



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS

Control and Enforcement

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Mr. Johansson and Mrs Milewska
Secretariat for the Baltic Sea
Regional Advisory Council
H.C. Andersens Boulevard 37,
Third Floor
1553 Copenhagen V

Subject: Unreported landings of Baltic cod

Dear Mr. Johansson and Mrs Milewska,

Thank you for your letter of 28 September 2007 expressing your concern about unreported landings of Baltic cod.

The catch registration and fisheries control procedures put in place by Member States bordering the Baltic Sea before 2007 have proven to be unable to provide reliable landing figures with particular regard to Baltic cod. The Commission services conducted a series of inspections in all the Member States bordering the Baltic Sea from 2005 to 2006 in order to evaluate the level of compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy. The Evaluation Report of catch registration in the Baltic Sea Member States¹ produced on the basis of these inspections confirmed that there were considerable differences between the declared catches of cod and the real quantities of cod actually landed in the Baltic Sea.

Based on the findings of the Evaluation Report and the volume of Baltic cod total allowable catches of the Member States concerned, a series of Commission inspections were further conducted to the following Member states in the first half of 2007:

- 4 missions to Poland,
- 3 missions to Sweden,
- 1 mission to Denmark;
- 1 mission to Germany.

¹ D 01596 of 14.02.2007

In the framework of these missions it was again confirmed by Commission inspectors that the problem of underreporting of catches continued to be a major problem in respect of Poland and to a much less extent Sweden. Each Member State concerned was informed of the findings of the Commission analysis and the results of the inspection missions.

On the basis of its findings the Commission services estimated that by 31 May the Polish quota for cod in ICES subdivisions 25-32 (Eastern Baltic) was already over-fished by more than 10,000 tonnes.

The Commission closed the Eastern Baltic cod fishery for Polish vessels on 9 July 2007. Germany closed its Eastern Baltic cod fishery for its vessels on the 24 July 2007. Sweden provisionally prohibited fishing for Eastern Baltic cod for its vessels on 17 September 2007 on the basis of quota uptake estimates. Following the full analysis of their catch data Sweden reopened the fishery for a limited time.

In addition the Commission initiated an infringement procedure against Poland for failing to act to ensure effective control and enforcement system of the rules of the common fisheries policy.

Commission Inspectors monitored and analysed the activities of Poland, Sweden, Lithuania and Estonia during the summer fishing prohibition periods taking into account the level of their quota uptake. Following the series of disconcerting reports of the Polish media, additional Commission inspections were carried out in Poland in September to verify the level of compliance with the fishing ban established by Commission Regulation 804/2007.

According to the rules governing overfishing and payback matters, the quantities overfished in 2007 will have to be deducted from future quotas of the Member States concerned.

Simultaneously Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007 of 18 September 2007 establishing a multiannual plan for the cod stocks in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks was adopted to address the problem of unreported fisheries and to recover the alarming situation of the Baltic Sea cod stocks. In the framework of this multiannual plan, the Commission proposed to adopt a decision establishing a specific control and inspection programme in the Baltic Sea region in order to address more effectively the remaining shortcomings in Member States' control activities.

I hope that these initiatives will minimise unreported landings and will create the basis for sustainable fisheries in the Baltic Sea. I look forward to continuing close cooperation with all members of the Baltic Sea RAC on this matter.

Yours sincerely,


Fokion FOTIADIS

Copies: C. Deben, V. Laine, W. Brugge, E. Papaioannou