



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS

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D(2006)

Dr Ingvild Harkes
Pelagic RAC
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Nederland

Subject: Recommendations on herring advice

Dear Dr. Harkes

Thank you for providing the Commission with the advice of the Pelagic RAC concerning the management of herring stocks for 2007. I will reply in turn to each of the issues that you raise in your letters of 17th October and 17th November.

1. Scientific surveys for herring in VIIId and IVc

- Two scientific surveys supported by the Data Collection Regulation (priority 1 surveys) are targeting Herring in the North Sea: Herring larvae survey in ICES area IV, VIIId; 1st and 4th quarter; 37-45 days at sea
- North Sea Herring acoustic survey ICES area IV, IIIa in July; 68-83 days at sea

Additional information on Herring is also obtained from the IBTS survey carried out in the ICES area IV, IIIa during the 1st and the 3rd quarter).

The sampling design and the methodologies of these surveys targeting Herring in the North sea are established by the ICES PGCCDBS. Their design could be modified if necessary by ICES based on scientific recommendations. I will make sure that a contact is made with ICES concerning this issue.

2. Herring in VIa(N)

I share fully your objective of achieving the implementation of a long-term plan for this stock along the general principles that you describe.

The Commission is very concerned at the surprisingly high levels of area-misreported catch involved in this quota. This is of particular concern when the stock of the neighbouring herring in the North Sea is vulnerable due to a series of low recruitments. Consequently, any consideration of the TAC for 2007 and the development of the long-term management needs to take into account this problem, and the need to find a

solution. The process of examining the control measures for this area has not reached a conclusion at this time, but the Commission will consider carefully your point of view and seek to implement necessary interim measures.

3. Herring in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat

I have taken note that the Pelagic RAC's advice covers the range of a reduction in TAC from 20 to 35%. This has been taken into account when preparing the Commission's and the Community's positions in the negotiations with Norway concerning this shared stock.

4. Irish Sea herring

The Commission intends to propose a TAC in line with the "Policy Statement" Communication. In this case, this means a quantity of 4 800t in accord with scientific advice.

5. Herring VIaS and VIIbc

The Commission has taken note of the ICES and STECF advice and the RAC opinion. The Commission's intention is to make a TAC and Quota proposal consistent with the "Policy Statement" Communication.

ICES has advised on the need for a recovery plan, or else a closure of the fishery.

STECF has not so far been able to propose an operation recovery plan, but has provided an advice which includes this statement:

As a preliminary step, a 15% reduction in TAC should be instituted for 2007 (...). STECF notes that the 15% reduction in TAC will not in itself lead the to recover to within the currently set reference points (...)

Taking account of this advice, the Commission intends to propose a 15% reduction in TAC for 2007 and will follow up on the development of a recovery plan.

6. Herring in subdivisions 22-24 and Division IIIa spring-spawners.

The biological and management issues in this area are complex. The Commission has already in 2005 requested that ICES improve the clarity of the presentation of the fisheries for the herring stocks fished in the Western Baltic, the Skagerrak and Kattegat, and the North Sea. It is our perception that ICES has indeed made a substantial improvement in the presentation of this information in 2006.

However, I will make sure that a contact is made with ICES concerning both the points you raise.

7. Norwegian Spring Spawning (Atlanto-Scandian) Herring.

The negotiations concerning this stock will take place on 4th. and 5th. December. I thank you for your views, which will be considered when developing a Community position for this stock.

8. Mackerel

The Commission will request ICES for advice on long-term management arrangements concerning this stock. Regrettably, neither Norway nor the Faroe Islands were able to join

the Community in making this request. The request will include an examination of target fishing mortality rates and of limitations in TAC variations.

As you know, the inclusion of a +/- 10% interannual flexibility in the TAC would require the agreement of the other coastal states with whom this stock is jointly managed.

The stock component issue has been examined in considerable depth, and I do not consider that it would be helpful to reopen that issue at this stage.

9. Horse Mackerel

The pelagic RAC advice concerning the TAC will be taken into account.

Research issues are most properly handled by ICES concerning shared stocks (STECF is more appropriate for Community stocks).

The Commission reviews on an annual basis the provision of data under the data collection regulation for all relevant Member States and all relevant fish stocks. The review of data collection concerning horse mackerel will be a part of that process.

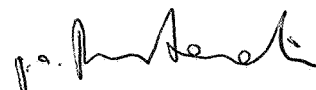
At present a review of horse mackerel management areas is not foreseen. As there is not yet a very clear scientific assessment that the state of the stock in some part of its area of distribution is different from that in any other, I cannot place a very high priority on work designed to align management areas and scientific areas for the early part of 2007, but I can agree that such work should take place as soon as practicable.

10. Sprat

The Commission will take account of the Pelagic RAC's advice when preparing its TAC proposal concerning this species in the North Sea.

11. MSY

The Commission's approach includes the development of impact assessments where fish stocks need to be brought closer to MSY fishing mortality rates. However, where fish stocks are already fished at such rates (or are subject to agreements to do so), these MSY fishing mortality rates should be maintained and implemented. In such cases, new impact assessments are not necessary in every case.



Jörgen Holmquist

C.c: Ms Garcia Ferrer