



5th September 2019

Stakeholder Notification regarding suspension status for the NEA mackerel fisheries

Following fisheries are affected:

- 1) ISF Iceland mackerel
- 2) MINSAs North East Atlantic mackerel
- 3) NIPSG Irish Sea-Atlantic mackerel and North Sea herring
- 4) Faroese Pelagic Organisation Northeast Atlantic mackerel

As a reminder, the above fisheries have been suspended (effective date of suspension is 2nd March 2019) as PI 1.2.2 Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) & Tools has been re-scored to <60 meaning the fishery no longer meets the MSC standard.

Surveillance audits and an expedited audit have been conducted for the above fisheries 1, 2, 4 and 3. One of the objectives of these audits is to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the fisheries' clients corrective action plans to address the cause of the suspension. CABs reviewed the ICES advice on NEA mackerel published in May 2019¹ as well as any change in the management strategy of the fisheries including the allocation of mackerel quotas.

The outcome of harmonisation is that, despite the change in mackerel stock status with the SSB currently above the MSY B_{Trigger}, PI 1.2.2 Harvest Control Rules & Tools score remains <60 and the fishery still fails, for the following reasons:

- The current level of exploitation does not provide evidence that the tools used to implement the generally understood HCRs are appropriate and effective in controlling exploitation.
- There is a continuing dispute over mackerel quota allocation resulting in annual catches well in excess of the advised catches. There is an absence of long-term management strategy for the NEA mackerel agreed by all parties involved in mackerel fisheries. Therefore, it could not be concluded with confidence that the management agency can and will act effectively and in a timely manner to reduce exploitation rate if the point of recruitment impairment is approached.
- Despite the change in mackerel stock status with the SSB currently above the MSY B_{Trigger} and the improvement in the management of the advised catch, with current and predicted exploitation level together with low recruitment, the stock is nevertheless predicted to continue to decline. Therefore, there is a reason to conclude that such high level of exploitation will lead to a situation where the stock is likely to fall below sustainable level in the foreseeable future.

¹ ICES. 2019. Norway special request for revised 2019 advice on mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) in subareas 1–8 and 14, and in Division 9.a (the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2019. ICES Advice 2019, sr.2019.09, <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.5252>

It is noted that CABs involved didn't reach consensus on PI 1.2.2 scoring and therefore as per FCP v.2.1 PB1.3.4.5.a.ii the lowest score is adopted by all CABs.

Therefore, the suspension of the above fisheries will not be lifted as a result of these surveillance and expedited audits.

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