



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Brussels, 9.01.2010 D 00720
D(2010)

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

Subject: Pelagic RAC recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2010 for joint pelagic stocks

Ref.: Your letter 0910PRAC09/AC (ADONIS A 16003)

Dear Ms. Coers,

Thank you for your letter containing recommendations of the Pelagic RAC, to which I would like to answer as follows:

1) Norwegian spring-spawning herring

The December Council set the TAC in accordance with the long-term plan, scientific advice and your recommendation at 1,483,000 tonnes. While the corresponding Member State quotas are available in international waters, access to Norwegian waters will only become available as from the date of conclusion of the bilateral fisheries arrangement with Norway for 2010.

You are wondering whether the existing management plan dating back to 1999 is consistent with the MSY objective. In 2007 and 2008, ICES considered the plan consistent with high long-term yield. In its latest advice (2009), ICES did not repeat this statement, but only stated that the plan was consistent with the precautionary approach. I take note of your request to ask for a new scientific evaluation of the plan in light of MSY, and will assess the appropriateness of such a request during meetings with our Northern counterparts.

2) NEA Mackerel

With regard to the management situation for NEA mackerel, I share the pelRACs discontent. I would like to refer to my letter to Mr McSween of last December, and refrain from comments in detail while the negotiations continue.

3) Blue whiting

Following the pelRACs concerns about certain aspects of the scientific advice provided by ICES, my service asked STECF for further explanation. Please find the content of the correspondence attached.

4) Atlantic horse mackerel stocks

I understand that your request for a roll-over was motivated by the fact that the TAC areas for Atlantic horse mackerel stocks were not aligned with the areas of scientific advice. In December Council 2009, Ministers arrived at an agreement on the reorganisation of the TACs for Atlantic horse mackerel. The TACs for the Western stock and the Northern stock are provisional as they might be influenced by exchanges with Norway and Faeroes. The allocations endorsed in Council for these areas represent 65% of totals that would assume unchanged exchanges with those Northern states. For both the Northern stock and the Southern stock (new zone IX), the Council agreed on reductions by 4%, based on scientific advice. The Western TAC and the TAC covering zone VIIIc follow scientific advice in line with the draft long-term management plan.

Yours sincerely,



Fokion Fotiadis

Annex: STECF advice November 2009 on blue whiting:

Request to STECF:

The advice on blue whiting contains the following explanation:

1. The updated assessment has a lower fishing mortality in 2007 and a higher SSB in 2008 than estimated in last year's assessment. The estimated SSB for 2008 has been revised upwards by 40% and the estimated fishing mortality in 2007 has been revised downwards by 13%. Around 40% of the change in SSB is due to the greater reliance this year on spawning ground survey results (relaxation of the constraint on survey CV), and the remainder due to the addition of recent data.
2. STECF is asked to advise on the range of uncertainty in the stock assessment, in particular whether the revisions undertaken this year can be considered within the expected annual range of precision or exceptional.
3. STECF is also requested to analyse and explain the reduction in estimated recruitment of age 1 in the year 2008.

STECF response:

Range of uncertainty

A comparison of the results of different annual assessments for blue whiting presented in ICES Advice 2009, Book 9, Figure 9.4.4.3, indicates that the revisions to F and SSB for 2007 and 2008 respectively arising from the revised 2009 assessment for blue whiting are within the range of precision previously observed in successive annual assessments of this stock (<http://www.ices.dk/committe/acom/comwork/report/2009/2009/whb-comb.pdf>).

Recruitment at age 1 in 2008

STECF notes that recruitment estimates are derived from 2 survey indices using the routine RCT3. The survey indices used are as follows:

- The international ecosystem survey standard area index
- The Barents Sea bottom-trawl time series.

Both recruitment series indicate that the 2005-2008 year-classes are extremely weak compared to earlier year-classes. The index value of 29 for year class 2007 (age 1 in 2008) from the international ecosystem survey standard area index is extremely low compared to the average value of 48 000 in the early part of the time series (1999-2004). The index of the Barents Sea bottom trawl survey is the third lowest in the time series (1981-2008). STECF also notes that both survey indices at age 1 have a zero value for the 2008 year class. The resulting RCT3 estimate of the 2007 year class (age 1 in 2008) is 3 869 billion fish, which is 72% lower than the GM of 13 890 billion fish for the whole time series.