



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
 DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
 MARE/JA (2019)

Mr Esben Sverdrup-Jensen
 Chair BSAC Executive Committee

Mr Andrzej Bialas
 Vice-Chair BSAC Executive
 Committee

Axelborg, Axeltorv 3, 6th floor
 1609 Copenhagen V

Subject: October Council decisions on TACs and quotas

Your ref.: BSAC/2018_2019/18

Dear Mr Sverdrup-Jensen and Bialas,

Thank you for your letter of 12 December 2018 to the BaltFish presidency and myself commenting on the Regulation setting Fishing Opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2019.

First I would like to underline that this Regulation is a Council decision. I am therefore not in a position to reply to comments and questions regarding decisions taken by the Council. Let me also recall that the Council found a rapid and almost unanimous agreement, as only the UK abstained, suggesting that Member States felt that it was a good result. I would like however to come back on the two cod stocks that are subject to comments in your letter.

Regarding western Baltic cod, ICES advice stated that the status of the stock was improving, but remained fragile. On this basis, the Commission made a balanced and cautious proposal by applying the lower range of the ICES advice for increasing the TAC to 7340t and stabilizing the bag limit for recreational fishing to five fish per angler per day all year round while discontinuing the winter closure period. This proposal was in the range of the BSAC recommendation, which was of 15.021t with a minority position by the Other Groups of Interest of 6.716t. The Council decided to increase the TAC to 9515t and the bag limit to seven fish. The question of the benefit of closure periods is complex and not uncontroversial as shown in the specific ICES ad hoc advice requested by Poland on the closure for eastern Baltic cod in annex to your letter.

As far as eastern Baltic cod is concerned, your ideas about how to address in a more comprehensive way the difficult situation of this stock has retained my full attention and I invite you to thoroughly discuss this in the Advisory Council and to send concrete proposals to BaltFish. Regarding the TAC, the Commission followed the precautionary approach by proposing to maintain the summer closure period and to reduce the TAC though not losing sight of some socio-economic aspects. The proposal seems to have been rather well balanced since the Council only shortened the closure period by one month.

Let me assure you that the Commission paid attention to your recommendation on fishing opportunities. For some stocks¹, the Commission proposal was the BSAC recommendation for EU TAC while for some others, the Commission retained the minority proposal². In most cases, the Commission proposal was set between the BSAC recommendation for EU TAC for 2019 and the minority position by the Other Interest Groups.

Finally, as far as the agreement on fishing opportunities between the EU and Russia is concerned, let me remind you that Russia is an independent country and sets its TACs as such. The Commission is not involved and does not know how Russia internally decides about the level of its TACs. The International Baltic Sea Fisheries Council ceased to exist at the end of 2006 and the forum for discussing fisheries matters between the EU and Russia is the Joint Baltic Sea Fisheries Committee, in whose meetings BSAC has been present as an observer. The question of joint TACs has been discussed since the beginning, yet still without tangible results. I would invite the BSAC to come forward with concrete ideas and proposals on how to further the discussions with Russia.

I'm looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation and invite you to take contact with Ms Pascale Colson (Pascale.Colson@ec.europa.eu; + 32 2 29 56273) should you have any further question on this reply.

Yours sincerely,

João AGUIAR MACHADO



¹ Riga Herring SD 28.1 and Bothnian Herring SD 30-31

² Sprat and Plaice 22-32.