



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.C.5/CG

The Pelagic Advisory Council
Louis Braillelaan 80
2719 EK Zoetermeer
The Netherlands

**Subject: PelAC input following the publication of the Benchmark report on
Northeast Atlantic mackerel**

Dear Mr Sverdrup-Jensen,

Thank you for your letter regarding the publication of the benchmark report on Northeast Atlantic Mackerel.

I fully recognise the vital role of mackerel in marine ecosystems and its socio-economic importance for European fishing fleets, food and feed producers, coastal communities and consumers. The continued absence of sharing arrangements for this and other pelagic stocks in the Northeast Atlantic poses a serious threat to the sustainability of these stocks.

The European Union is actively engaged and remains committed to pursuing comprehensive solutions proactively in the coastal States consultations that brings the overall level of all the TACs in line with the scientific advice. Upholding science-based and rules-based fisheries management grounded in fair sharing arrangements remains a core priority of the European Union.

Excessive fishing continues. In addition, despite the mackerel stock being perceived as larger following the changes introduced by the 2025 benchmark exercise, the decreasing trend in mackerel SSB since 2014 persists. Taking into account the benchmark's newly established reference points, the situation may be even more alarming. In line with your recommendations, we aim at reducing overfishing by engaging with all coastal States during the upcoming rounds of consultations to agree on a comprehensive sharing arrangement as a matter of urgency.

We welcome your ideas for a Management Strategy Evaluation of mackerel Long-Term Management Strategies (LTMS). In line with an ecosystem-approach to fisheries management and taking into account ICES FEISA, we intend to discuss the specific technical recommendations included in your letter aiming to improve the science basis

with ICES and with the other EU and non-EU stakeholders in order to maximise international scientific collaboration and research.

However, given that LTMS assume that the stock is being caught at the level of the advised TAC, there is a need to prioritise in the short term that such advised TAC is respected, management sticks to its objectives and the scientific advice is actually followed. The current fishing levels exceed scientific recommendations due to unilateral quota increases by certain countries. It is therefore essential that we focus our efforts on reducing overfishing as a priority matter, in particular during sharing arrangement discussions.

I take the occasion to also to thank the PelAC for its continued support and for sharing its recommendations to support the Coastal States in addressing this shared challenge. My team will be available to discuss in more detail these aspects during our dialogue with both industry and NGOs in the context of the coastal States consultations.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA