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Date: 13 August 2012  
Our reference: 1112PRAC126  
Subject: Fishing opportunities 2013 herring stocks  
CC: Catherine Dale (by e-mail)

Dear Ms Evans,

At the latest Pelagic RAC Working Groups meeting on 11 July 2012, the Pelagic RAC discussed the ICES advice regarding fishing opportunities in 2013 for several herring stocks and agreed on a number of recommendations. These recommendations were afterwards unanimously approved by the Executive Committee through written procedure.

Please find the recommendations attached in the Annexes. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Ohms', is written in a cursive style.

Ms Verena Ohms  
Pelagic RAC Secretariat

## **Annex 1: Recommendation on fishing opportunities for some herring stocks in 2013**

Provided below are the recommendations for fishing opportunities in 2013 by the Pelagic RAC for four herring stocks, namely:

- West of Scotland herring (Division VIa North)
- Herring in areas VIa South and VIIb,c
- Celtic Sea and South of Ireland herring (Division VIIa South of 52°30' and Divisions VII g,h,j,k)
- Irish Sea herring (Division VIIa North of 52°30')

Recommendations for North Sea herring and Western Baltic herring shall be provided after the Pelagic RAC's next meetings on 4 and 5 October 2012.

### General comment

In its current advice ICES recommends that there should be no "*seabed-disturbing activities*" for most herring stocks. It should be noted that the Pelagic RAC assumes that this does not refer to other fishing activities. Furthermore, as ICES places the emphasis on spawning grounds, information regarding the exact location of the spawning grounds is required as otherwise this recommendation seems difficult to follow.

The Pelagic RAC recommends that:

- ICES is asked to clarify what is meant by "*seabed-disturbing activities*"
- ICES is asked to give exact locations of the different spawning grounds.

### 1) West of Scotland herring (Division VIa North)

The Pelagic RAC advises following the agreed management plan for West of Scotland herring which seems to be working well.

The Pelagic RAC therefore recommends that:

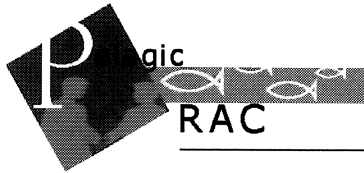
- the TAC for 2013 is set at 27,480 tons.

### 2) Herring in areas VIa South and VIIb,c

The Pelagic RAC advises a rebuilding plan for this stock which can be found in Annex 2. This plan is based on a previously submitted rebuilding plan which had not been fully endorsed by STECF for several reasons, mainly because the former version did not allow for 0 catches if deemed necessary. This revised rebuilding plan addresses all issues raised by STECF and should be submitted to ICES/STECF to be investigated for scrutiny. Point 6 of this rebuilding plan suggests a closed area which should only apply if ICES/STECF reached the conclusion that a closed area would indeed be beneficial.

The Pelagic RAC thus recommends that:

- the proposed rebuilding plan be submitted to ICES/STECF for scrutiny and testing against PA and MSY



- ICES/STECF are specifically asked to evaluate point 6 of the MP
- the TAC for 2013 is set to a TAC calculated by ICES/STECF on the basis of the proposed rebuilding plan

### 3) Celtic Sea and South of Ireland herring (Division VIIa South of 52°30' and Divisions VII g,h,j,k)

The Pelagic RAC proposes a long-term management plan for this stock (Annex 3) which should come into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2013 if receiving a positive evaluation by ICES/STECF. ICES has been requested to evaluate this long-term management plan and the outcome of their analysis is expected to be available by the end of October/early November 2012. According to the long-term management plan which has a target  $F=0.23$  and a 30% TAC constraint the TAC in 2013 should equal 17,200 tons. The Pelagic RAC advises to follow the long-term management plan and hence a TAC of 17,200 tons. Only in case that ICES advises against the long-term management plan, shall MSY be followed with a corresponding TAC of 19,000 tons.

The Pelagic RAC recommends that:

- the management plan is followed and the TAC is set at 17,200 tons in 2013
- if ICES rejects the management plan, MSY is followed and the TAC is set at 19,000 tons in 2013.

### 4) Irish Sea herring (Division VIIa North of 52°30')

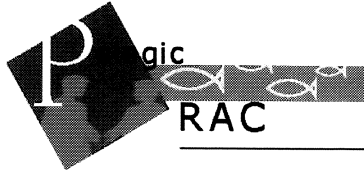
No long-term management plan currently exists for this stock. However, representatives of the UK and Irish industry as well as representatives of two NGO's have, together with scientists from the Marine Institute Ireland and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute UK established a work plan in a recent meeting funded by GAP2 and facilitated by the Pelagic RAC for the development of a long-term management plan. At the same time STECF has responded to a UK request regarding a mid-year TAC increase from 4,752 (2012 TAC) to 5,280 tons (roll-over of 2011 TAC) that in the case of the proposed mid-year TAC increase  $F$  in 2012 is predicted to be 0.23 which is below  $F_{msy}=0.26$ . Fishing at  $F_{msy}$  in 2013 will then decrease catches to 4,993 tons while SSB in 2013 and 2014 will remain well above MSYBtrigger. In light of the benchmark results and the latest STECF advice the Pelagic RAC recommends a roll-over of the 2011 TAC and to increase the TAC for 2012 mid-year to 5,280 tons.

The Pelagic RAC recommends that:

- the TAC for 2012 is increased to 5,280 tons
- MSY is followed in 2013 and the TAC for 2013 is set at 4,993 tons

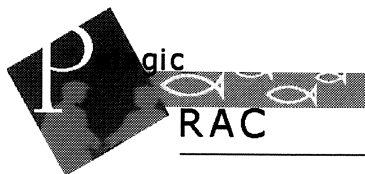
### 5) North Sea herring

A recommendation for this stock will be given after the Pelagic RAC's next Working Group I meeting on the 4th of October 2012.



6) Western Baltic herring (Division IIIa and Subdivisions 22-24)

A recommendation for this stock will be given after the Pelagic RAC's next Working Group I meeting on the 4th of October 2012.



**Annex 2: Revised rebuilding plan for herring in areas VIa South and VIIb,c**

**Proposed rebuilding plan for herring in areas VIa South and VIIb,c**

**Submitted by**

**The Pelagic Regional Advisory Council**  
**To**  
**The European Commission**

**August 2012**

The Pelagic RAC has agreed on a proposed rebuilding plan for herring in areas VIa South and VII b,c. This is a revision of the plan sent to the European Commission by the Pelagic RAC in September 2011 for evaluation by STECF at its November meeting. It was not sent to ICES for evaluation. The plan did not meet with favour from STECF. In response, the Pelagic RAC is now proposing a revised improved plan. This revision takes into account the new scientific advice published at the end of June 2012. The criticisms of the original plan by STECF, are addressed as shown in the table below. The plan can accommodate information from an uncertain assessment, avoiding the criticism that the previous plan could not be precautionary without an accepted assessment being available. However the Pelagic RAC is most anxious that a benchmarked assessment be carried out without delay as it considers that the present situation with the assessment is unsatisfactory.

<b>Criticism by STECF</b>	<b>How addressed in revision</b>
A clause that allows for reducing the catch to zero if necessary, is required	Article 2, allows for linear reduction of TAC to zero when $SSB < B_{trigger}$
It seems unlikely that the PRAC proposed fixed TAC of 4,471 t will limit catch to the TAC.	Articles 5 and 6, to deal with boundary catches, mortality on emigrant fish in VIaN
A fixed TAC could not be relied upon to reduce F	Article 2, allows for linear reduction of TAC to zero when $SSB < B_{trigger}$
Proposed rule could not be classed as precautionary without an accepted assessment	Article 3 provides for a precautionary TAC penalty (analogous to ICES buffer), proportional to uncertainty in assessment
A clause to close the fishery if necessary is required	Article 2 and 4. Latter article allows for ICES advice to override the HCR if there is risk of recruitment impairment



An amendment of clause 5, is required to give an explicit reduction of F to levels below  $F_{msy}$  if SSB is thought to be below  $B_{lim}$  Article 2 and 4

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The text of the revised plan is as follows:

1. Every effort shall be made to keep SSB above 76,000 t (SSB consistent with unacceptable risk of recruitment impairment).

2. For 2013 and subsequent years the TAC shall be set based on fishing mortalities, as follows:

- a.  $SSB > B_{pa}, F = F_{0.1}$
- b.  $SSB < B_{pa} F = SSB * ( F_{0.1} / B_{pa} )$

3. If an assessment is available, but is considered by ICES to be less reliable, then the TAC settings in paragraph 2 shall apply, but the TAC shall be down-weighted by a factor ( $G^*$ ) (see explanation below) based on the level of uncertainty.

4. If ICES considers that SSB is at risk of being below 76,000 t, the TAC shall be based on ICES advice, and set at a lower level than provided for in Section 2.b.

5. In order to provide for separate management of this stock, relative to that in VIaN, every effort shall be made to disaggregate abundance-at-age data in Division VIa.

6. In order to avoid bycatches and unaccounted mortality of this stock, and in light of the problem of disaggregating stock-specific data, it is necessary to establish an interim temporary exclusion zone for 2 years. In anticipation of results of the analyses being conducted by ICES, and until better information on stock mixing is available, a temporary exclusion zone prohibiting herring fishing shall be established that lies between 56°N and 57°30 N, in Sub-Division VIaN. (It should be noted that this exclusion will only affect catches of herring by the Irish Fleet in VIaN)

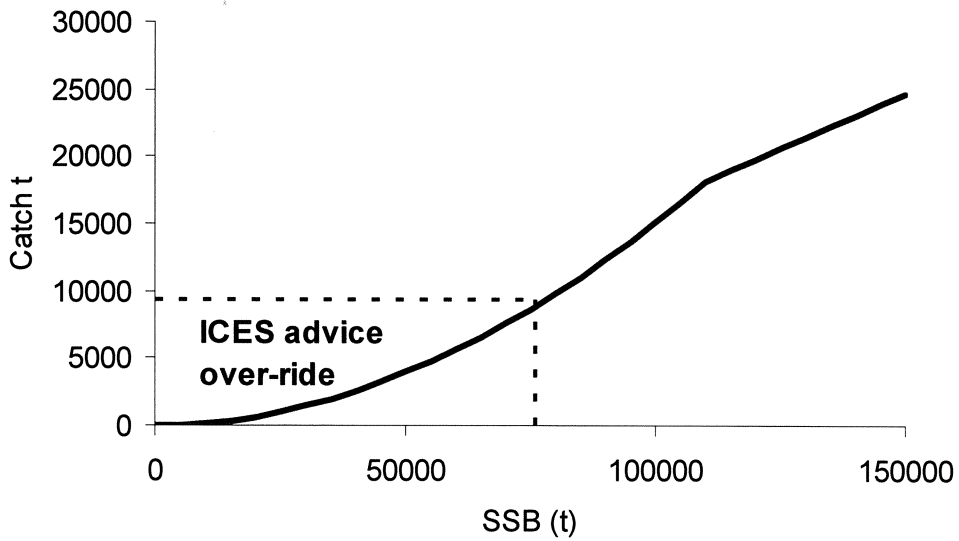
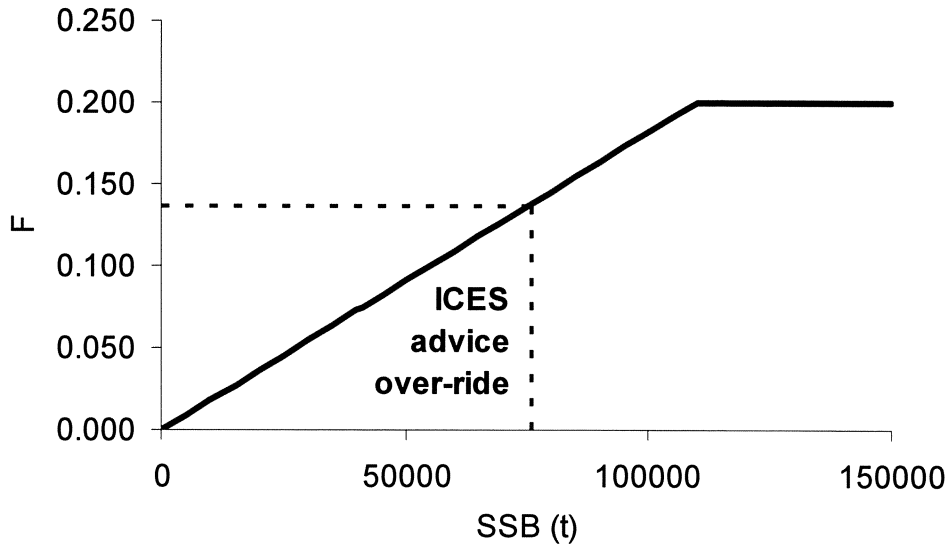
7. When SSB is deemed to have recovered to a size equal to or greater than  $B_{pa}$  in three consecutive years, the rebuilding plan will be superseded by a long-term management plan.

**\*Uncertainty down-weighting parameter G**

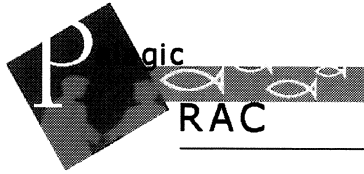
The parameter G is defined as follows:

$$G = TAC * \exp^{(-1.645 * \sigma)}$$

where  $\sigma$  refers to the standard deviation of the final year SSB estimate.



**Harvest control rule for proposed rebuilding plan. Upper panel shows implemented  $F$  in relation to  $SSB$  in TAC year. Lower panel (diagrammatic only) shows one possible series of catches for given  $SSBs$  in TAC year, based on the harvest control rule.**



### **Annex 3: Long-term management plan for Celtic Sea and South of Ireland herring (Division VIIa South of 52°30' and Divisions VII g,h,j,k)**

1. Every effort shall be made to maintain a minimum level of Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) greater than 41,000 t, the level below which recruitment becomes impaired.
2. Where the SSB, in the year for which the TAC is to be fixed, is estimated to be above 61,000 t (Btrigger) the TAC will be set consistent with a fishing mortality, for appropriate age groups, of 0.23 (Ftarget).
3. Where the SSB is estimated to be below 61,000 tonnes, the TAC will be set consistent with a fishing mortality of:

$$\text{SSB} * 0.23 / 61,000$$

4. Where the rules in paragraphs 2 and 3 would lead to a TAC which deviates by more than 30% from the TAC of the preceding year, the TAC will be fixed such that it is not more than 30% greater or 30% less than the TAC of the preceding year.
5. Where the SSB is estimated to be below 41,000 tonnes, Subdivision VIIaS will be closed until the SSB has recovered to above 41,000 tonnes.
6. Where the SSB is estimated to be below 41,000 tonnes, and Sub-Division VIIaS is closed, a small-scale sentinel fishery will be permitted in the closed area. This fishery will be confined to vessels, of no more than 50 feet in registered length. A maximum catch limitation of 8% of the Irish quota will be exclusively allocated to this sentinel fishery.
7. Notwithstanding paragraphs 2, 3 and 4, if the SSB is estimated to be at or below the level consistent with recruitment impairment (41,000 t), then the TAC will be set at a lower level than that provided for in those paragraphs.
8. No vessels participating in the fishery, if requested, will refuse to take on-board any observer for the purposes of improving the knowledge on the state of the stock. All vessels will, upon request, provide samples of catches for scientific analyses.
9. Every three years from the date of entry into force of this Regulation, the Commission will request ICES and STECF to review and evaluate the plan.
10. This arrangement enters into force on 1st January, 2013.