



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.C.5/ac/CG

Subject: Access to Norwegian waters to fish Atlanto-Scandian herring

Dear Mr Sverdrup-Jensen,

Thank you for your letter of 31 March 2025, which includes PELAC recommendations relating to several important aspects of the management of the Atlanto-Scandian herring ('ASH') stock. I share your concerns about the lack of access for ASH fisheries to Norwegian waters, the level of pressure on the pelagic stocks, in particular mackerel, and the impact this has on sustainable fisheries management and the livelihoods they support.

As showed during the coastal States consultations in June 2025, the EU is committed to work intensively and proactively to find solutions for comprehensive sharing arrangements.

The absence of such comprehensive sharing arrangements for mackerel, blue whiting and ASH in the Northeast Atlantic poses significant risks not only to the sustainability of these resources but also jeopardises thousands of jobs within the EU. We remain committed to fair, science-based, and rules-based fisheries management. It is crucial for all involved coastal States to reach sharing agreements that reflect both historical patterns and scientific advice.

The Commission finds it unacceptable that current fishing levels, in particular for mackerel, exceed scientific recommendations due to unilateral quota increases, particularly by Norway, given the critical situation of that stock. It is essential that we focus our efforts on reducing these excessive shares, as only once this issue is addressed can Long-Term Management Strategy (LTMS) and Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) be effective. Sharing arrangements provide the predictability and stability needed for the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) to accurately assess the viability and long-term impact of such strategies.

Furthermore, despite our longstanding presence and commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of these fisheries, Norway's refusal to recognise the EU's historic

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quotas and its unilateral decision to discontinue access to Norwegian waters for EU vessels to fish ASH, presents a challenge that contradicts our expectations of cooperation with partners. At the same time, the EU position is clear. We continue to advocate for a sharing arrangement and quota allocations based, among others, on historic rights, considering the essential dependence of our fleets and coastal communities on these resources. Commissioner Kadis has brought this up to the attention of his Norwegian counterpart on several occasions and the Commission continues to work towards a solution with Norway as regards access, while seeking alternatives.

Despite recent challenges, our engagement is unwavering, and we will not hesitate to adopt assertive measures when needed. In this context, the EU welcomes the political agreement reached by the co-legislators on the Commission proposal related to non-sustainable fishing by non-EU countries on shared fish stocks. This tool allows the EU to identify countries allowing unsustainable practices and, where necessary, impose quantitative restrictions on imports of fish and fishery products derived from those stocks. This agreement enhances legal clarity, empowers us to take meaningful and proportionate measures, and strengthens the EU's toolbox for addressing overfishing beyond our borders.

Be reassured that we will persist in our efforts to ensure that all parties adhere to international law and equitable resource management.

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, and in case you want to organise a meeting with MARE.C5 as suggested in your letter, please contact Ms Camille Gallouze via Camille.Gallouze@ec.europa.eu.

I appreciate your continued support and engagement as we navigate these challenging discussions.

Yours sincerely,

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