



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.D3/PCO/mbe/Ares (2020)

Mr Esben Sverdrup-Jensen
Chair BSAC Executive Committee
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Mr. Jesper Raakjaer
Chairman Pelagic AC
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Subject: Rebuilding plan for western Baltic spring spawning herring

Dear Mr Sverdrup-Jensen, Dear Mr Raakjaer,

Thank you for your letter dated 30 April 2020 about a rebuilding plan for the western Baltic herring fishery.

It is very encouraging to hear that the Advisory Councils maintain a regular dialogue with ICES, and are actively participating in ICES' work. I would like to commend you on your active involvement and am convinced that this is of benefit for all stakeholders involved.

In this context, I would like to point out that the Commission bases its proposals for the annual TAC setting on the latest best available peer-reviewed scientific advice. While being in a permanent dialogue with ICES, the Commission does not interfere in ICES' scientific work, nor in ICES' internal organisation and relations with its members. The EU and Norway hold annual consultations on fisheries related questions, but as a non-EU country Norway is not bound by EU legislation.

Finally, on your suggestion to look at a rebuilding plan we believe that the Multiannual Plan for the Baltic Sea (MAP) provides very clear and useful rules for setting TACs and remedial measures for stocks under pressure, such as western herring. In other words, a rebuilding plan for western herring as recommended by you is already contained in the

existing MAP for the Baltic Sea. We have implemented the MAP and the decisions taken at Council have put the rebuilding plan into practice. The elements of rebuilding this important fishery were on the one hand setting TACs at the lower end of the MSY range and in addition to agree a remedial measure for this stock in the form of an additional TAC decrease for 2019 and 2020. This was done in order to rebuild this stock as quickly as possible and to provide a better future for the fishermen who depend on this fishery for their livelihood. At the same time, we have taken into account socio-economic considerations to the extent possible, and this as well as the flexibility given by the MAP is the reason why the fishery was kept open albeit at very low levels despite a 0-catch advice.

ICES's advice for western herring from May 2019 estimates that there are very good chances for this stock to be above dangerously low levels by 2022. We hope to have an updated picture about the stocks situation at the end of May when we receive the new ICES advice for the Baltic Sea stocks for 2021.

I hope that I was able to clarify the matter for you. I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation and invite you to take contact with Ms Pascale Colson (Pascale.Colson@ec.europa.eu; + 32 2 29 56273) should you have any further question on this reply.

Yours sincerely,

Bernhard FRIESS
Acting Director-General