Blim and Bpa for this herring stock, in addition to an amendment of the management plan (see under General).

6. North East Atlantic Mackerel (quota areas IIa (non EC-waters), III, IV,Vb (EC-waters),VI,VII,VIII,IX,X,XII,XIV)

We are of the opinion that specific measures should be included in this management plan that apply if the stock is in poor condition, in addition to an amendment of the management plan (see under General).

We urge the Commission to initiate steps to improve the scientific research on mackerel as formulated in annex III of the coastal states agreement for 2006 (see annex I).

7. Blue whiting combined stock (quota areas I,II,III,IV,V,VI,VII,VIII,IX,X,XII,XIV)

We are of the opinion that the following element should be added to this management plan, in addition to an amendment of the management plan (see under General). Private organizations or other entities should, through their respective authorities, be allowed to swap quotas during the year. This component was also part of the industry's management plan for blue whiting (see annex II).

We urge the Commission to initiate steps to improve the scientific advice (improve data set, reliability of the assessment, different stock components, population dynamics, management areas) and to set up a working group to address the issue and protection of juvenile blue whiting

8. North Sea horse mackerel (quota areas IIa (EC-waters), IV(EC-waters)

We encourage the Commission to initiate steps to set up working groups to improve scientific research and address the by-catch issue.

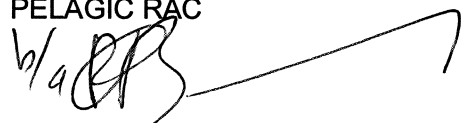
9. Western horse mackerel (quota areas Vb (EC-waters),VI,VII,VIIIabde,XII,XIV)

We urge the Commission to initiate steps to improve the scientific advice on western horse mackerel, set up working groups to examine the utility of egg surveys, establish a recruitment index for horse mackerel, address by-catch, examine the possibilities and timing for closures to protect juvenile horse mackerel and gather scientific data on the abundance of the 2001 year class particularly in the western area.

We offer to assist the Commission to do part of the organizational/secretarial work, particularly in the field to improve the scientific research concerning the mackerel, horse mackerel and blue whiting.

We are looking forward to your reaction.

Yours sincerely,
PELAGIC RAC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Iain MacSween', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr. Iain MacSween
(chairman)

c.c.: ICES, general secretary Mr. G. Hubold
Member States

ANNEX III**RESEARCH ON THE NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC MACKEREL STOCK**

The Delegations agreed that substantial research on the mackerel stock is called for. In particular, the assessment of the stock needs to be improved. For this purpose they agreed to strengthen mackerel research with the following aims:

1. Improvement of the catch data available to the assessment.
2. Improvement of the fisheries independent surveys as inputs to the assessment, including recruitment indices.
3. Mapping and describing the seasonal distribution and migration of the stock.

Currently assessment of the mackerel stock is based on catch at age data and a triennial egg survey. In order to achieve a better assessment of the stock, the Delegations agreed that priority should be given to improvement of points 1 and 2 above.

The Delegations agreed to encourage their respective authorities to both advance activities in this area through co-ordination of relevant research and to make financial means available from relevant resources.

The Delegations propose to ask ICES to make recommendations on how to improve the scientific surveys being used as inputs to the stock assessment.

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Management Plan for Blue Whiting

The following organisations:

The Norwegian Fishing Vessel Owners Association (Norway)
Northern Pelagic Working Group (EU)
The Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners (Iceland)


recommend to the respective authorities the following Management Plan for the Blue Whiting fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic Ocean:

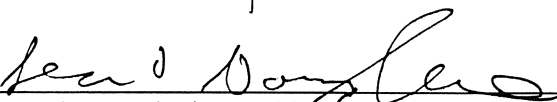
1. The management plan is for the five year period 2006-2010. The plan shall be reviewed before the end of this five year period.
2. The TAC for Blue whiting in the first year, 2006, shall be 2 million tons.
3. For each succeeding year the TAC shall be reduced by 100,000 tons annually, unless this results in the SSB falling below 2,25 mio tons. However should a fishing mortality of $F=0,32$ result in a higher TAC, then this should be implemented.
4. The objective is to attain a fishing mortality of $F=0.32$ within five years.
5. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) shall be maintained at values exceeding 2.25 million tons.
6. Special measures should be adopted to protect juvenile Blue Whiting.
7. Percentage shares of the Blue Whiting TAC should be allocated as follows:


EU and Norway:	57%
Faroe Islands and Russia	25%
Iceland	18%

8. The coastal states are granted access to each other EEZ's to catch blue whiting, only if this element is included in any bilateral agreement between the coastal states concerned.
9. Iceland and Norway recognise that the EU has to resolve the internal management areas arrangements.
10. A +/- 10 % year to year flexibility should be allowed, provided the coastal state accepts such an arrangement for itself.
11. Private organisations or other entities should, through their respective authorities, be allowed to swap quotas during the year.

Reykjavik 27 September 2005


The Norwegian Fishing Vessel Owners Association


Northern Pelagic Working Group


The Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners