



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Fisheries Policy Atlantic, North Sea, Baltic and Outermost Regions
The Director

Brussels,
MARE.C.1/AK/ms/Ares(2022)

Dear Mr Zieliński,

Thank you for the information from BSAC you sent to Commissioner Sinkevičius on 6 December 2022 following the roundtable meeting with the Advisory Councils of 5 December 2022. The Commissioner asked me to reply on his behalf.

Regarding western Baltic herring, allow me to summarise the state of play of our fisheries consultations with both the UK and Norway.

At the trilateral level, the EU, Norway and the UK have agreed ⁽¹⁾ on the TAC setting for North Sea herring. In addition, there is agreement for the Parties to meet in early 2023 to continue the revision of the current management regime to finalise the work before October 2023. This revision will need to consider the conclusions of the report from the WG on herring, including the intermixing with the Baltic herring stock. Furthermore, the Delegations agreed to send a request to ICES about an evaluation of a new harvest control rule for herring. In addition to this trilateral request, the EU is likely to submit a request to consider additional scenarios to be evaluated, e.g. those deriving from the application of measures in the so-called transfer area in the Eastern North Sea where both stocks are intermixed, the use of inter-area flexibilities for Skagerrak quotas into the North Sea or the model that has been used to recalculate the ICES advice into the multi-fleet model in recent years.

In the EU-NO bilateral consultations for the Skagerrak, there is an agreement on substance by which the Parties maintain their quotas, while being able to apply up to a 100% of inter-area flexibility into the North Sea. With a view to protect the Baltic herring stock, the EU committed to limit its catches in the Skagerrak to 969 tonnes, while Norway will limit its own to a 10% of the quotas. These arrangements are still to be signed, but have guided the Council decisions during its AGRIFISH December meeting.

Finally, in the EU-UK bilateral consultations there has been an agreement to renew the inter-area flexibility for 50% of the EU Skagerrak quota into UK waters of the North Sea and this was already reflected in the measures agreed during the December Council.

⁽¹⁾ Agreed Record of Fisheries Consultations between the European Union, Norway and the United Kingdom for 2023 (9 December 2022): [2023-eu-no-uk-fisheries-consultations_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

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Regarding eel I had taken good note earlier this year of the different positions of the BSAC members. You certainly know about the decision taken by the AGRIFISH Council of 11-12 December 2023. After long discussions the Council decided to extend the current closure period in all relevant Union waters to six months based on the GFCM approach for the Mediterranean. This means that the Member States can choose whether the six months are consecutive or a combination of a fixed period of three months plus an additional three months to be determined by each Member State concerned during a certain period in accordance with the eel migration patterns. For the Baltic Sea the fixed period would be October to December, and the flexible one between January and August. The flexible closure period can be different for different areas within a given Member State and for the different eel life stages so that the closures match with the migration patterns. For glass eel the rules are slightly more flexible to take account of the temporal restocking requirements and the requests by Member States to be able to continue restocking in view of contributing to rebuilding the eel stock. Finally, recreational fisheries were totally prohibited.

Furthermore, the Commission proposed to sign a Joint Declaration on strengthening the recovery of European eel via a reinforced cooperation on stepping up efforts as regards the implementation of the Eel Management plans, addressing mortality factors other than fishing, restoring habitats, decreasing pollution, strengthening controls and the fight against illegal fishing and poaching. Many Member States co-signed this declaration.

Yours faithfully,

Fabrizio DONATELLA