

Commission proposes fishing opportunities for the Baltic Sea for 2010

In the beginning of September the European Commission tabled its proposal on fishing possibilities for fish stocks in the Baltic Sea for 2010. Scientific advice has shown that cod stocks are recovering, but that the Western herring stock still gives rise to serious concern. Based on the advice and in line with the communication on fishing opportunities for 2010 and the multi-annual plan for cod in the Baltic Sea, the Commission proposes increases of fishing opportunities for Baltic cod of 15 percent (Eastern stock) and 9 percent (Western stock). For the Western herring stock, the Commission is proposing a 21 percent reduction in fishing opportunities. The present proposal for fishing possibilities shall be discussed at the October Fisheries Council.

Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Joe Borg commented: "The positive trend for Baltic Sea cod gives us confidence that the plan we have adopted to rebuild the stocks is working. We have paved the way for the comeback of Baltic cod by strictly applying the cod plan; this strict application is essential also in bountiful years along with further measures as might be deemed necessary. While discarding used to be rather low in the Baltic so far there are indications that it might be on the increase. In line with the Commission's position on discards, we are therefore proposing a high grading ban for next year.

For herring, the stock is in a long term slump, witnessed by the fact that incoming year classes are continuing to decline and are now merely a quarter of what they used to be. Serious cuts in fishing possibilities are needed to stop overfishing this stock and compensate for the poor recruitment. "

The Commission's proposals reflect the latest advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), and the opinion of the Commission's own Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee on Fisheries (STECF), together with input from stakeholders, in particular from the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council.

Cod stocks

The Commission is proposing an increase of 15 percent in the EU Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for eastern Baltic cod, from 44,580 tonnes to 51,267 tonnes, and an increase of 9 percent in the TAC on western Baltic cod, from 16,337 tonnes to 17,700 tonnes. The Eastern cod stock continues to benefit from strong recruitment, as well as improved discipline in the application of the multi-annual plan. The Western stock is starting slowly to improve as well, following a series of years where recruitment and respect of the plan was weak. The proposed TAC increases are in line with the provisions of the multi-annual plan, which aims to adapt fishing mortality to a level that is sustainable in the long term.

Herring

The Western herring stock has declined further, following a 2009 TAC which was set well above scientific advice. The incoming year class is only a quarter of the long term average. This stock intermingles with the North Sea herring stock, which is also suffering from poor recruitment. It is therefore important to adopt a common approach for the management of these two stocks.

Having taken the economic situation of the sector into consideration, the Commission is proposing a reduction of 21 percent in the TAC for Western Herring, from 27,176 tonnes, to 21,469 tonnes. Other pelagic stocks have seen falling recruitment as well, requiring a reduction in the TAC. The Commission therefore proposes a 15 percent reduction in fishing possibilities for the Central Herring stock (from 143,609 tonnes to 122,068 tonnes) and the same percentage reduction for sprat (from 399,953 tonnes to 339,960 tonnes).

Given the decreasing of salmon juveniles at sea survival of Baltic salmon and the poor status of some of the river stocks subject to mixed stock fishing within the main basin, the TAC in the main Basin has been reduced by 15 percent. For the Gulf of Finland, no TAC reduction has been proposed since for this area, the causes of the problem need to be addressed primarily by national management measures in inland waters. The Commission will raise the issue with concerned Member States in the context of the future Baltic salmon management plan, which is under preparation.

Useful link

http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/press_corner/press/map_baltic_en.pdf