



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

Brussels,

Mr. Sam Lambourn  
NWWRAC  
Board Iscaigh Mhara  
Crofton Road  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin  
Ireland

**Subject: Sole and Whiting in the Irish Sea**

Dear Mr Lambourn,

I am pleased to reply to the NWWRAC's opinion concerning sole and whiting in the Irish Sea, following from the Commission's letter of 25<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

### **Sole VIIa**

Under ICES new MSY transition approach, a TAC of 240t is recommended which corresponds to a 50% reduction in fishing mortality. Under the precautionary approach, a closure is again advised.

This is the scientific basis currently available. The effect of the factors you mention will have been taken into account by ICES and STECF. These bodies have maintained a consistent advice for this stock since 2007 and I see no reason to expect an improvement unless changes are made.

### **Whiting VIIa**

Under the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, an evident responsibility exists for the restoration of populations of marine organisms irrespective of their economic value. I am please that you accept that recovery is necessary even though the stock has a low economic value.

I concur with you that technical measures can be used to deliver reductions in whiting mortality. There is indeed a substantial body of knowledge on this topic. By means of the letter of 25<sup>th</sup> May the Commission was seeking specific advice on which of these the RAC might recommend.

I note your views on estimating current discard rates and setting minimum levels of by-catch. Currently, however, there is no means available to monitor and to enforce the application of such rules.

Concerning both sole and whiting, there is clearly much more to be done and some of this work will have to take place in the context of new technical measures regulation and the reform process of the Common Fisheries Policy.

I regret that the NWWRAC was unable to propose specific measures for the fishing opportunities for 2011. This is disappointing in view of the longstanding problems faced by the sole and whiting stocks, but I am well aware of the difficult issues surrounding management of Irish Sea fisheries. I trust it will be possible to make more progress soon.

Yours sincerely,

Lowri EVANS

cc. Mr. Penas, Mr. Cueff, Ms. Amado