



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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Ms. Aukje Coers  
Pelagic RAC  
Treubstraat 17  
PO Box 72  
2280 AB Rijswijk  
Nederland

**Subject: Pelagic RAC recommendations on horse mackerel, sprat and some shared stocks**  
**Your letters - references PRAC0848/AC and 0809PRAC10/A**

Dear Ms. Coers

Thank you for your letters dated 14<sup>th</sup> November regarding recommendations of the Pelagic RAC on horse mackerel, sprat and some shared stocks. I apologise for the late reply.

### **1) Horse mackerel**

Your continuous support to the area re-alignment will be most appreciated when the Commission is going to present its legislative proposal for a long-term management of the Western stock early next year. I understand the RAC's position not to get involved in the issue of quota allocation within the new areas. However, support from relevant stakeholders will be necessary in coming weeks in order to have a more complete picture on the different interests involved, which have so far rendered difficult the finding of a solution.

For 2009, given the difficulty in agreeing on new allocation keys in revised areas, the Commission has followed your suggestion of proposing a rollover concerning the horse mackerel TACs.

### **2) Sprat**

You are suggesting developing a method for setting a provisional TAC for sprat at a level that would avoid that, when a final TAC has to be found based on spring scientific advice, a reduction of this TAC would occur. It might be difficult to establish a provisional TAC that would at the same time satisfy your initial expectation and be precautionary enough so that it anticipates a final TAC that reflects a very bad year and is not lower than the initial TAC. You will be aware that for sandeel, no provisional TAC is

available, but only allowance for an amount of fishing effort that is necessary to support the scientific spring surveys. Proposing the sandeel method as a solution might not represent a real step forward, as the sandeel industry is requesting abolishing this method and setting a provisional TAC instead, as we have witnessed during December Council. However, I would be interested to know your views on how the provisional sprat TAC might be set so that a decrease in the middle of the year will be unlikely.

### **3) Norwegian spring spawning herring**

The good status of this stock has allowed agreeing with coastal states on an increase of the TAC by 8% for 2009, to 1 643 000 tonnes. This is in line with the long-term management plan, and the Commission is very satisfied that this herring stock is managed with a fishing mortality at MSY now.

### **4) Northeast Atlantic Mackerel**

I refer to my previous answer given with letter of November 2008

### **5) Blue whiting**

Based on recent scientific advice, the Commission is convinced that drastic reactions are needed in order to reflect strong signs that the phase of extraordinary good recruitment is over. The compromise found in November, based on transitional adjustment steps of fishing mortality in order to reach a maximum long-term yield expressed in  $F_{0.18}$ , is a clear sign that parties are committed to react to the recruitment downturn of this stock. For the Commission, it is promising that the parties were able to rapidly react to scientific advice showing that the old management plan, including a target of  $F_{0.32}$ , was not sustainable in view of normalising recruitment. The TAC reduction agreed for 2009 might be rather painful in the short term perspective, but provides a chance that this stock keeps its importance, thus providing better harvest in years to come, if discipline is maintained.

The suggestion to bring forward the yearly scientific advice for this stock is in line with the Commission's position. However, such a result will not be achieved in 2009, against previous expectation. The Commission will continue its efforts in this direction.

Concerning a large scientific project on the stock structure, the Commission is evaluating whether this endeavour should be undertaken.

In case you need further details, do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Fokion Fotiadis