



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS

Director-General

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Ms Ingvild Harkes
Pelagic RAC
Treubstraat 17
2280 AB Rijswijk
Nederland

Subject: Fishing Opportunities for 2008

Dear Ms Harkes

Thank you for your letter of 26th September. I am pleased that you received the "Policy Statement" in good time this year. However, I can only regret the limited comments that Pelagic RAC could make concerning the main substance of that Communication: the rules to be applied in setting TACs in relation to scientific advice.

I can confirm that long-term planning is the Commission's preferred approach to governing the setting of fishing opportunities. This has been explained in the "Policy Statements". It is the Commission's intention that the existing plans should be implemented each year, and we welcome the RAC's initiatives in developing new plans. The "Policy Statement" was not intended as a general review of conservation work in progress but rather as a preparation for the decisions on fishing opportunities in 2008. This is why current progress on developing long-term plans is not addressed in that document, but I can assure you that the Commission values highly the development of new long-term plans and especially appreciates the Pelagic RAC's initiatives on developing a long-term plan for horse mackerel, for example.

I take note that the Pelagic RAC considers it has made progress in contributing to scientific advice. While the support for development of the management plan for horse mackerel is a very useful contribution, there are still very substantial improvements to be made in other areas, particularly concerning the herring stocks around Ireland. I hope the Pelagic RAC will be able to help improve the available data concerning those stocks.

You have asked for a meeting to discuss pelagic stocks in advance of the Coastal States meetings, and indeed the head of the Community Delegation to those meetings, Mr. Constantin Alexandrou, met a delegation of the Pelagic RAC in London on 23rd October. I trust your delegation found this useful; from our side it did indeed help clarify a number of issues.

Yours sincerely,

Fokion Fotiadis