

Ms Charlina Vitcheva

Director General

Directorate General Maritime Affairs
and Fisheries

Rue de la Loi 200

1049 Brussels

BELGIUM

Date: 27 October 2023

PelAC reference: 2324PAC08

Subject: Call for urgent planning of inter-benchmark meeting for horse mackerel in Q1 2024

Dear Ms. Charlina Vitcheva,

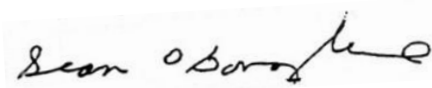
Following-up on our recommendations issued over the course of 2022-2023 (references [2223PAC14](#) & [2223PAC65](#)), the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) once again writes to request your support in expediting, as a matter of urgency, the ICES inter-benchmark meeting that is jointly dedicated to the three horse mackerel stocks (Western, Southern and North Sea) combined.

The PelAC has taken note that this ICES inter-benchmark process is set to take place in the first quarter of 2024, with a data compilation meeting planned in January 2024, so as to ensure the results are available in time to take onboard at the ICES WGWIDE meeting in 2024. Even though the PelAC would have liked the inter-benchmark to take place in 2023, we were reassured it was now clear the benchmark would be finalised in time for the 2024 TAC setting exercise with the UK. In this context, the PelAC reiterates its recommendation to the Commission to ensure that any changes following the change in the perception of these stocks that result from this inter-benchmark are adopted without delay, and asks the Commission to seek agreement between the EU and the UK to adjust the agreed TAC in 2024 following the TAC option this revision may generate.

Unfortunately, it has now come to the PelAC's attention that ICES has still not issued the data call for the data compilation meeting originally planned for 9-12 January 2024. The PelAC is seriously concerned this delay will affect the entire benchmark planning, putting the finalisation in the first quarter of 2024 at risk. In light of this, the PelAC would be grateful if the Commission could discuss this with ICES as a matter of urgency, to try to ensure that the data compilation workshop goes ahead as planned in January 2024.

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

Sincerely yours,



Sean O'Donoghue
Chairman Pelagic AC