



To: Bernhard Friess, Acting Director-General
Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium
By e mail

Copenhagen Tuesday 21st April 2020

BSAC 2020-2021/4 PELAC 1920PAC70

Subject: rebuilding plan for western Baltic spring spawning herring (WBSS)

Dear Ms. Veits,

The two Advisory Councils BSAC and PELAC have come together to write to you about the above.

For two years running, ICES has advised a zero TAC for the western Baltic herring stock in sub-divisions 20-24. It has been the subject of discussion in our Advisory Councils, both of which advise on this stock.

The Baltic Sea Advisory Council has been concerned about the need for remedial measures for the stock. It has also been concerned about the new reference points that were established after an ICES benchmark in 2018. The 2019 ICES assessment for western Baltic herring showed a downward revision in the estimated for spawning stock biomass (19% lower than for 2017) and an upward revision in the fishing mortality (27% higher than for 2017).

In its recommendations for the Baltic fisheries, the BSAC recommended asking ICES to advise on a recovery plan for western Baltic herring.

The issue of providing zero advice on certain stocks was raised at this year's annual meeting between the Advisory Councils and ICES, and the BSAC provided an explanatory memo on this subject in relation to the western Baltic herring.¹

¹ Attached to this letter is the BSAC memo

ICES has been engaged in this work and has looked into the environmental drivers for the recruitment of the stock. The work on recovery scenarios is underway, and ICES recently held a Working Group on rebuilding plans (WKREBUILD) from 24th – 28th February 2020. Representatives from both of the Advisory Councils took part. However, the workshop was inconclusive on what kind of approach to take towards rebuilding plans, and it is too early to conclude what the outcome of the work will be. One particular issue highlighted was the need to clarify whether the purpose of rebuilding plans is to focus on the conservation of stocks or on the continuation of a particular fishery.

Both Advisory Councils want very much to contribute to this work. We both share one important concern: An EU Baltic Sea multiannual management plan was established in 2016 and was updated in 2019. The plan also applies to herring in subdivisions 22–24, which is part of the distribution area of the WBSS stock. Our concern is that this plan has not been adopted by Norway and is thus not used as the basis of the advice for this stock which is shared between the North Sea and the Baltic. So, this raises the question of Norway's involvement and interest in a rebuilding plan.

We are writing to you to in order to explore with you how ICES intends to work on a stock where a third country has an indirect interest. Is it useful to work on developing a rebuilding plan for this stock when there is no agreed EU-Norway management plan in place? We would very much hope that it is in the interest of all to give focus to the WBSS: it is part of the big family of herring stocks that ICES provides advice on.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Sjørdal', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

BSAC ExCom Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jens Raaen', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

PELAC ExCom chair