

**Mr. Dirkjan van der Stelt**  
Ministry of Agriculture  
Department FDA, DG Agro, DAD, Dz Viss  
PO Box 20401  
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**THE NETHERLANDS**

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Date: 27 May 2021  
Our reference: 2021PAC64  
Subject: Request to ICES to peer review EASME herring genetics sampling report

Dear Mr. Van der Stelt,

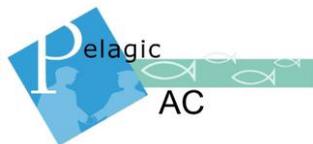
The Pelagic Advisory Council (Pelagic AC) would like to bring to your attention an issue concerning the herring stock in area 6a North and 7 b,c.

In 2015 a routine benchmark has concluded to assess the herring stocks in ICES areas 6a North and 6a South, 7bc in a single assessment due to lack of data. As a result, the Pelagic AC, in collaboration with the pelagic industry, national research institutes and DG Mare, has initiated a research project in 2016 aiming at genetically differentiating between stocks in area 6a North and area 6a South and 7b,c. The aim of the study was to gather sufficient data for genetic discrimination in order to split the stock again. From December 2017 to December 2020, this genetics project was funded under EASME.

The Pelagic AC is pleased to inform you that the final report for this EASME-funded project '*Herring in Divisions 6.a, 7.b and 7.c: Scientific Assessment of the Identity of the Southern and Northern Stocks through Genetic and Morphometric Analysis*', has been ratified by EASME in January 2021 and is now published on the [Commission's website](#).

A key recommendation of the final project report was that it should undergo peer-review by a relevant ICES expert group, e.g. the ICES Stock Identification Methods Working Group (SIMWG), prior to the results and conclusions being incorporated in the assessment and management of 6.a, 7.b and 7.c herring. It is imperative that this review is conducted as soon as possible so that the project results can be incorporated into the forthcoming benchmark meetings (scheduled in November 2021 and February 2022) and the subsequent stock assessment process. Whilst the data from the project will ultimately be published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, this will take some time and will also be in an abbreviated form and in any case will not be completed in time for the benchmark s.





As a key Member State involved in this project, the Pelagic AC would appreciate the support of your administration to request this formal review from ICES, with the aim of having the review completed before the first benchmark meeting in November this year. We are sending a similar request to the Irish administration.

We would be very grateful for your cooperation, and look forward to your response. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jesper Raakjaer".

Jesper Raakjaer  
Chairman, Pelagic AC

