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Date: 2 March 2018
Our reference: 1718/PAC 105
Subject: Choke mitigation tool

Dear Mr Machado,

The Pelagic AC has been actively engaged in adopting the choke mitigation tool developed by the North Western Waters Member States Group and the NWWAC to identify the category three choke situations for pelagic stocks. The results of this work were presented by Dominic Rihan at the Landing Obligation Seminar on the 15th of November 2017. Category 3 choke situations arise when there is insufficient quota at EU level within the relevant sea basin to cover current catches or catches cannot be otherwise reduced, e.g. by increasing selectivity or avoidance.

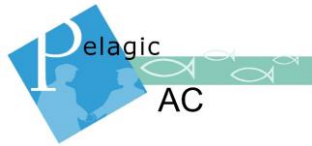
Arising out of this analysis we would like to draw your attention to the choke situation that will arise on the 1st of January 2019 when all TAC and quota species come under the landing obligation. Unless solutions are found for the category 3 choke species a vast array of fisheries will be prematurely closed including pelagic fisheries. In the case of pelagic fisheries this will be due to by-catches of demersal species. We note that in the statements at the December Fisheries Council both the Commission and the Member States recognised the choke situation and that appropriate measures should be put in place to alleviate the choke risk as set out below.

“The Commission and Member States recognise a need to take into account the effects of the landing obligation when setting fishing opportunities for different stocks. This also includes situations where a very low TAC or zero TACs could lead to premature closure of fisheries due to choke situations.

To this end, Member States working with the Advisory Councils within the regional groups undertake to apply all appropriate measures to mitigate choke situations and to include such measures within their joint recommendations for discard plans for 2019.

In cases where, even after applying all appropriate measures, residual choke issues still remain a major concern, the Member States will propose alternative conservation measures to alleviate the choke risk.





Where necessary, the Commission will seek scientific advice either from ICES or STECF on appropriate measures for those stocks."

In light of this statement the Pelagic AC is more than willing to fully engage with you and the Member States to ensure that the pelagic fisheries are not prematurely closed early in 2019 when the landing obligation is fully implemented.

Kind regards,

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

Jesper Raakjær
Chairman Pelagic AC

