

Ms Charlina Vitcheva

Director General

Directorate General Maritime Affairs
and Fisheries

Rue de la Loi 200

1049 Brussels

BELGIUM

Date: 28 March 2022

PelAC reference: 2122PAC24

Subject: Progressing the ICES assessments for North Sea horse mackerel and boarfish

Dear Ms. Charlina Vitcheva,

The Pelagic AC (PelAC) members met on March 2 2022 to evaluate the advice issued for 2022 for the stocks under its remit and the final uptake of our TAC recommendations at December Council. It is also the annual meeting where the Pelagic AC looks ahead to establish its priorities for the coming year.

One of the discussions held during this meeting was related to the assessment status of the North Sea horse mackerel and boarfish stocks. Being data-limited and thus subject to the ICES framework for category 3 stocks, both stocks currently lack full analytical assessments. As you know, the PelAC has a long-standing history of developing multi-annual management strategies for the stocks under its remit, and will continue pursuing this key objective moving forward. In order to do so, it is vital that progress in the assessment models for these two stocks is secured.

In the case of North Sea horse mackerel, it is our understanding that more data is available than is currently being used by ICES. In our recommendations for 2022 fishing opportunities, the PelAC therefore advised the Commission to ask ICES to make optimal use of the available data for North Sea horse mackerel, and to prioritize upgrading this stock into a higher stock category. Boarfish has been a category 3 stock since 2014 and the PelAC is unaware to what extent the development of an assessment model is producing results. Given that both stocks are subject to a two-year advice by ICES, the PelAC believes it is becoming increasingly urgent to take active and concrete steps that will progress these stocks to higher assessment categories.

We kindly ask the Commission to support the Pelagic AC by requesting ICES to improve the quality of the data available for these stocks, and to prioritize the transition of these two stocks to higher stock categories. To this end, the PelAC suggests to hold active discussions with ICES to better understand what would be required to make this transition possible as a matter of urgency. The Pelagic AC offers its full support and input into such discussions.





We thank you in advance for your consideration of the above, and look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

Jesper Raakjær
Chairman Pelagic Advisory Council

