



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE.C5/JB/vr

Subject: Reply to PelAC on herring advice (ref. 2425PAC81)

Dear Mr Sverdrup-Jensen,

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2025 and the recommendations from the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) regarding the TAC setting for herring stocks for 2026 ⁽¹⁾.

Your observations on the dynamics, mixing, and assessment methods of various herring stocks, particularly the 6a North and 6a South/7bc components, highlight important scientific and management challenges. The points raised on stock delineation and spawning components, and your call for more robust analytical assessments and coordinated data collection, including the use of genetic methods, are well noted. These aspects are being considered together with the ICES advice, as well as Member States input and our international commitments.

ICES published its updated advice for 2026 on **North Sea autumn-spawning herring** on 13 October, incorporating the outcomes of the evaluated long-term management strategy (LTMS) in the catch options table. The advice assumes a new management model for the stock, which is currently under discussion between the EU, Norway, and the UK, marking an important step towards a shared LTMS. While the LTMS has not yet been formally adopted, pending an agreement on the new management model, its integration into ICES advice provides a solid scientific foundation for future management discussions. I greatly appreciate the constructive contributions of industry and PelAC's active engagement throughout this process. Your support for research initiatives such as ATHERE and C3P-Eaux remains essential for the robust, long-term management of this key stock.

On **Western Baltic spring-spawning (WBSS) herring** bycatch and management measures in ICES subdivision 3a, your concerns are well understood. An ICES evaluation of these measures and a broader overview of spatial and temporal management options could indeed be beneficial, especially in balancing conservation objectives with

⁽¹⁾ PELAC Ref. 2425PAC81

Mr Esben Sverdrup-Jensen
Chair of Pelagoc Advisory Council
Zoetermeer, Netherlands
info@pelagic-ac.org

sustainable exploitation. Continued data provision on catches, bycatch, and fishing effort will be essential to support robust scientific evidence.

Several of the points raised are primarily scientific, particularly those concerning stock assessment design, reference points, and genetic differentiation. These fall rather within ICES' remit. I would therefore encourage PelAC to continue raising such questions within the appropriate ICES fora, such as MIACO, or through direct engagement with ICES expert groups and dedicated workshops, where stakeholder input is highly valued. Active participation in these processes will help ensure that PelAC's observations and practical insights are fully reflected in the scientific advice that underpins fisheries management.

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

I greatly appreciate PelAC's ongoing engagement in support of sustainable fisheries management and look forward to our continued constructive cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA