

**Ms Charlina Vitcheva**

Director General  
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BELGIUM

Date: 8 November 2024

PelAC reference: 2425PAC11

Subject: Update of the Southern horse mackerel Long Term Management Plan

Dear Ms. Charlina Vitcheva,

We are contacting you regarding the southern horse mackerel (SHOM) stock that underwent a benchmark in 2024 WGHANSA. The report of this benchmark was published on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2024. The new model includes revised biological information (maturity and natural mortality) and additional indices, can accommodate changes in fisheries selectivity, and is considered to provide more realistic and accurate estimates (Spawning Stock Biomass, Fishing mortality, recruitment) than the previous model<sup>1</sup>.

The benchmark updated the reference points based on the new model, with MSYBtrigger increasing from 181,000 tonnes to 279,000 tonnes, Blim rising from 103,000 tonnes to 201,000 tonnes, and FMSY being reduced from 0.15 to 0.115. As a result of these changes, the SHOM Long Term Management Plan has become obsolete, since its reference points were based on the previous model.

The PelAC strongly believes that developing an update multiannual management strategy for this stock must be prioritised and recommends that the Commission submit a request to ICES to have the updated PelAC LTMS undergo a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). Elements such as the effect of climate change and the importance of this species to the ecosystem and specific role in the food chain should be tested in the MSE.

As underlined by ICES in its advice, the “Management of the catches of southern horse mackerel, blue jack mackerel and Mediterranean horse mackerel under a combined TAC prevents effective control of the single-species exploitation rates and could lead to overexploitation of any of these species”. The PelAC would greatly appreciate having this issue also addressed by the MSE.

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<sup>1</sup> (ICES. 2024b. Working Group on Southern Horse Mackerel, Anchovy and Sardine (WGHANSA). Draft Report. ICES Scientific Reports. 6:46. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.26003356>)





The PelAC hopes that these elements can be included in the refit of the SHOM LTMP and can feed the MSE that will be carried out once the LTMP is updated.

Yours sincerely,

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen  
Chair Pelagic Advisory Council

