

Pelagic RAC

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Mr. Jörgen Holmquist
Director General
D.G. Fisheries and Maritime Affairs
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

Date: 25 November 2005
Our reference: PRAC05.09/IH
Subject: Recommendations Pelagic RAC

Dear Mr. Holmquist

As a result of our Working Groups meeting last November 4, the executive committee of the Pelagic RAC likes to present the recommendations that were agreed upon during the meeting. The recommendations concern our view on the ICES/ACFM advices on herring, mackerel, blue whiting and horse mackerel (and other species), and some additional points. We would like to ask you to take our viewpoints into consideration at the upcoming negotiations with third countries and the establishment of the TACs for 2006.

In accordance with article 18 of the articles of association of the Pelagic RAC, a copy of this letter has been sent to the Member States concerned and to the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Yours sincerely,
Pelagic RAC

Ingvild Harkes
(secretariat)

c.c. Mr. J. Farnell, Mr. E. Penas-Lado, Mr. E. Kirkegaard, Ms. M. Garcia-Ferrer

Recommendations Working Group 1 - Herring and Mackerel

1. Clyde herring (Division VIa)

- Advice is adopted without alterations, resulting in a status quo TAC.

2. Celtic Sea and Division VIIj herring

- The TAC to be reviewed before the end of 2006 in the light of new scientific advice from ICES.

3. Herring (Division VIa South and VIIb,c)

- Request that a higher TAC than the status quo should be considered for next year based on the implementation of an industry management plan over the last five years (as outlined in the ACFM advice) and also on the views expressed at the meeting on the abundance of the stock. It was also agreed that the management targets should be reviewed.

4. Irish Sea herring (Division VIIa)

- Advice is adopted without alterations.

5. Herring in Division VIa (North)

- The drafting of a management plan based on the harvest control rule that is put forward by ACFM, and which includes a TAC constraint of $\pm 15\%$, and with a flexibility of $\pm 10\%$ over 2 years. This is a general requirement and should be included for all the stocks where there is a management plan.
- The TAC for 2006 should be set in accordance with the new management plan.

6. Herring in Subdivisions 22-24 and Division III a (Spring Spawners)

- Advice is adopted without alterations.
- However, there is great uncertainty about what is the actual advice, and it is recommended to ACFM to give more clear information.
- The industry requests clear information on advised TAC.

7. Herring in Subarea IV, Division VIIId and Division IIIa (Autumn Spawners)

- Set the TAC at -15% compared to 2005, with the provision that the EC looks into the causes of the fluctuations and development of the stocks.
- The management plan should be amended to include a year-to-year flexibility of $\pm 10\%$ with a maximum of 2 years.
- The EC is requested to seek clarification of the relationship between paragraphs 5 and 6 in the advice.

8. Norwegian Spring-Spawning herring (Atlantoscandian Herring)

- TAC based on 2005 advice (890,000 tonnes).
- The management plan should be amended to include:
 - A TAC constraint of $\pm 15\%$ and,
 - A year-to-year flexibility of $\pm 10\%$ with a maximum of 2 years.

- The objectives in the management plan should be reviewed, as they seem overly conservative.

9. Northeast Atlantic Mackerel (combined Southern, Western and North Sea spawning components)

- The TAC is already agreed by the Coastal States and the working group expressed its disappointment at the outcome.
- The Group recommended that the management plan should be amended to include:
 - A +/- 15% TAC restraint and,
 - A year-to-year flexibility of +/- 10% with a maximum of two years (this should be included in the TAC and quotas regulation for 2006).
- The management plan should be reviewed to prioritise the different decision rules.
- The Group recommended that in the future consultations between the Coastal States on TACs should not take place before the Pelagic RAC has been heard.

10. Mackerel Action Plan

ICES response to the pelagic industries of the EU, Norway and the Faroe Islands on its agreed mackerel action plan was noted and in particular the changes adopted in the research annex of the Coastal States agreement as a result of this advice.

Recommendations Working Group 2 – Blue Whiting, Horse Mackerel and other species

1. Blue Whiting Combined Stock (sub areas I-IX, XII and XIV)

- Accept the industry's (EU, Norway and Iceland) management plan for blue whiting with a TAC of 2 million tonnes for 2006 and progressively decreasing to 1.5 million tonnes over five years if required, with a +/- 15% TAC restraint and a year-to-year flexibility of +/-10% with a maximum of 2 years.
- Call for additional scientific research to improve the data set and the reliability of the assessment (in order to avoid massive fluctuations), including different components of the stock, population dynamics and management areas.
- Set up a working group of stakeholders and scientists as part of the Coastal States agreement to address the issue and protection of juvenile blue whiting.
- To discuss the dioxins and PCB issues at a future Working Group meeting.

2. North Sea Horse Mackerel (IIIa, IVbc, VIIId).

- Maintain status quo of TAC until data issue is resolved.
- Set up a working group to improve research.
- Set up a working group to address the bycatch in horse mackerel fishery.
- Create correspondence between stock areas and management areas.

3. Southern Horse Mackerel (VIIIc and IXa)

- Advice is adopted without alterations. Southern Horse Mackerel to remain within the remit of the Pelagic RAC.

4. Western Horse Mackerel (II a, IVa,Vb, VIa,VIIa-c,e-k, VIIIa,b,d,e)

- Recommend a TAC for 2006 of 150,000 tonnes (137,000 tonnes in 2005). It was noted that the 2001 year class seems to be large and maybe similar to 1982 year class.
- Improve scientific advice (daily egg productivity in relation to fecundity).
- Set up working groups to:
 - o examine the utility of egg surveys.
 - o establish a recruitment index for horse mackerel (juvenile survey).
 - o address the bycatch in horse mackerel fishery.
 - o examine the possibilities and the timing for closures to protect juvenile horse mackerel.

5. Anchovies and Sardines

- It was decided that anchovies and sardines should be dealt with by the SWW RAC.
- If in the future the fisheries on anchovies or sardines in the Channel develop, the RACs will need to collaborate.

6. Sprat

- In the future Sprat will be included in Working Group 2 of the Pelagic RAC, but with lower priority than the other species.

• Sustainable EU Fisheries / MSY

- Recommended that the Executive Committee write to the Commission that the document is important and that the Pelagic RAC needs more time to think about the way forward. A standpoint will be presented by the end of January.
- For a next Working Group meeting a number of experts will be invited to go through the proposals and present different alternatives.

• Technical Measures

- Recommended that the Executive Committee write to the Commission seeking additional time to consider the proposals and indicating that the Pelagic RAC should be in a position to respond by the end of February 2006.
- A draft document will be prepared and circulated in advance of the next Working Group meeting by the secretariat.
- A detailed response will be formulated at the next Working Group meeting.