

Pelagic RAC
European Commission
Directorate-General Fisheries
c/o Mr Fokion Fotiadis
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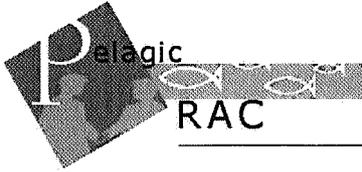
Dear Mr Fotiadis,

The Pelagic RAC has examined the Commission's Policy Statement for fishing opportunities for 2008 and wishes to make a number of points in relation to this document as set out hereunder.

At the outset the Pelagic RAC wishes to acknowledge that the Commission has produced its Policy Statement for 2008 at a much earlier stage than 2007 which had allowed more time for the stakeholders to consider the document. The Pelagic RAC is also pleased that the Commission has reaffirmed its commitment to consulting stakeholders about setting fishing opportunities and that its proposed approach to setting the 2008 fishing opportunities will include an examination of the likely effects of the proposals on economic and social aspects. The Pelagic RAC strongly supports the Commission's commitment on this aspect to improving the assessment of social and economic impacts of the decisions to be taken and that it will seek scientific advice on these aspects in support of its final proposals.

The document does not deal specifically with pelagic stocks other than to say that small pelagic stocks are in a relatively healthier stock position than demersal stocks. The Pelagic RAC is disappointed that work undertaken and proposed by the Pelagic RAC which the Commission is aware of covering the four main pelagic species i.e. herring, mackerel, horse mackerel and blue whiting has not been recognised in the policy statement particularly as this work is directly addressing some of the stated aims of the Commission in developing long-term management plans, improving scientific data and trying to take a board social and economic aspects. It is hoped that these worthwhile endeavours by the Pelagic RAC will be recognised in the Commissions final proposals for 2008, and that the recommendations made by the Pelagic RAC for 2008 will be fully taken into account.

The Pelagic RAC notes that the Commission has invited specific comments on improving scientific data and on methods to reduce long-term risks by alternative methods for setting fishing opportunities. The Pelagic RAC considers it has made significant progress on these aspects with the development of industry/science partnerships on management and rebuilding plans (e.g. horse mackerel management plan), improved herring acoustic



surveys and trying to incorporate the vast amount of non-quantified statements from the stakeholders into the stock assessment process.

An issue of major importance to Pelagic RAC not covered in the policy statement is the timing of the Coastal States meetings on mackerel , blue whiting and Atlanto Scandia herring only one week after the ICES advice is issued. This does not allow sufficient time for the Pelagic PAC to give its recommendations to the Commission in time for the meetings. This problem arose also last year and the Pelagic RAC is requesting a once off ad-hoc arrangement for this year on the understanding that this problem will be resolved next year with the ICES advice on these stocks issued in the first half of the year. The ad hoc arrangement suggested is that the Pelagic RAC Management Committee meet and discuss with the Commission the ICES advice on these stocks in advance of the Coastal States meetings, and we suggest either Monday Oct 15 or Tuesday Oct 16.

The Pelagic RAC looks forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

c/o

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

Ingvild Harkes
Pelagic RAC secretariat

c.c. Mr Kenneth Patterson, Mr Penas-Lado, Mr Emmanouil Papaioannou, Mr Poul Degnbol.