



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Brussels, 23505
DG MARE – C2/JL

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Mr Ian McSween
Pelagic RAC secretariat
Treubstraat 17
PO box 72
2280 AB Rijswijk
The Netherlands

Subject: PELRAC advice on widely distributed stocks (fishing opportunities for 2011)

Dear Mr McSween,

Thank you for the PELRAC's opinion on fishing opportunities for widely distributed stocks.

The December Council now being behind us, I would like to briefly comment on your letter reflecting the outcome of this Council meeting.

Western horse mackerel and horse mackerel in the North Sea

During discussion with the Council, the Commission agreed to adjust the TAC proposal slightly upwards in order to reflect more precise advice on the application of the proposed management plan adopted by the STECF plenary in November. The final TAC is 183 924 tonnes, consisting of 158 787 tonnes for the larger Western area and 25 137 tonnes for the Cantabrian waters.

For the North Sea stock, for which the scientific advice is poor, the Council finally decided a reduction by 2%.

The Commission brought up the problematic rise of Norwegian catches on both stocks during the consultations with Norway. The Commission's concern was documented in the agreed record. We will continue our further efforts in explaining to Norway the functioning of the proposed management plan, so that Norway adopts management measures that would be consistent with the plan's objective.

Southern horse mackerel

The Commission proposed a reduction by 15% as supported by the pelagic RAC. Due to particular circumstances, the reduction finally agreed was in the order of -5%.

Blue whiting

As pointed out by the RAC, the stock is in very poor state and concern about the fluctuation in the scientific advice is understandable. The Commission's position in the consultations with Norway was complicated by the fact that the fishing opportunities in blue whiting had to be radically reduced.

I welcome and support your idea to set up a focus group including Norwegian experts. In the past, the focus group on whiting set up by the NSRAC has contributed to facilitating negotiations with Norway. We look forward to receiving your detailed planning so as to draw the attention of our Norwegian counterparts to this initiative.

North East Atlantic mackerel

This year's efforts on NEA mackerel consisted of crisis management. We now reached at a point which you rightly describe as "sparing no efforts in finding an internationally acceptable agreement". With regard to control measures, I share the RAC's concern. The Commission is now looking into this with a wider perspective.

North East Atlantic herring

The agreements for 2011 on this stock are in line with the plan agreed with Norway in 1999. The Commission did not focus during the consultations with Norway on a possible plan review, and there was consequently no such review agreed for 2011. I would like to refer also to the scientific advice on widely distributed stocks released by ICES, which states that:

"Although the current target F may be on the low side of this range, there is no significant long term gain in yield by increasing the current target."

Having said this, I will keep your request in mind, and we might find an opportunity to discuss the review issue during the various 2011 meetings with Norway.

I take this opportunity to thank you for your cooperation in improving fisheries management during the year 2010.

Yours sincerely,



Lowri Evans