

Ms Charlina Vitcheva

Director General

Directorate General Maritime Affairs
and Fisheries

Rue de la Loi 200

1049 Brussels

BELGIUM

Date: 20 April 2023

PelAC reference: 2223PAC65

Subject: Benchmark meeting for Western horse mackerel in 2023

Dear Ms. Charlina Vitcheva,

The Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) wishes to thank you for your very supportive letter regarding the benchmark for Western horse mackerel received on 22 February 2023. Following up on our letter from December 22 2022 (reference 2223PAC14), calling for an urgent benchmark meeting that treats the three horse mackerel stocks together (Western, Southern and North Sea), the PelAC encloses in Annex 1 the detailed meeting report from the PelAC Focus Group meeting on the three horse mackerel stocks held on 3 April 2023. This report has been unanimously adopted by the Executive Committee and details the technical basis as well as our recommendations for the organization and preparation of this benchmark meeting.

The PelAC underlines the importance that the terms of reference of the benchmark clarifies the organization and assignment of individuals to carry out the various tasks detailed in our action plan for Western horse mackerel in particular, as well as the other listed suggestions in order to move this issue forward within ICES and to allow the research institutes involved to take this work into account in their annual planning.

Furthermore, the PelAC notes that the horse mackerel assessments currently do not include genetic information related to stock identification. This genetic information must be taken into account in order to treat the three horse mackerel stocks holistically (and not in isolation) and to ensure the assessments capture the latest scientific information on the delineation of the stock boundaries.

The PelAC recognizes that some research areas, such as genetics, may require a longer process. For this reason, PelAC encourages the development of a long-term plan for the improvement of the Western horse mackerel stock assessment, as well as the establishment of a genetic stock identification working group/task force within ICES to ensure that this new information is incorporated into the assessment.

The PelAC would be grateful if the Commission could discuss this report with its UK counterpart in the context of the Terms of Reference to ICES.





In case you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat.

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

Kind regards,

Sean O'Donoghue
Chairman Pelagic AC

