



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES  
THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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Mr Niels Wichmann  
North Sea RAC Secretariat  
Woodhill House  
Westburn Road  
Aberdeen AB16 5GB  
United Kingdom

**Subject: Management plan for North Sea Whiting**

Dear Mr Wichmann,

Thank you for your letter of 24 March responding to some of the points made in our earlier correspondence on whiting discards.

One of the issues you raise is the quality of the scientific assessments for North Sea stocks. I agree that there are too many stocks, including whiting, where insufficient data are available to allow scientists to provide reliable assessments. The use of industry knowledge has a great potential to improve the situation, but greater cooperation between the industry and scientists is needed to achieve this. I am disappointed that you consider that it is patronising to query whether the fishers taking part in the Fisher's Survey for whiting are properly representative. Let me assure you that there is no such intention. We need to know basic facts related to any data collection so as to be able to make an objective judgement in relation to those data.

The North Sea Fisher's Survey has proved its worth for a number of stocks, to the extent that it is now incorporated by scientists into the assessment process. On the basis of these encouraging results the survey should be continued and enhanced, with the close cooperation of scientists in order to ensure that data are collected in a way that is useful for the assessment of all of the stocks covered.

This brings me to the question of payment for scientists participating in meetings. Under our Memorandum of Understanding with ICES, we already support ICES participation in RAC meetings to present ICES advice. This covers the annual stock assessments, but could also cover other topics, such as advice to support the development of long term management plans, and would be at no cost to the RAC. For other scientific experts, the RACs can use EU subsidies to cover travel costs and pay per diem rates. We are nevertheless aware that the amount of money the RACs have available is limited, which is an issue that will be carefully considered following the adoption of the reformed CFP.

Returning to the original subject of this correspondence, I very much welcome the NSRAC's work towards the development of a long term management plan for whiting. The agreement with Norway in December on the basic elements of a plan was a big step forward. It allowed an increase in the TAC in 2011 rather than what would otherwise have been a decrease, which should go some way to reduce discard levels. However, the plan should be more comprehensive if we are to achieve sustainable fisheries on whiting. I am sure that the NSRAC will make a significant contribution towards this, especially in the identification and collation of relevant economic and social data.

A first joint STECF-ICES workshop for scoping and preparation of impact assessments for new management plans took place at the end of February, with participation of the RACs. A second meeting should be held in the end of June. On that basis, ICES should release its advice in July. The first round of negotiations with Norway won't be until November, but the Commission representatives will probably try to meet Norway sometime in September to discuss the ICES responses to our joint requests on the whiting, cod and herring plans. The Commission would appreciate to receive the RAC's first results on whiting before then.

In the meantime, the Commission will try to attend your next working group, on 24 June in Hamburg.

Thank you very much for your valuable input.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lowri Evans', with a stylized, cursive script.

Lowri Evans