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ICES
CIEM



Our Ref: C.24.b/MS/MB/MO

18 February 2010

Subject: Northern hake request

Dear Patrick,

Referring to the draft request sent by mail to ICES 27 January 2010 in which you write:

'The Commission is aware that ICES will review certain aspects of the assessment of Northern hake early in 2010. The Commission requests that, in the light of such a review, ICES should advise on whether a target fishing mortality rate of 0.17 (averaged on ages 2 to 6) remains appropriate for exploiting the stock consistently with MSY.'

ICES is also invited to comment on any new implications that have arisen concerning the Commission's proposal for a Council Regulation establishing a long-term plan for the northern stock of hake and the fisheries exploiting that stock (COM/2009/039).

The Commission requests that this advice be provided by 18 February 2010.'

The northern hake stock has been dealt with during the roundfish benchmark workshop at ICES 9–16 February. Results of published tagging studies definitively indicate that the past age determination methods were overestimating age approximately twofold. This invalidates the age data used in previously age-based stock assessments and indicates that growth is faster than previously estimated. As a consequence, the length-based Stock Synthesis assessment model was selected for use in this assessment. A lot of progress has been made during this meeting, but the Workshop did not reach the stage of defining new reference points. However, a significant change in our understanding of growth rate will probably impact the estimate of F_{MSY} .

A Workshop (WKFRAME) to provide technical guidelines on implementing the ICES MSY framework will take place in ICES 22–26 March. Following this workshop the Working Group on hake, monk and megrim

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(WGHMM) will meet 5-11 May with the Term of Reference to: "*Set MSY reference points (F_{MSY} and $BMSY_{trigger}$) according to the ICES MSY framework and following the guidelines developed by WKFRAME*". Release of this advice will be 30 June. I hope the release on 30 June 2010 of an answer to your request for MSY reference points for North hake is acceptable to the Commission

Sincerely,



Mike Sissenwine
Chair of ACOM

Cc Hans Lassen (Head of Advisory Programme), Carl O'Brien (Vice-Chair of ACOM), Manuela Azevedo (Vice-Chair of ACOM), Mark Tasker (Vice-Chair of ACOM), Eugene Nixon (Vice-Chair of ACOM), Gerd Hubold (General Secretary), Carmen Fernandez (Chair of WGHMM), Ken Patterson (EC), Rodrigo Ataide Dias (EC)