



Ms Lowri Evans
European Commission
Directorate General - Mare
Office J-99; 0/07
B-1049 BRUSSELS
Belgium

Pelagic RAC
Treubstraat 17
PO Box 72
2280 AB Rijswijk
The Netherlands

Tel: +31 (0)70 336 9624
Fax: +31 (0)70 399 3004
E-mail: info@pelagic-rac.org
<http://www.pelagic-rac.org>

Date: 26 September 2011
Our reference: 1112PRAC04/AC
Subject: Fishing opportunities 2012 herring stocks
CC: Sabela Perez-Maiz (by e-mail)

Dear Ms Evans,

At the latest Pelagic RAC Working Groups meeting on 13 September 2011, the Pelagic RAC discussed the ICES advice for fishing opportunities in 2012 for several herring stocks and came to agreement on a number of recommendations which were supported by the industry as well as the environmental NGOs. These recommendations were thereafter approved unanimously by the Executive Committee through written procedure.

Please find the recommendations attached in the Annex. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to 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 line extending to the right.

Ms Aukje Coers
Pelagic RAC secretariat

Annex 1: Recommendations on fishing opportunities for herring stocks

North Sea herring

The PRAC was pleased to receive your letter dated 06-09-2011 in which you took a very positive stance towards the PRAC proposal on approaches for improvement of the North Sea herring management plan. Considering that EU-Norway negotiations are approaching quickly, we hope that your services will be able to agree an ICES request together with Norway within a very short timeframe. Without those simulation results at present, it is not possible for the PRAC to provide a precise recommendation on a TAC figure. However, the PRAC:

- recommends that the NS herring stock is exploited at MSY;
- considers that this should be achieved within the framework of a LTM plan;
- however, since the current LTM plan does not incorporate that the stock be exploited at MSY, the RAC requests the Commission to ensure that the necessary investigative work is conducted by ICES to allow for an amendment of the LTM plan before the TAC setting for 2012 occurs together with Norway;
- will revisit the discussion on an alternative basis for TAC setting later in the year (possibly at its meeting on 6 Oct.) should ICES be unable to deliver its advice on this issue in time for EU/Norway consultations.

Western Baltic herring

The PRAC would like to emphasise that the development and implementation of a LTM plan based on the principles recommended by the PRAC and BSRAC last year should be speeded up and that TAC setting should be based on this LTM plan. The Commission published a non-paper to the purpose of developing a LTM plan on 17 March 2010, after which a two month consultation period followed. At present, 1,5 years later, no Commission Proposal for LTM plans for stocks in the Baltic has been published yet. The PRAC would kindly like to request a meeting with relevant DG Mare representatives to facilitate an exchange of views / information. In the mean time, the PRAC refrains from providing a recommendation on a specific TAC number for area IIIa, although it would like to express that the flexibility arrangement to catch 50% of the TAC in area IV should not be continued into 2012, since it results in additional mortality of North Sea herring. While everyone can acknowledge that the North Sea herring stock is able to sustain such additional pressure at present, the PRAC deems it an unfair and un-transparent arrangement and suggests that the management of these two stocks be kept separate. Instead, the PRAC would rather see such acknowledgement result in a more rational exploitation of the North Sea herring stock, following an amendment of its management plan (see above).

Celtic Sea herring

The PRAC notes that the current rebuilding plan, in accordance with the clause in the rebuilding plan that when the SSB has been above B_{PA} for three consecutive years (which is currently the case) should be superseded by a LTM plan at present. The PRAC proposes that the attached LTM plan (annex 2), which was developed by the Celtic Sea Herring Management Advisory Committee (CSHMAC), comprised of Irish industry together with

scientists from the Marine Institute (Ireland) is adopted as soon as possible. This LTM plan was evaluated as precautionary by the scientists of the Marine Institute. Considering that ICES was not in the opportunity yet to review the Marine Institute's evaluation of the LTM plan, the PRAC recommends that the Commission requests STECF to do so during its November meeting. For any necessary detailed information (e.g. specific simulation results), please contact the CSHMAC or PRAC secretariat. The PRAC furthermore recommends that the TAC for 2012 is set in accordance with this proposed LTM plan, i.e. at 17,2 kt (see options table in ICES advice).

Herring in VIa North

The PRAC recommends that the TAC is set based on the LTM plan, i.e. at 22,9 kt.

Herring in VIa South

The PRAC recommends that the attached proposal for a rebuilding plan (annex 3), developed by the Federation of Irish Fishermen (FIF) with the support of scientists from the Marine Institute (Ireland) is adopted and the TAC for 2012 is set accordingly, i.e. at 4,471 tons, the same level as in 2011. The PRAC furthermore requests that the proposal is sent to STECF to be evaluated during its November meeting.

Irish Sea herring

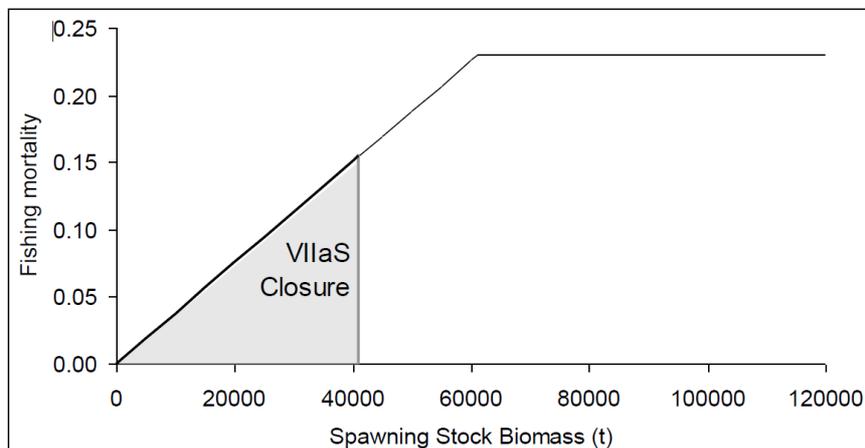
The PRAC will provide a recommendation on this stock after its meeting of the 6th of October 2011.

Annex 2: Proposal for a LTM Plan for Herring in the Celtic Sea and Division VIIj

1. Every effort shall be made to maintain a minimum level of Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) greater than 41,000 t, the level below which recruitment becomes impaired.
2. Where the SSB, in the year for which the TAC is to be fixed, is estimated to be above 61,000 t (B_{trigger}) the TAC will be set consistent with a fishing mortality, for appropriate age groups, of 0.23 (F_{target}).
3. Where the SSB is estimated to be below 61,000 tonnes, the TAC will be set consistent with a fishing mortality of:

$$\text{SSB} * 0.23 / 61,000$$

4. Where the rules in paragraphs 2 and 3 would lead to a TAC which deviates by more than 30 % from the TAC of the preceding year, the TAC will be fixed such that it is not more than 30 % greater or 30 % less than the TAC of the preceding year.
5. Where the SSB is estimated to be below 41,000 tonnes, Sub-Division VIIaS will be closed until the SSB has recovered to above 41,000 tonnes.
6. Where the SSB is estimated to be below 41,000 tonnes, and Sub-Division VIIaS is closed, a small-scale sentinel fishery will be permitted in the closed area. This fishery will be confined to vessels, of no more than 50 feet in registered length. A maximum catch limitation of 8% of the Irish quota will be exclusively allocated to this sentinel fishery.
7. Notwithstanding paragraphs 2, 3 and 4, if the SSB is estimated to be at or below the level consistent with recruitment impairment (41,000 t), then the TAC will be set at a lower level than that provided for in those paragraphs.
8. No vessels participating in the fishery, if requested, will refuse to take on-board any observer for the purposes of improving the knowledge on the state of the stock. All vessels will, upon request, provide samples of catches for scientific analyses.
9. Every three years from the date of entry into force of this Regulation, the Commission will request ICES and STECF to review and evaluate the plan.
10. This arrangement enters into force on 1st January, 2012.



Annex 3: Proposal for a Rebuilding Plan for Herring in Division VIaS and VIbc

This plan aims to achieve rebuilding and sustainable harvesting for the stock of herring off the northwest coast of Ireland. A mechanism is provided for setting the TAC for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014, consistent with fishing at or below $F_{0.1}$. For years subsequent to 2014, it shall be superseded by a plan aiming to achieve harvesting consistent with F_{MSY} . This proposed plan is the result of initial consultations between the Federation of Irish Fishermen and scientists from the Marine Institute and subsequent debate in the Pelagic RAC among the EU industry as well as with environmental NGOs.

1. Every effort shall be made to maintain a minimum level of Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) greater than B_{lim} .
2. For 2012 the TAC shall be set at 4,471 t, the same level as in 2011. This is to achieve a transition towards $F_{0.1}$.
3. For 2013 and subsequent years, the TAC shall be set consistent with $F_{0.1}$ ($F=0.2$), based on ICES and STECF advice, see Note 2 below.
4. If ICES and STECF are unable to provide an assessment and forecast for 2013, or any subsequent year, then *status quo* TAC shall apply in that year.
5. Notwithstanding paragraph 3 and 4, if the SSB in any year is estimated to be at or below the level consistent with recruitment impairment, then the TAC for that year shall be set at a lower level.
6. ICES and STECF shall be requested to evaluate this rebuilding plan.
7. When a suitable, benchmarked assessment method is available for this stock this rebuilding plan shall be superseded by a long-term management plan.
8. If a benchmark assessment is not available by 2014, the terms of article 3 shall remain in place until a benchmarked assessment and forecast is available.
9. In order to provide for separate management of this stock, relative to that in VIaN, every effort shall be made to disaggregate abundance-at-age data in the wider VIa Sub-area, see Note 3.
10. This arrangement shall commence 1st January, 2012.

Note 1: Transition towards $F_{0.1}$, in 2012.

It is not possible to forecast a catch that is consistent with $F_{0.1}$ for 2012. However, preliminary deterministic forecasts suggest that fishing at $F_{0.1}$ ($F=0.2$) implies catches in 2012 of between about 5 000 t and 10 000 t. *Status quo* TAC is lower than these catch options.

Note 2: Assessment and forecasting method

Currently, ICES is unable to provide an assessment or forecast. This is partly due to the lack of sufficient time series of surveys for tuning purposes. In 2012 it is expected that a minimum time series of 4 years will be available with which to assess the stock. In 2012, 4 surveys will be available, and in 2013, 5 surveys will be available for tuning purposes. By the time of the proposed benchmark, in 2014, a time series of 6 surveys will be available for tuning.

Note 3: Disaggregation catch and survey abundance-at-age data

It has been noted by the WESTHER project that VIa contains mixed stocks, comprising the VIaN, VIaS/VIIbc and VIIaN stocks. Further work was conducted on this by ICES group, SGHERWAY. This group concluded that whilst this mixing was taking place it was not possible to assess and manage the stocks together, and that separate assessment and management should continue.