

South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

7 May 2012

Dear Colleagues

I write to draw your attention to the potentially serious situation for the jack mackerel fishery revealed by the report of the Interim Secretariat dated 30 April on the reported catches of *Trachurus* species in the first quarter of this year. It would seem that the amount of catch in the EEZs of Chile and Peru over this period means we are at risk of repeating the situation that arose last year where, despite the restraint exercised on the high seas and within the Chilean EEZ in accordance with the 2011 Interim Measures, substantial catch increases in the EEZs of Ecuador and Peru resulted in the total whole of range catch being considerably in excess of the maximum catch level of 390,000 tonnes at or below which the Science Working Group considered there was a high probability of stock rebuild.

The Secretariat's first quarter report for this year shows that total reported catches for the quarter were 241,361 tonnes. This total comprises 168,099 caught in the EEZ of Chile, 71,350 tonnes caught in the EEZ of Peru and 1912 tonnes caught in the high seas. I note the total of reported catches in Peru's EEZ does not include catches for the month of March as the Secretariat has not yet received a report covering "in zone" catches for that month. I should also note that the total does not include any catches in the EEZ of Ecuador. In that regard I must inform you that I have yet to receive any reply to the letter of 8 February I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador at the request of the Third Session of the Preparatory Conference. I further note that, in the past, fishing for jack mackerel on the high seas gets underway only late in the first quarter and is concentrated in the second two quarters.

You will all recall that in our Report of the Third Session of the Preparatory Conference, Santiago, Chile, 30 January to 3 February this year we expressed grave concern that the Report of the 10th Science Working Group confirmed that the stock remained in a seriously depleted state. In that Report the Science Working Group had repeated their advice that total whole of range catches should be maintained below 520,000 tonnes to maintain spawning biomass at least at current levels and should be at 390,000 tonnes or less if we are to have a high probability of stock rebuild.

In the light of this advice the Preparatory Conference agreed that further voluntary reductions in catch were needed and adopted the 2012 Interim Measures effective from 4 February (Paragraph 12 of the Report). The positions of Chile and Peru with regard to the 2012 Interim Measures are recorded in Paragraphs 13 and 14 respectively.

With approximately 240,000 tonnes already caught inside EEZs in the first quarter of this year (and probably significantly more once first quarter figures for Ecuador and March figures for Peru are included) it is clear we are in a difficult situation. Unless "in zone" catches are virtually curtailed at this point and high seas catches are strictly reduced by each participant in accordance with the 2012 Interim Measures to 40% of the final recorded

catches in 2010¹ there is a strong possibility that the total whole of range catches for the year will again substantially exceed the limit recommended by the Science Working Group as necessary to offer a high probability of the spawning stock rebuilding.

Accordingly I would urge all participants in the fishery to reflect on the potential implications of the first quarter catch figures in the light of the seriously depleted state of the stock and the voluntary commitments they made in Santiago in January and where appropriate to take action with regard to their fleets.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Mansfield". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill Mansfield
Chair
Preparatory Conference for the Commission of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries
Organisation

¹ The total of the limits for the high seas in 2012 is approximately 165,000 t