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Date: 2 October 2009
Our reference: 0910PRAC06/AC
Subject: Recommendations on fishing opportunities for several herring stocks

Dear Mr Fotiadis,

Please find attached as an annex the Pelagic RAC's unanimous recommendations on fishing opportunities for 2010 for several herring stocks.

If you have any questions, please contact the secretariat. Looking forward to your response,

Yours sincerely,

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

Aukje Coers
Pelagic RAC secretariat

c.c. Ms Isabelle Viallon (by e-mail)

Annex 1: Pelagic RAC recommendations October 2009

Herring - West of Scotland (VIa North)

The Pelagic RAC recommends that the ICES advice should be followed and the TAC should be set at 24 420 t.

Herring - Celtic sea

The Pelagic RAC recommends that the ICES advice should be followed and the TAC should thus be set at 10 150 t.

Herring - Irish sea

The Pelagic RAC recommends that the TAC should be rolled over from last year, i.e. set at 4 800 t.

Herring - North sea

The Pelagic RAC recommends that the ICES advice should be followed and the TAC should thus be set at 164 300 t. for the A-fleet.

Herring - Western Baltic (IIIa-22/24)

The Pelagic RAC refrains from giving an advice on the TAC, but would like to note that it supports the development of a management plan which incorporates a fixed allocation key between IIIa and 22-24. The Pelagic RAC would furthermore like to note that it is still endeavouring with the BSRAC and the JAKFISH project to investigate options for harvest control rules for this stock. Please note that the BSRAC and the Pelagic RAC will be further commenting on this issue in due time.

Herring - VIa South

The Pelagic RAC would like to express its support for a rebuilding plan proposed by the Irish industry (annex 2). The Pelagic RAC suggests that STECF is requested to provide advice on this matter, considering that the timeframe for this year does not allow ICES to evaluate the plan. I.e. the Pelagic RAC recommends that:

- The TAC should be rolled over, while;
- The Irish vessels will use a minimum of 10% of the quota for a sentinel fishery which aims at finding 'missing fish' and therewith improving the knowledge base for this stock.



Rebuilding Plan for Herring in VIaS/VIIb,c

Federation of Irish Fishermen (FIF)

Introduction

The ICES advice for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 has been that there should be no targeted fishing without a rebuilding plan. No rebuilding plan is in place. Without a plan being in place, the terms of the EU TAC Decision Rule apply. This rule implies a 25% reduction in TAC for 2010.

This document presents a rebuilding plan that was presented to the Pelagic RAC for approval. The plan incorporates elements of the EU TAC Decision Rule process, along with some concerns of the Irish industry. These concerns surround the issue of changes in the fishing pattern. The industry is concerned that, due to the change in fishing pattern because of restrictive quota, an incomplete account is being taken of the stock structure and some “missing fish” have prevented an accurate stock assessment being conducted.

Missing fish

The catch at age matrix (see Figure 1) for this stock is not thought to be informative of the current stock situation. For instance, for the past number of years, no one-year old fish have been detected, while the two-year olds’ abundance remained rather stable. This suggests that the one-year olds are not absent from the stock, but just not found.

In addition, since 2000, the TAC has been reduced to such an extent that the present fishery cannot be compared with the earlier fishery. Changes in the fishery have occurred both in temporal and spatial extent. On the spatial scale, the fishery has become much more restrictive, because vessels tend to target the fish at closest proximity to port. On the temporal scale, the fishery is now much shorter because vessels catch their quota in very few days. For these reasons the range of ages in the catches may be reduced. In other words, it is likely that catchability at age has significantly changed, which may be wrongly interpreted as lower relative abundances at age, and consequently, as higher mortality on these ages, in the catch at age matrix.

Rebuilding plan

1. In 2011 and subsequent years, the stock will be harvested at a rate of $F_{0.1}$. The present F is unknown, but measures to locate missing fish it is hoped, will improve the estimation of abundance at age and thus of F .
2. If, in the opinion of ICES and STECF, the catch should be reduced to the lowest possible level, the TAC for the following year should be reduced by 25%.
3. If the SSB is deemed to have recovered to a size equal to or greater than B_{pa} in three consecutive years, the rebuilding plan will be superseded by a long-term management plan, with a fishing mortality of F_{msy} .
4. ICES and STECF will be asked to advise on the reference points, considering periods of high and low productivity¹.
5. Every three years, the Commission shall request ICES and STECF to evaluate the rebuilding plan.

Sentinel fishery

6. At least 10% of the Irish quota will be allocated to a Sentinel Fishery which will aim to locate the “missing fish”. Fishing will take place throughout the year and in areas other than those currently being fished by the main fishery.
7. The TAC for 2010 should be rolled over, to accommodate the fishing vessels that will be investing time and effort and thus expenses for carrying out the sentinel fishery.

¹ The stock is in a period of lower productivity than in the 1980s (Figure 2). It appears to exhibit productivity similar to that of the 1970s. ICES/STECF is asked to comment on whether the precautionary reference points should be revised to take account of differing productivity regimes.

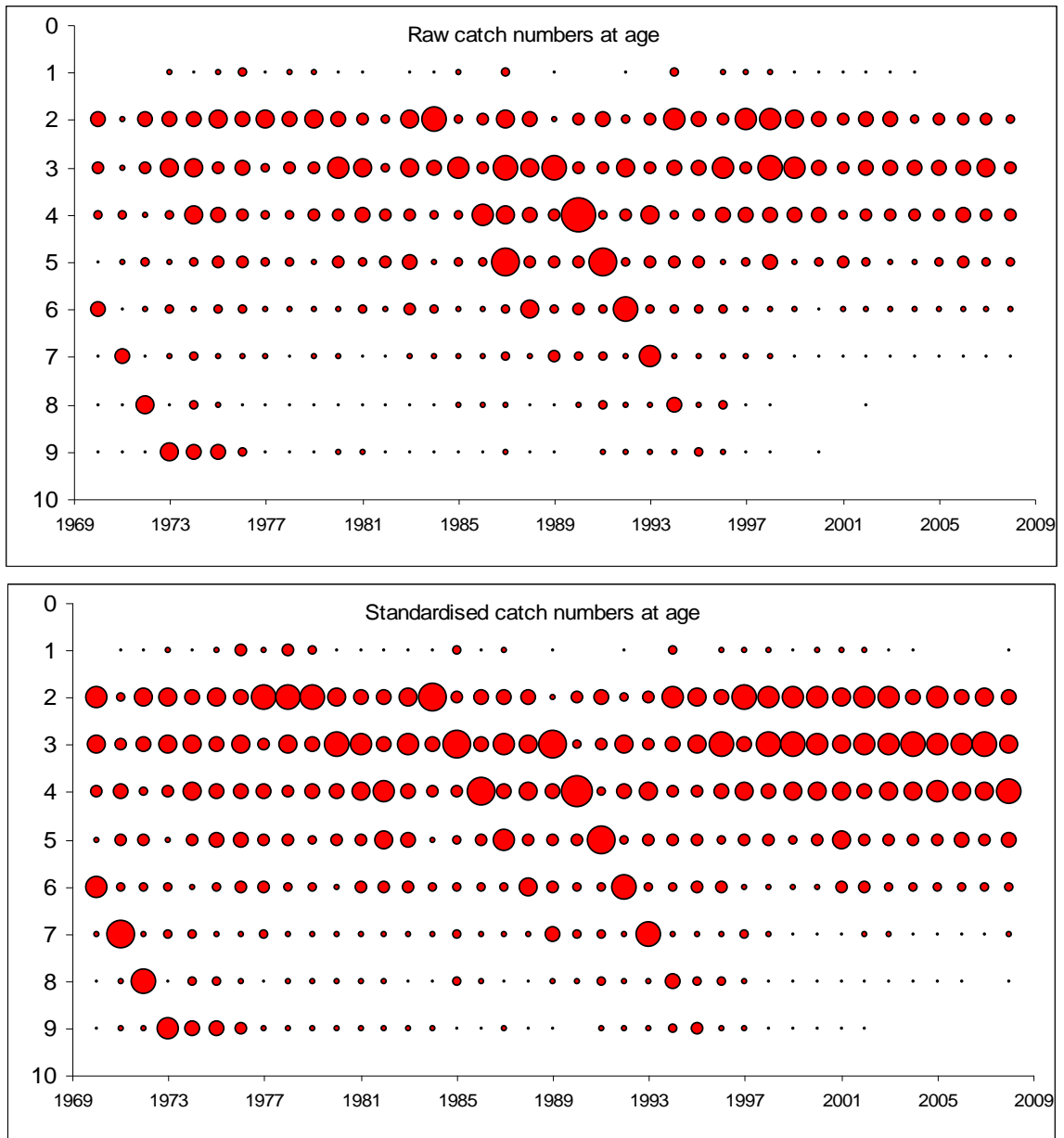


Figure 1. Catch at age matrix for herring in VIaS and VIIbc. Lower panel shows numbers standardised by yearly mean.

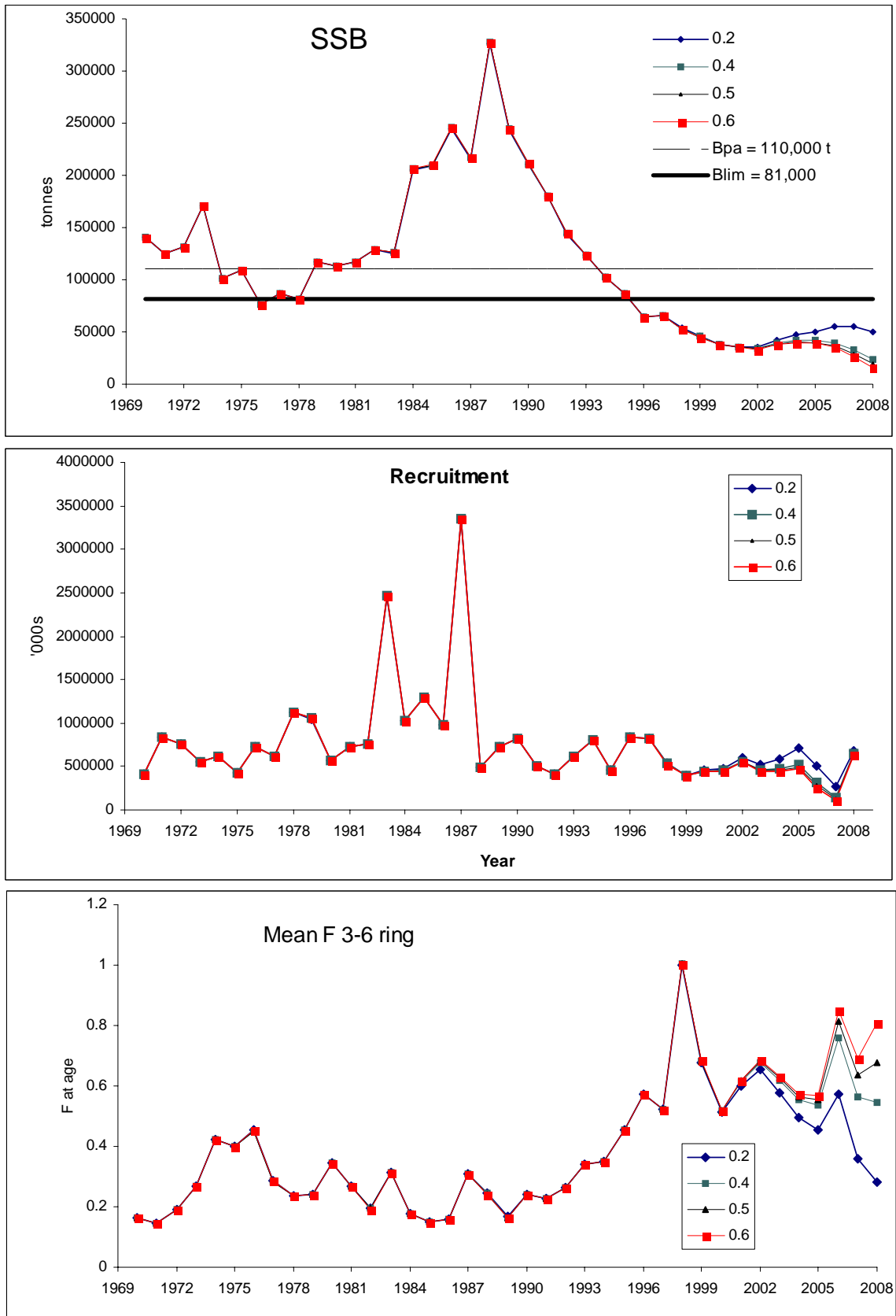


Figure 2. SSB, recruitment and fishing mortality over time for herring in VIaS and VIIbc. It can be seen that productivity, in terms of recruitment, was much higher in the 1980s, than before or since.