

Recommendations on the long-term management of pelagic species in the Baltic

June 2008

This paper contains the BS RAC first position on the long-term management of pelagic species in the Baltic Sea. The recommendations have been prepared by the Pelagic WG and have been approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 17th June 2008 in Riga.

- According to the Commission's request to ICES for advice on a multi-annual plan for pelagic fish stocks in the Baltic, the Commission's initial approach is to develop an overall management scheme for pelagic species in the Baltic. This will in turn be translated into stock-based management plans.

The BS RAC agrees to this approach. Although the initial preference of the RAC is to have 4 management plans for herring based on the present 4 stock assessment areas (western stock, central stock, ICES Subdivisions 30-31 and Gulf of Riga) and 1 management plan for sprat, the RAC supports that the final decision on the number of management plans is based on the best available scientific advice.

- The management plans must be robust with respect to the annual fluctuations in the environment and the stock size, rather than being based on the very current situation in the Baltic.
- The management plans must be based on multi-species and multi-area considerations and scenarios. In particular, the plans have to take account of the implications on the herring and sprat stock from an increased cod stock.
- As the problem of dioxin is an important element in the regulation of some pelagic species in the Baltic Sea, questions related to dioxin should be taken into account when developing the management plans.
- The management plans must provide a solid/sound basis for the further development of a sustainable and profitable fishery for herring and sprat in the Baltic. In that context, socioeconomic considerations must also be taken into consideration.
- Stability in the annual fishing opportunities must be a key objective of the management plans.
- The plans must include measures to improve cross border cooperation on the handling of the fish resources and on the links from the catching sector to the consumer. The introduction of ITQ systems could be an instrument to increase cooperation, but other

instruments should also be considered. The BS RAC advises that best practice in Member States should be taken into account.

- The management plans must include provisions for scientists to collect more data in order to improve the assessment of the pelagic stocks in the Baltic. In that context, the RAC has learned that scientists do not have access to VMS data on fishing effort from all the Baltic Sea member states. This applies both to historic data as well as data on the current level of fishing effort.