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NORTH WESTERN
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European Commission J99
Directorate General of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DGMARE/Unit A2 – Common Fisheries Policy and Aquaculture
B-1049 Brussels

Dublin, 4th of September 2013

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR IN YEAR REVIEW (INCREASE) OF THE TAC FOR NORTHERN HAKE

Dear Director General, Mrs. Lowri Evans:

On the 23rd and 24th July 2013, the NWW Rac held working sessions in Dublin including a Presentation of the ICES Advice released in June 2013, which was conducted by the Vice President of the ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM), Ms. Carmen Fernández.

The information included therein in respect of the state of the demersal stocks was analyzed with utmost interest and it was verified a general trend to progressive and steady recovery of the stocks in North Western Waters (ICES VI-VII) thanks partly to the efforts undertaken by the catching sector, amongst other reasons.

What mostly attracted the attention of the NWW Rac's members was the case of the Northern Hake stock inasmuch as it was ascertained that fishing mortality is at maximum sustainable yield levels ($F_{msy}=0.24$) and has been stable since 2011; also the spawning stock biomass has reached historic maximum values as from the mid 70s.

Consequently, the management recommendations issued by the ICES for 2014 include a 49% increase of the TAC, to 81,846 t, compared to the one currently in force in 2013 (55,105 t)¹.

STECF supports on its report on quotas for 2014 the recommendation made by ICES regarding the volume of landings for 2014 (81.846 t) as follows: *"STECF agrees with the ICES assessment of the state of the stock and the advised landings for 2014 of 81,846 t. Given that total discards are not accounted for in the assessment model and catch forecast, the predicted catch of 84,811 t is an underestimate"*².

¹ ICES Advice for 2014 for Hake in Division IIIa, Subareas IV, VI, and VII, and Divisions VIIIa,b,d (Northern stock) - Release: June 2013 - www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2013/2013/hke-nrth.pdf

² Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - Review of scientific advice for 2014 - part 2 (STECF-13-11). 2013 – p 261

http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/571417/2013-07_STECF+13-11+-

[+Review+of+advice+for+2014+Part+2_JRCxxx.pdf](#)

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It was also noted in the ICES advice that for this year 2013 by keeping F values at MSY levels the TAC would be consistent with the value of 69,440 tonnes in comparison with the 55,105 tonnes currently included in the Council Regulation (EU) No. 39/2013 of 21st January 2013 fixing for 2013 the fishing opportunities for UE vessels regarding certain fish stocks which are not subject to international negotiations or agreements.

Therefore, the TAC for 2013 fixed by regulation in respect of the Northern stock of Hake is lower by exactly 14,335 tonnes according to the ICES estimations for the same period and regarding the MSY fishing mortality.

In view of the scientific evidence above, the NWWRAC is of the opinion that the current situation of the Northern Hake stock will result in a significant increase of catches for which there is insufficient quota available and no landing authorisation. This will lead to an increase of discards and will aggravate the effects of "*choke species*" as it will reach hardly acceptable limits for this stock in all of its distribution areas.

Consequently the NWWRAC calls the Directorate General of Fisheries of the European Commission (DG MARE) to urgently proceed and direct those actions and initiatives leading to the inter-annual/in-year review of the Northern Hake TAC in the present year (2013) in order to align TAC with that considered by the ICES as appropriate and consistent with the maximum sustainable yield approach.

In summary, the NWWRAC members call for an increase of the Northern Hake TAC to 69,440 tonnes for 2013.

We hope that our request can be dealt with as soon as possible and we look forward to receiving a prompt reply

Yours faithfully,

Bertie Armstrong
NWWRAC Chairman