



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Brussels, 03 OCT. 2012
1161206

Ms Verena Ohms
Pelagic RAC Secretary
Treubstraat 17
PO box 72
2280 AB Rijswijk
The Netherlands

Subject: Fishing opportunities southern horse mackerel, herring stocks 2013 and long term management plan for boarfish

Reference: Your letters 1112PRAC128 (Ares 985408) and 1112PRAC126 (Ares 983341) both dated August 14, 2012 and 1112PRAC126 dated August 13, 2012 (Ares 982241)

Dear Ms Ohms,

Thank you for your correspondence on fishing opportunities for horse mackerel and herring stocks, and for the long-term management plan for boarfish. These letters are an important part of the input for us to make further analysis in alignment with the ICES advice before drawing the proposals for fishing opportunities for 2013.

Let me go through the major points on the stocks you have indicated in your letters:

In relation to the general comments, I note the PRAC's concern on "seabed-disturbing activities" for most of herring stocks especially in spawning areas, as reported in the latest ICES advice. I agree that in general an improvement of geographical information is required to address the issue successfully. The Commission will work towards clarifying the issue with ICES.

1. West of Scotland herring (Division VIa North)

We agree with the RAC on the appropriateness to follow the management plan for this stock, considered as precautionary by ICES.

2. Herring in areas VIa South and VIIb,c

The revised management plan will be submitted to STECF via an ad hoc consultation, prior to the November plenary. The request aims (i) to assess the proposed management plan, as revised, for compatibility with the precautionary approach and its ability to drive to management to this stock to MSY by 2015; (ii) specifically assess the desirability and expected efficiency of the measures foreseen in point 6 of the plan in ensuring the good management of the stock, and (iii) to identify the TAC that should apply to this stock in

2013 based on the proposed plan, as revised. Should STECF have comments on this revised version, I hope that there would be an opportunity for the PRAC to address them prior to the November Plenary, so that the Commission can take the plan into account for the 2013 TAC proposal. I would recall and underline that the advice for this stock signals the need to close the fishery unless a rebuilding plan is implemented.

3. Celtic Sea and South of Ireland herring (Division VIIa South of 52°30' and Divisions VIIg-k)

In 2011 the Pelagic RAC agreed on a proposed management plan. This plan has a target F of 0.23 and a 30% constraint in TAC change. The application of the plan would lead to a TAC in 2013 of 17,200 tons.

The plan has not yet been evaluated by ICES, but initial evaluation by the Irish Marine Institute concluded it to be precautionary. The evaluation of the management plan will be on the basis of a request by Ireland which was forwarded to ICES earlier this year. ICES will need to assess the plan's conformity to the precautionary approach to fisheries management and its ability to achieve MSY by 2015. We expect a reply by mid-November.

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

We note the results of the meeting organised by the PRAC in Belfast last 24 July regarding the development of a management plan for this stock.

The 2011 stock assessment for herring in the Irish Sea was based on a trends-only assessment and led to the adoption of a reduced precautionary TAC for this year. Subsequent benchmarking in 2012 of this stock has improved the assessment methodology and a catch forecast based on an MSY approach can be provided. STECF was asked to comment upon a possible in-year increase of fishing opportunities for this stock and to detail the impact upon the 2013 advice. On the basis of the STECF positive feedback, we indicated to the Council that an in-year increase of the TAC is acceptable, provided that the 2013 TAC will also be adjusted to the level needed to maintain fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) level. The 2012 fishing opportunities regulation is to be accordingly amended setting a TAC of 5,280 tonnes in line with the PRAC's proposal. The matter will be covered in the coming meetings of the Council's Working Party.

5. Southern Horse Mackerel (Division IXa)

We welcome the PRAC's intention to work towards proposing a management plan for this stock in the future. I fully agree on the need to resolve the data poor situation which has weakened this year's ICES assessment if an effective plan is to be developed for this stock.

6. Long term management plan for boarfish

We welcome very much the PRAC's initiative to develop a management plan for boarfish. It conveys the willingness of the PRAC to take the management of this new fishery in hand from an early stage, thereby increasing the chances of its long-term sustainability.

As you requested, we have submitted the proposed plan to ICES for assessment immediately before the relevant working group (WGWIDE) was to start its meeting this autumn. There is, however, a chance that the WGWIDE decides an ad hoc meeting is necessary to examine this plan, so at this time I am unable to indicate with precision what the timing will be to receive feedback from ICES on this proposed plan. My services will gladly update the PRAC secretariat as the information reaches us over the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lowri Evans', written in a cursive style.

Lowri Evans