



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels  
MARE.C.5/NG

**Subject: Benchmark request for Irish Sea and Celtic Sea herring**

Dear Mr Sverdrup,

Thank you for your letter of October, in which you express concerns regarding the interaction between herring stocks in the Irish Sea and Celtic Sea and request ICES to undertake an urgent benchmark.

Considering that the Celtic Sea stock has received zero catch advice since 2020, your observations highlight a valid concern about potential other sources of fishing mortality on this stock, as noted by ICES in its advice for the Irish Sea herring stock.

This is not an isolated issue; the mixing of herring stocks presents a series of management challenges, as we have also observed in the case of the Western Baltic Spring Spawners and North Sea Autumn Spawners. However, ICES has noted that the extent of this mixing is not yet quantifiable.

The decision to subject stocks to a benchmarking process lies within ICES' remit, and is largely determined by their internal criteria, including data availability. Nonetheless, we will raise the matter with ICES to explore how data can be improved to support future management decisions.

The Commission will also discuss this issue with the United Kingdom, as both stocks are managed bilaterally.

The annual meeting between ICES, Advisory Councils and other Observers (MIACO) later this month presents a timely opportunity to bring forward your concerns and observations.

Thank you once again for your dedication and efforts. I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation.

Esben Sverdrup Jensen  
Chairman Pelagic Advisory Council  
Pelagic Advisory Council  
Louis Braillelaan 80  
2719 EK Zoetermeer  
The Netherlands

Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox [MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu](mailto:MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu).

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA