

Mr Ole Toft
Director of Fisheries
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark
Sent by e mail

Ref: BSAC/2017-2018/12

Copenhagen 8th December 2017

Dear Ole Toft,

On 7th November 2017, the BSAC held a Workshop at the National Marine Fisheries Research Institute in Gdynia to discuss selectivity and to look at technical solutions to the current problems in the Baltic demersal fishery. We invited scientific experts from research institutes in Denmark, Germany, Poland and Sweden to share their knowledge and experience from the trials they have been carrying out, focusing on both selectivity and technical measures.

After some excellent presentations and discussions, BSAC members recognised the urgent need to improve selectivity of the cod trawls so as to facilitate the implementation of the landing obligation. At the same time, they called for short-term solutions, which include the BSAC proposed reduction of the mesh size in the prescribed gear types Bacoma and T90 cod ends from 120 mm to 110 mm.

Improving selectivity is not new to the BSAC. Back in 2011, the BSAC organised a workshop in Simrishamn to deal with bycatch management and the reduction of discards, focusing on the need to reduce cod discards through technical improvements to the trawl gears. Already then there were calls for the development of fishing gears with improved selectivity and increased flexibility, as well as improved possibilities for fishermen to modify their fishing gear, whilst at the same time ensuring full accountability of what the fishermen catch

So the constant call has been for the possibility to change the technical rules prevailing in the Baltic Sea. The particular concern has been the mismatch between the introduction of the landing obligation and the strict rules which stipulate that when targeting cod in the Baltic, fishermen must use either Bacoma or T-90 with a mesh size of 120 mm.

At the Gdynia workshop it was agreed that a two-step approach was needed. The long term is for a new technical measures regulation which is more open-ended and results-oriented, and defines the objectives, giving more freedom for fishermen to adapt their gear to the conditions prevailing on the fishing grounds. However, the dynamics of nature and the fishery cannot wait on for these long draw out politic decisions.

The short term is an immediate change of the technical regulations in Baltic cod fishery. We take this opportunity to repeat our call for a reduction in the mesh size from 120 mm to 110 mm, in line with what the BSAC has already called for in its recommendations for technical measures in the demersal fishery. Those recommendations, which were sent to BALTFISH in July this year, are attached. ./.

I have consulted the Executive Committee when drafting this letter and they have endorsed it by written procedure, except for one ExCom member, Wolfgang Albrecht, from the Association of Fisheries Protection, who does not support this letter.

Kind regards,



Reine J. Johansson
Chairman of the BSAC

And copied to all the BALTFISH Member States and to DG Mare