



The Director-General

Brussels,
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Mr. Jesper Raakjær
Pelagic Advisory Council
Louis Braillelaan 80 2719 EK
Zoetermeer
The Netherlands

Subject: *ICES advice for Southern horse mackerel*

Your reference: *1819/PAC83*

Dear Mr Raakjær,

Thank you for your letter of 13 August 2019 seeking clarifications on the Commission's request to ICES to have MSY advice for Southern horse mackerel.

Let me first acknowledge the much appreciated hard work and effort that your Advisory Council has put into developing a long-term management plan for this stock. We have taken note of your concerns regarding the fact that ICES provides the MSY approach in the headline of its advice, while you point out that there is a management strategy deemed precautionary by ICES which is only addressed in the ICES catch scenarios table.

As you are aware, we are bound by our legal obligations to manage all of our stocks at the MSY exploitation rate, as is stated in Article 2 (2) of the CFP: *"In order to reach the objective of progressively restoring and maintaining populations of fish stocks above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, the maximum sustainable yield exploitation rate shall be achieved by 2015 where possible and, on a progressive, incremental basis at the latest by 2020 for all stocks."* Furthermore, recital 34 also states that: *"For stocks for which no multiannual plan has been established, exploitation rates delivering maximum sustainable yield should be ensured by setting catch or fishing effort limits. If available data is insufficient, fisheries should be managed by using approximative parameters."*

In this regard, and for the purpose of being consistent across the board with other stocks managed at EU level and which are not part of a multiannual plan like the Southern horse mackerel, we ask ICES for MSY advice in its headline advice for all stocks where MSY assessment is available. This is the reason why, for both 2019 and 2020, the management strategy TAC only appeared in the ICES catch scenarios table.

However, I would like to assure you that this does not in any way undermine the work that the PELAC has invested into developing this long-term management strategy. The involvement and effort that Advisory Councils put into supporting the objectives of the CFP are of utmost importance to us. We share the same long-term ambitions to have all stocks managed sustainably, and the input provided by the Advisory Councils ultimately feeds into our decision-making process.

Furthermore, as you may remember, the Pelagic Advisory Council had developed a management strategy for the Celtic Sea herring that was deemed precautionary by ICES until recently. The MSY approach was also requested in the headline advice for this stock, yet the Commission nevertheless proposed the PELAC management strategy TAC, which also only appeared in the catch scenarios table, in its Fishing Opportunities proposals for 2013, 2014, 2015, 2015 revised, 2016 and 2017.

We recognize that your management strategies generally present figures, which are lower than the MSY approach. This is the case for Southern horse mackerel for 2019 and 2020 and had been the case for Celtic Sea herring in the past. I would like to assure that the Commission will do its utmost to take this into account during the TAC setting exercise when we consider the ICES advice for our proposals. We will therefore continue to ask ICES to use your Advisory Council's management plan and to provide the ensuing TAC figure in the catch scenarios as we have done previously.

I encourage you to continue your valuable work and look forward to our continued cooperation. Should you have any further questions regarding this letter, I invite you to contact Ms Pascale Colson, coordinator of the ACs (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu; + 32 2 29 56273).

Yours sincerely,


João AGUIAR MACHADO