



FISKIMÁLARÁÐIÐ

Information Memorandum

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International Management of Northeast Atlantic Mackerel

For the Faroe Islands, with an economy overwhelmingly dependent on fisheries, mackerel and other pelagic fish stocks in the Northeast Atlantic have vital importance. The Faroese fisheries zone is centrally located in the migration and distribution of pelagic fish stocks in the region, giving the Faroe Islands an important stake in the sustainable utilisation and joint management of these valuable resources.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the fisheries, effective international cooperation on the management of all shared stocks in the region, including the mackerel, is crucial.

The Faroe Islands contribute actively to regional cooperation on the management of shared fish stocks in the Northeast Atlantic. This cooperation includes participation in management arrangements with neighbouring countries and through the Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), as well as contributions to scientific research and coordination of inspection and control in the region.

The Government of the Faroes is therefore committed to reaching a new and effective multilateral arrangement for the joint management of the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock in 2011 and beyond, in cooperation with the EU, Norway and Iceland. Such an arrangement will also provide a basis for measures to regulate mackerel fisheries in international waters through NEAFC, in cooperation between the coastal states and the Russian Federation.

- **A multilateral mackerel arrangement necessary**

For several years now, changes in the mackerel distribution have become increasingly evident. Significant catches of mackerel have been taken further north and west than previously documented, placing the Faroe Islands in the midst of the summer distribution of mackerel.

The joint ecosystem surveys carried out by the Faroe Marine Research Institute and marine research institutes in Norway and Iceland in July and August 2010 confirmed that the distribution and abundance of mackerel is further west and north than previously measured, with a high density in the Faroese zone. Excellent mackerel fisheries in Faroese waters in 2010 clearly support these research findings. Results from the 2010 egg survey, in which the Faroe Islands participated, also confirm earlier indications that mackerel spawns in Faroese waters.

The first coastal states management arrangement on mackerel was concluded between the EU, the Faroe Islands and Norway for 2000. For each year up to and including 2009, measures were agreed on an annual *ad hoc* basis, under which the total Faroese share was only around 5% of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC).

The former arrangement does not provide a relevant basis for the new multilateral sharing arrangement that is now needed for Northeast Atlantic mackerel. A new agreement on allocation must take into account both the ecological role and changes in distribution of the mackerel stock in the region, as well as the genuine interests of all major stakeholders in the fishery.

Ministry of Fisheries

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- **Mackerel fisheries and consultations in 2010 and 2011**

In the absence of an agreed arrangement between coastal states for mackerel in 2010, all parties set their own quotas. Together these unilateral fishing limits far exceeded the total catch level recommended by ICES (the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea). The Faroese quota was set at 85,000 tonnes, much lower than the unilateral quotas set by others.

Faroese mackerel fisheries in 2010 confirmed that mackerel occurs in great abundance and density in Faroese waters during the summer feeding. The quota was fished in the space of a little over two months.. In general the fishery was very good, with over two thirds of total catches landed for human consumption.

The restraint exercised by the Faroe Islands compared with other mackerel fishing states in 2010, together with genuine efforts to encourage an open and active dialogue with other parties on the issue, has been met by landing bans and blockades and a refusal by the EU and Norway to renew long-standing bilateral fisheries agreements for 2011.

The Faroe Islands find such an approach extremely disappointing. All parties share responsibility for the present situation and should seek to cooperate to find a fair solution to mackerel management. The actions taken by EU and Norway can only be seen as counterproductive to this common goal.

For 2011, the EU, Norway and Iceland announced their respective quotas for mackerel fisheries in December of 2010. At that time it was already apparent that the total of these unilateral quotas would far exceed the advice from ICES for 2011 that a sustainable TAC should be limited to 646,000 tonnes

Despite several rounds of negotiations, the latest as recently as March this year, it has not been possible to agree on multilateral management measures for mackerel in 2011. In the continued absence of an agreed arrangement, the Minister of Fisheries announced on 14 March his decision to limit mackerel fisheries by the Faroese fleet in 2011 to 150,000 tonnes. This catch level is a clear reflection of the status and legitimate interests of the Faroe Islands as a major stakeholder in the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock. It includes quotas exchanged with the Russian Federation and Iceland in bilateral fisheries agreements for 2011, as well as an amount set aside for dedicated scientific research on mackerel in Faroese waters.

- **Sustainability a joint responsibility**

It is vital that all coastal states cooperate jointly in scientific research surveys in order to provide the broadest possible coverage of the mackerel stock and thereby ensure the best possible scientific basis for future management decisions. The Faroe Marine Research Institute is taking part in the pelagic ecosystem research survey planned for 2011, together with the Marine Research Institute of Iceland, which is designed to enhance our common understanding of the distribution and abundance of mackerel. It is with regret the Government of the Faroe Islands notes that neither Norway nor the EU plan to contribute to this research this year.

The Government of the Faroe Islands takes seriously its obligations under the UN Law of the Sea Convention and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement for coastal states to seek agreement on the joint management of shared fish stocks. The lack of agreement between the coastal states on how to manage the Northeast Atlantic Mackerel fisheries is therefore of great concern.

A balanced and transparent multilateral arrangement for the management of mackerel is necessary if all nations with a stake in this valuable resource are to benefit from sustainable mackerel fisheries in the future. The Faroe Islands remain committed to working with other parties to achieve this aim.