



Mr. Friess

Director – Unit C

DG MARE

Brussels

Dublin, 28 October 2014

Subject: Eastern Channel Sole Management

Dear Mr. Friess,

I would like to thank you for calling a meeting on 4 September 2014, inviting delegates of the NWWAC, to discuss the ICES TAC advice 2015 for sole VIIId.

At this meeting, Ms. Carmen Fernandez (ICES ACOM Vice-Chair) made a scientific presentation on this stock establishing that:

- SSB is fluctuating above $MSY B_{trigger}$
- F is above F_{MSY} and F_{pa}
- Recruitment in 2012 and 2013 are the lowest in the time series and there is an occasional very strong recruitment causing large fluctuations in the stock.
- Preliminary information indicates that sole discards are around 10% in weight, but the discards are not included in the assessment.

Abundance indices used in the assessment are:

- Surveys: UK(E&W Channel)-BTS, FR-YFS, UK-YFS (last in 2006).
- Commercial LPUE: BE-CBT, UK(E&W Channel)-CBT.

A continuation of UK component of YFS (last conducted in 2006) would improve estimation of incoming recruitment and catch forecast.

The ICES TAC advice is based on the MSY 2015 approach, requiring an F of 0.27 and resulting in a reduction of F of 60%. For Belgium, this could result in an overall revenue reduction for the fleet of 25%. France considers such reduction impossible to manage and the UK finds that a multi-annual framework is necessary. Sole VIIId is included in the listing of stocks susceptible for a mixed fisheries management plan and for MSY range assessment by ICES.



In respect of adjacent ICES areas there is a sole/plaice management plan in the North Sea, a sole management plan in the Western Channel and one in the Gulf of Biscay which all have been taken into consideration for the conclusion to be followed up by the NWWAC and more specifically the WG3 – Channel. This conclusion has also been made based on your statement, that for this stock it is worthwhile introducing a specific management plan; and not wait for its eventual inclusion in a mixed fisheries management plan.

In all this the ICES advice is considered to be mainly a consequence of the data indicating low recruitments in 2012 and 2013, as mainly obtained from the single YFS in the area. A proposed specific management plan should accordingly focus on selectivity, avoiding the juvenile sole in order for the juveniles to get the opportunity to join the SSB.

The NWWAC therefore commits itself to work on the rapid completion of a specific management plan for the Eastern Channel sole stock. The input for such a plan is expected from France for measures concerning passive gear targeting sole and from Belgium concerning the trawling, more specifically beam trawling. Other necessary input and considerations for this plan will be requested from the stakeholders in the NWWAC WG 3 – The Channel.

We trust that the Commission will take the NWWAC intention into account when discussing the ICES advice with the Council of Ministers as a basis for its proposal for the TACs 2015. We will keep DG MARE Dir. C informed about the progress made with this intention after it has been addressed at the WG3 session of 13 November and the Executive Committee of 14 November.

Yours sincerely,

Bertie Armstrong

NWWAC Chairman