



**European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)  
(Northern Pelagic Working Group)**

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**Press release 11 October 2013**

**EU industry warns against a quick deal with Iceland and Faroe Islands in light of dramatic increase in 2014 scientific advice for Atlantic mackerel**

Last week the scientific advisory body ICES came out with its latest catch advice on the mackerel stock in which it changed dramatically its view on this European fish stock with the highest economic value. The new ICES advice entails a 64% increase of the catches in 2014 compared with 2013, while for 2013 ICES advised last year a 15% decrease.

Gerard van Balsfoort, Chairman Northern Pelagic Working Group of EAPO, said: “The mackerel fishing industry welcomes ICES advice that finally acknowledges after so many years what fishermen have been seeing on the fishing grounds for at least 5 years. There is however a high level of frustration in the industry over this same period as EU fishermen have been held back by the EU institutions to make more use of this valuable and vastly increasing stock in their waters. This frustration is compounded by seeing catching sectors in Iceland, Faroe Islands and (recently) even Greenland been given almost limitless freedom by their respective governments to start and expand their mackerel fishery from close to zero to more than 50% of the allowed catches in just a few years”.

He added: “With the new ICES advice for a huge TAC increase in mind the EU mackerel industry is very concerned that the European institutions and Member States are prepared to quickly jump into to wheeling and dealing with Iceland and Faroe Islands with the aim to come to a new sharing arrangement with these countries regardless of the consequences for EU fishermen. By doing so the EU would reward these countries for bad behaviour which is unacceptable for the industry. The European Commission and Member States must refrain from such action. Haste is never a good advisor in negotiations and this is all the more true now as the stock continues to be in very healthy state with no danger at all of a stock collapse”.

The advice issued by ICES is interim advice that has dramatically changed from last year with the rejection of the assessment and is only based on the recent total catch levels (890,000 ton). In this light ICES has announced a total overhaul of the assessment of Atlantic mackerel early 2014 with the aim to regain its scientific grip on this very important stock. It is of primordial importance that before the Coastal States start any negotiation on a fair and balanced sharing arrangement, the science community (ICES) must restore its scientific assessment of this stock. This is foreseen in 2014.

EU industry has not seen any movement by Iceland and Faroe Islands away from their intransigent position in the negotiations. A first and serious sign by both countries of a more constructive attitude in the negotiations is very much needed. This is all the more important as the latest survey indicate that the mackerel stock shows a decreasing presence in Icelandic waters in 2013 (reduction of more than 35%).

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