



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS

Director-General

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Mr Ian MacSween  
Pelagic RAC Secretariat  
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PO Box 72  
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Netherlands

**Subject: Provisional recommendation on 2008 TAC for mackerel**

Dear Mr. MacSween,

Thank you for your letter of 26 October in which you notified me of the provisional recommendation of the Pelagic RAC on the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock for 2008. I understand that the level proposed by the RAC was also endorsed at the RAC's executive committee meeting in London on 14 November.

The relevant coastal States (European Community, Faroe Islands and Norway) met in Oslo on 29 and 30 October and agreed upon the final management measures for 2008. These measures were endorsed by NEAFC at its Annual Meeting in London earlier this month, at which time provision was also made for fisheries by Iceland and the Russian Federation in the NEAFC Regulatory Area.

When the coastal States agreed upon the management measures for 2008, they considered that it was necessary to work within the limits agreed under the current long-term management arrangement. To be consistent with this arrangement, advice from ICES indicated that catches in 2008 would have to be between 349,000 and 456,000 tonnes, which would have given a reference TAC of between 313,507 and 409,625 tonnes. ICES also indicated that fishing mortality must, on average, be kept below 0.17.

The Community did not share the opinion of the Pelagic RAC when agreeing with the other coastal States on the establishment of the reference TAC level. They considered all the options available to them and established a TAC at the upper limit of the long-term management arrangement. A TAC in excess of this level could not have been supported by the Community as it was felt that taking any other approach would require reductions

in the future and would only promote instability in the industry. Furthermore, the Commission felt that this would not have been in line with the Commission's own Policy Statement.

I would also like to add that the current long-term management arrangement for the North-East Atlantic mackerel stock covers all mackerel in the North-East Atlantic, including that found in the North Sea; there are no plans at the moment to have a separate management plan for the North Sea component.

Before the meeting of the coastal States on management measures for 2009, ICES will be requested to analyse the uncertainties surrounding the reliability of the assessment due to unaccounted fishing mortality on the mackerel stock. They will also be asked to include the North-East Atlantic mackerel stock in their routine reviews of reference points.

Finally, as regards the possibility of extending the system of year-to-year flexibility for the mackerel stock, this has so far not been accepted by the other coastal States. They feel that the agreement between the coastal States at this stage is an *ad hoc* one due to a number of so far unresolved issues concerning this stock. Nevertheless, both the Faroe Islands and Norway have accepted the principle of flexibility in respect to blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring. Furthermore, Norway has agreed bilaterally with the Community to establish a working group in early 2008 to examine how to introduce such flexibility for biologically sound jointly managed stocks.

I hope this clarifies the position of the Commission in respect of this important stock.

Yours sincerely,



Fokion Fotiadis

c.c.: Messrs Priebe, Beslier, Penas, Alexandrou, Thomson