

**ECOREGION**      **Widely distributed and migratory stocks**  
**SUBJECT**        **EC request to ICES to evaluate the proposed long-term management plan for boarfish and possible in-year revision of the TAC for 2013**

**Advice summary**

ICES has not fully evaluated the proposed long-term management plan for boarfish. However, ICES identifies that Tier 1 of the proposed plan coincides with the ICES generic approach to giving advice for data-rich situations. Given that a Category 1 assessment is now being used for advice, ICES recommends that Tier 1.1 of the plan be considered consistent with the PA and MSY approaches for as long as a Category 1 assessment is available. An in-year TAC revision is not possible at the moment because the 2013 assessment is the first that is of sufficient quality to be used for advice. An in-year revision would require an accepted 2012 assessment, and this was not available.

**Request**

*The Pelagic RAC has proposed a management plan for the stock of boarfish. This plan includes a stability factor. The TAC for boarfish 2013 was set by the Council at 82,000 t, in line with the advice. Council and Commission committed to ask for a scientific evaluation of the plan and to revise the TAC according to the plan if the plan is evaluated as being precautionary.*

*ICES is therefore requested to evaluate the proposed multiannual management plan for boarfish as proposed by the pelagic RAC.*

**Elaboration on ICES advice**

ICES compliments the Pelagic RAC on developing this plan. The plan can deal with various levels of data availability, from a full Category 1 ICES assessment to completely data deficient. There is a decision rule to match every state of information availability, including when no information is available.

**Evaluation of the management plan**

After the end of the recent WGWIDE, there was insufficient time available to conduct the simulations required to evaluate the plan. However, ICES notes that the ICES advice for 2014 is consistent with Point 1.1 of the plan. ICES advises that as long as the boarfish assessment is classified as Category 1, then Tier 1 of the plan may be considered to be in conformity with the MSY approach.

ICES notes that the plan includes provisions for a stability factor. In a new, developing fishery, management should be as reactive as possible to information from changing stock perceptions, especially negative perceptions. Therefore, ICES advises that the TAC constraint should either be set at zero, or be set at zero in cases of advised decrease in TAC. If the latter option is taken, then a small stability factor (e.g. 10–15%) could be appropriate in the event of an advised TAC increase. This would enable management to react to the fullest extent to decreasing stock signals, yet be less reactive to possible TAC increases.

The remaining harvest control rule terms of the proposed management plan cannot be evaluated at the moment. ICES policy is to use the data-limited stocks (DLS) approach in the absence of a Category 1 assessment. However, the subsequent terms of the proposed management plan might be followed, if they resulted in more precautionary management (lower TACs) than those provided for in the DLS approach, and if a Category 1 assessment ceased to be available in the future.

There is also an area closure which is a useful way of protecting other species, as well as a seasonal closure that aims to minimize the bycatch of mackerel. Both of these clauses are considered to be welcome additions to the plan. It might be useful to include a proviso to iteratively adapt these measures as new information becomes available on bycatches of other species.

**In-year revision**

An in-year revision of the TAC is not possible in 2013. The request requires that a full management strategy evaluation (MSE) be performed as a basis for considering such a revision, and such an MSE is not currently possible. An in-year revision would require a forecast based on the assessment that was available at the end of 2012. This assessment was

not used as a basis for advice in 2013 because certain aspects of the model required development. As such the 2012 assessment cannot be a basis for an in-year TAC revision.

In 2013, ICES conducted a new assessment that is an improvement on the 2012 assessment. The new assessment incorporates catches and a time-series of trawl surveys up to the end of 2012, an acoustic survey in 2012, and an in-year acoustic survey in 2013. This system does not allow an in-year revision because in the assessment configuration, 2013 is an intermediate year. An in-year revision based on the current assessment configuration would thus involve a truncation of the 2-year acoustic series, leaving only a single acoustic abundance estimate. This is insufficient for the current assessment to function. With the resources available to ICES, the priority was to achieve a Category 1 assessment and forecast. This assessment/forecast is consistent with the main provision of the proposed plan.

ICES also notes that the proposed plan does not mention an in-year revision. ICES considers this appropriate because caution should be a paramount consideration in a developing fishery. In-year TAC revisions lacking the best quality information and sufficient time for its evaluation would not be a prudent course of action in developing fisheries.