

The North Sea Regional Advisory Council

NSRAC Secretariat
Woodhill House
Westburn Road
Aberdeen AB16 5GB
Scotland



NSRAC

Mr Fokion Fotiadis
European Commission
DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs
B-1049 BRUSSELS
Belgium

PAPER 4

05 November 2007

Dear Mr. Fotiadis,

Re – ICES Advice on North Sea Plaice and Sole

At the Executive Committee meeting of the NSRAC on October 16th, the ACFM chair presented the ICES TAC advice for 2006. To our astonishment, the advice on North Sea plaice and sole was not given in accordance with the long term management plan agreed upon by Council. We were informed that it was not in line with ICES policy to base the North Sea plaice and sole advice upon a plan which had not been reviewed and assessed by ICES. It would appear that ICES has not been requested by the Commission to review the management plan, and that it does not feel any obligation to do so until it receives a formal request from the Commission. An existing review of the draft plan by STECF has not been forwarded to ACFM. Furthermore, it appears that there has been a lack of clarity on the part of ICES about the interpretation of the harvest control rules for plaice and sole.

The development of the long term management plan for North Sea plaice and sole has been a difficult process. Although NSRAC is very aware of the serious short term economic consequences for the fleets involved, we were pleased to see that the agreed plan with its harvest control rules includes many key elements of the advice from the NSRAC. In this context, we find the current advice situation very disturbing. It may signal to the fleets and other stakeholders (including Norway) that ICES does not consider the long term management plan to be sound or appropriate. Such a message will affect the perceptions of some stakeholders and the general public when TACs are agreed in accordance with the long management plan, against advice from ACFM (based on the previous system) which would lead to much lower TACs.

The NSRAC agreed that it would be in the best interests of both the Commission and the NSRAC if ICES was requested to carry out a review of the long term management plan for North Sea plaice and sole at the earliest opportunity. In view of the above, the NSRAC urges you to send a request along these lines to ICES.

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Secretary – **Ann Bell**, tel: +44 (0) 1224 665341, email: ann.bell@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

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In view of the absence of any formal request to review the long term management plan, and the implications of this for the preparation of the scientific advice, we would also ask you to evaluate your agreements with ICES. As long term management plans are progressively agreed for the main fisheries it will be necessary to ensure that advice from ICES keeps pace with those plans.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hugo Andersson".

H Andersson
Chair of the NSRAC Executive Committee

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