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Date: 3 March 2017
Our reference: 1617/ PAC 32
Subject: Amendments to the pelagic discard plan in the North Sea

Dear Ms Mossink,

In response to your request for advice in regards to reviewing the discard plan for small pelagic fisheries in the North Sea I am pleased to submit to you the Pelagic AC's recommendations and comments.

Please note that all recommendations have been unanimously endorsed by the Executive Committee.

Gramme sizes

As laid out previously, the Pelagic AC considers live information on gramme sizes a powerful control tool and advises that a system based on the collection and haul by haul transmission of gramme size information should be mandatory for all fleets involved, both EU and non EU. Given the sensitivity of these data from a market aspect, however, there must be a clear understanding that these data must be treated confidentially and should only be available to the control authorities and for risk analysis (in conformity with article 112 and 113 of Council Regulation 1224/2009)¹.

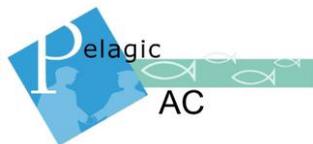
Footnote recommendation

On 30 November 2016, the Pelagic AC published a recommendation² on how to handle unwanted by-catches (of demersal species) in pelagic fisheries that avoids creating a conflict between the demersal and pelagic sectors. This "footnote recommendation" applied to 2% by-catches of saithe, haddock, hake, mackerel and whiting in the North Sea herring fishery, to 5% by-catches of hake in the North Sea and Western horse mackerel fishery and to 2% of by-catches of saithe, haddock, hake, herring and whiting in the mackerel fishery.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:pe0012>

² <http://www.pelagic-ac.org/media/pdf/1617%20PAC24%20footnotes.pdf>





The Pelagic AC recommends that the provisions as described in the footnote recommendation will be included in an amended pelagic discard plan for the North Sea.

Furthermore, the Pelagic AC would like to inquire what kind of action Member States have taken in response to the Council Declaration on associated by-catch species³. Member States committed to providing information to the Commission with supporting data by 28 February 2017.

Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes

The Pelagic AC would like to point out that it intends to organize a workshop on the usefulness of minimum conservation reference sizes in the coming months as it sees the need to have a fundamental discussion on this issue among all relevant parties. Invitations will be distributed to the Scheveningen Group in due time and we strongly encourage that representatives of the Scheveningen Group will attend this workshop.

Informal pelagic subgroup

Finally, we would like to remind the Scheveningen Group that it promised to explore possibilities for convening an informal pelagic subgroup to ensure sound coordination with the other regional groups. The Pelagic AC is still of the firm belief that such an informal subgroup is indispensable to guarantee a level-playing field between the different areas and fisheries.

In case you have any questions concerning this recommendation please do not hesitate to contact the secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jesper Raakjær'.

Jesper Raakjær
Chairman Pelagic AC

³ <http://www.pelagic-ac.org/media/pdf/Council%20statement%20on%20associated%20bycatch.pdf>

