

Ms Charlina Vitcheva

Director General
Directorate General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
BELGIUM

Date: 22 April 2024

PelAC reference: 2324PAC58

Subject: Concerns regarding North East Atlantic Mackerel Stock Components and EU Regulation
2019/1241

Dear Ms. Charlina Vitcheva,

On behalf of its members, the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) wishes to express concerns regarding the findings detailed in the report published in March on the 2023 meeting of the workshop on the evaluation of North East Atlantic Mackerel stock components (WKEVALMAC), with outputs already included in the ICES stock advice for 2024.

We are particularly concerned by the potential discord between these findings and the technical measures stipulated in EU Regulation 2019/1241.

The North East Atlantic mackerel is a crucial species both ecologically and economically, supporting numerous coastal communities. Thus, it is imperative that its management is guided by the best available scientific evidence and that technical measures are diligently enforced to ensure the stock's sustainability.

The ICES WKEVALMAC report has underscored significant apprehensions regarding stock components of North East Atlantic mackerel. Notably, it concluded that, for the first time in twenty years, there is now no reference to separate stock components within the 2024 advice for mackerel. This departure from prior assessments, which had informed two decades of discussions and adaptations of technical measures at PelAC, including various Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes, poses a considerable challenge.





In light of these new developments, we urge the European Commission to carefully consider how the findings of the ICES WKEVALMAC report will be incorporated into the forthcoming revisions of EU Regulation 2019/1241 on Technical Measures. Specifically, we seek clarity on how the outcomes pertaining to mackerel stock components will shape future management strategies and regulatory measures geared towards securing the fishery's sustainability.

In conclusion, we respectfully request the European Commission to prioritize this matter and take proactive measures in addressing the concerns raised by the ICES WKEVALMAC report.

Additionally, despite the single stock scenario advanced in the workshop, participants raised two points that would require further investigation: the need for more genetics samples and data from Portugal regarding the southern part of the distribution and the possibility of the Cantabrian Sea constituting a juvenile nursery area for the species. We would therefore ask the European Commission to initiate the processes to allow the data collection and scientific assessment of these issues.

We extend our sincere gratitude for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to your prompt response and stand ready to collaborate with your services in addressing these pressing issues.

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

Kind regards,

Sean O'Donoghue
Chairman Pelagic Advisory Council

