



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Director General

Brussels,
MARE D3 ADV

North Western Waters Advisory
Council
Mr. Emiel Brouckaert
Chair of the Executive Committee
BIM, PO Box 12
Crofton Road,
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin
Ireland

Subject: Request to the European Commission for the early provision of advice on undulate ray (*Raja undulata*) in area 7d and 7e

Your Ref.: your letter of 11 May 2018

Dear Mr Brouckaert,

Thank you very much for your above-mentioned letter concerning the undulate ray and its related catch limit. Whilst there was new scientific advice for some species of skates and rays in 2017, unfortunately, there was no new scientific advice for undulate ray from ICES in 2017. This is why the Commission proposal for 2018 was based on the internationally peer-reviewed advice of ICES from 2016. The current TAC for undulate ray of 180t (161t in the Western Channel (7e) and 19 t in the Eastern Channel (7d)) is far higher than the current ICES advice of 65t for this species.

The Commission appreciates that the ICES advice is only issued biennially, which is why we made a commitment at the December Council of 2017, to ask ICES for an earlier advice on undulate ray in 2018. The Commission has also considered the possibility of proposing an in-year amendment, should the ICES advice support an increase. ICES however informed us in writing on 26 January 2018, that the earliest they could provide updated advice would be 7 September 2018.

Let me also stress that we are aware that fishermen have put considerable efforts into recording their catches of undulate ray, which has been instrumental in moving past the initial prohibition of this species. The Commission also recognises that Member States have spent considerable effort and resources on researching this stock. Our understanding is that much of the data collected is delivered to the French “Musée national d’Histoire naturelle” (MNHM) and to the UK Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), whose scientists participate directly in the ICES stock assessment for undulate ray.

We have communicated to the French administration that the Commission finds it important to be transparent with the fishing industry. This means that the fishing industry, who participates in collecting data on undulate ray, is informed of what is being done with the already collected data and what further data are required from them. Should the scientists at MNHM, CEFAS and ICES need several years more of data to provide an analysis and index on the impact of fishing on the undulate ray stock, then the Commission would find it important that this is effectively communicated by the Member States and the scientists to the fishing industry.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to commend your advisory council, fishermen, fisheries managers and scientists and thank them for the good work done so far on undulate ray data collection and management. We have already come a long way from the prohibition in 2009 and we look forward to working with you further on this important species.

I very much look forward to our continued cooperation and invite you to take contact with Ms Pascale Colson, as coordinator of the ACs (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu; +32 2 29 56273) should you have any question on this reply.

Yours sincerely,

Joao AGUIAR MACHADO

c.c.: Ms Veits, Roller, Kirchner, Georgitsi, Colson, de Diego
Mr. Shrives