



Director General João Aguiar Machado  
The European Commission, DG Maritime Affairs & Fisheries  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium

Re: MoU with ICES and information on biomass levels of stocks

Brussels, 24 November 2015

Dear Mr. Aguiar Machado,

Thank you for the constructive meeting on 10 November. By way of follow up, can you confirm that in 2016, the Commission will seek advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) on the status of biomass in relation to levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY)?

As you are aware, the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) sets the objective to restore and maintain populations of fish stocks above biomass levels capable of producing MSY.<sup>1</sup> While no clear date has been set for achieving this objective, it is important to know which stocks are recovering and moving above biomass levels capable of producing MSY (i.e.  $B_{MSY}$ ), and which stocks are already at or above that point. Without this information, it will not be possible to evaluate whether fisheries management is achieving the objectives of the CFP as defined in Article 2.2. Also, providing such information will build greater understanding of the state of stocks among scientists, stakeholders and policy-makers and will facilitate the monitoring of progress towards full implementation of the CFP.

This information has not been presented in the Commission's communications on fishing opportunities for 2015 and 2016<sup>2</sup>. We were informed during recent exchanges with your services that the Commission might request further information from ICES about biomass levels. Given the importance of the information to evaluating progress of the CFP as well as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, we would welcome confirmation that the

---

<sup>1</sup> CFP Article 2.2 "In order to reach the objective of progressively restoring and maintaining populations of fish stocks above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, the maximum sustainable yield exploitation rate shall be achieved by 2015 where possible and, on a progressive, incremental basis at the latest by 2020 for all stocks."

<sup>2</sup> COM(2014) 388 final: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Concerning a consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2015 under the Common Fisheries Policy and COM(2015) 239 final: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Concerning a consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2016 under the Common Fisheries Policy.

Commission will ask for specific advice from ICES in 2016 and beyond on the biomass levels of EU fish stocks in relation to the  $B_{MSY}$  reference point. In addition, we would like to request that your services publish any existing ICES information on the level of biomass of EU fish stocks in relation to the  $B_{MSY}$  reference point.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Uta Bellion  
Director  
European Marine Programme  
The Pew Charitable Trusts



Wendy Broadgate  
Director  
The Fisheries Secretariat



Angelo Caserta  
Regional Director  
BirdLife Europe and Central Asia



Aniol Esteban  
Head of Environmental Economics  
new economics foundation (nef)



Lasse Gustavsson  
Executive Director  
Oceana in Europe



Sandy Luk  
Head of the Biodiversity Programme  
ClientEarth



Geneviève Pons  
Director  
WWF European Policy Office



Saskia Richartz  
Acting Managing Director  
Greenpeace EU



Monica Verbeek  
Executive Director  
Seas At Risk