

**International Council for the Exploration
of the Sea (ICES)**

Ms Anne Christine Brusendorff, General
Secretary

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Date: 5 August 2015
Our reference: 1415PAC/153
Subject: Benchmark request on Western horse mackerel

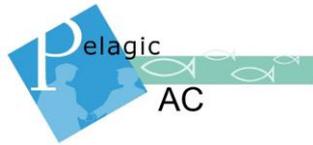
Dear Ms Brusendorff,

Over the past eighteen months the Pelagic AC, in collaboration with the Northern Pelagic Working Group of the European Association of Producer Organisations, CEFAS in the UK and the Marine Institute in Ireland, has spent considerable time and effort on improving the knowledge base for Western horse mackerel and to try to revise the multiannual management plan which ICES no longer considers precautionary.

In this regard the pelagic industry has provided resources to carry out scientific evaluation work on the existing multiannual management plan, expand the mackerel and western horse mackerel egg survey and is currently investigating how acoustic data from commercial vessels could be utilized in stock assessments. Furthermore, a preliminary inspection has shown that retrospective analysis of acoustic survey data in Spanish waters is feasible to assess abundance of Western horse mackerel in this area and can even provide age/length keys. Existing other acoustic surveys in other areas and ground fish surveys are under investigation and may provide information on Western horse mackerel abundance. A draft road map to achieve such a synoptic survey has already been drawn up. In addition the CPR data has been examined to ascertain whether or not it can be used as a data source.

To ensure that all this additional information can be properly evaluated and included in future assessments of the Western horse mackerel stock and to define the reference points particularly B_{lim} , the Pelagic AC considers that a benchmark should be carried out for this stock in early 2017 at the latest. Therefore we kindly ask ICES to schedule such a benchmark for Western horse mackerel when finalizing its work plan for 2017.





In case you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the Pelagic AC secretariat. I look forward to receiving your positive response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean O'Donoghue".

Sean O'Donoghue
Chairman Working Group II

