



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Brussels,  
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**Baltic Sea AC**  
Mr Reine Johansson (Chairperson)  
H.C. Andersens Boulevard 37, 3rd floor  
DK-1553 Copenhagen  
Denmark

**Subject: Reply: "BSAC advice and recommendations for the fishery in 2015"**

*Your reference: Letter from R. Johansson and E. Milewska dated 7 July 2014*

Dear Mr Johansson, Dear Ms Milewska,

Thank you for the BSAC advice concerning the above mentioned topic.

Next year will see the implementation of two key points of the new CFP: the maximum sustainable yield objective and the introduction of the landing obligation in the Baltic Sea for catches made in pelagic, cod and salmon fisheries. The introduction of the landing obligation requires that the future fishing opportunities reflect a change from landing to catch quotas. ICES advice provides catch figures, which are referred to as "wanted" and "unwanted" catches.

BSAC does not explicitly state in its recommendation whether the Russian part of shared stocks was taken into account when calculating the TACs. Clarity on this would help to build mutual understanding, especially among stakeholders.

Cod stock in subdivisions 22-24

The application of the TAC setting procedures and of the effort management provisions in the cod management plan has been consistent throughout the years and has been presented to the BSAC several times in the past.

The ICES advice for cod 22-24 represents a decrease in TAC by 48% and corresponds to MSY levels. This is a much bigger decrease than the usually observed variation in TAC of  $\pm 15\%$  in line with article 6 of Council regulation (EC) No 1098/2007 establishing a multiannual plan for the cod stocks in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks. However, article 7 of the same Regulation empowers the Council to derogate from this rule and put in place a bigger decrease, when appropriate. Taken into account ICES advice, we consider that the conditions are met to make use of this derogation.

The recruitment of cod has been high in the last two years compared to the 2004-2011 period; however it is still below the long term average. Taking into account the fact that recruitment is estimated with very large confidence intervals and that the migration of the eastern cod stock takes place towards the western Baltic, the positive trend in the recruitment should be looked at with great caution.

The Commission has proposed the quota levels for the western cod stock in accordance with the principles laid down in the Consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2015 (COM(2014)388 final).

#### Cod stock in subdivisions 25-32

The Commission shares the BSAC concerns regarding cod in subdivisions 25-32. Since scientists were unable to perform analytical assessment, we applied the same method that we announced that we would apply for data limited stocks. The Commission expects ICES to revisit the assessment, which may result in different advice on catch levels.

Despite the age reading discrepancies, the status of the stock in subdivisions 25-32 is quite worrying. Cod is concentrating in a narrow area and its growth has reduced considerably (most likely due to decreased availability of food items, density dependence and seal induced parasites). As recommended by ICES, the Commission together with the Member States will develop short additional measures to reduce the fishing pressure for the pelagic stocks in subdivision 25-26 where cod is concentrated.

#### Plaice

The Commission shares the same understanding of the status of the stock as the BSAC. However this cannot be said also for the application of the data limited approach to this stock. The BSAC considers that an increase / decrease is to be applied to the level of TAC established for the previous year, while the approach was developed to apply a percentage increase / decrease on the level of catches and not on the level of TAC adopted in the previous year.

We have proposed a quota in line with scientific advice and lower than the one that the BSAC recommends. More information about the methodology to be used for the calculation of the quota can be found in STECF advice<sup>1</sup>.

#### Sprat

The Commission is happy to note the information received from the BSAC that the sprat fishery in Latvia has been exceptionally good and that the abundance increased in subdivision 25. There is no doubt that such stock development will be reflected in next year's ICES stock assessment.

Sprat is a short lived species, which is vulnerable to changing environmental conditions. Therefore, fluctuations in TAC are unavoidable. BSAC recommendation to set the TAC at precautionary levels could not be taken into consideration, since it does not bring stocks to the MSY levels and is not thus in line with the objectives of the CFP.

#### Herring stocks in subdivisions 22-24, 25-29 & 32 (excl. GoR), Gulf of Riga, 30-31

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<sup>1</sup> Review of scientific advice for 2015 - part I Advice on stocks in the Baltic Sea (STECF-14-10)

The BSAC recommendation on catch levels for herring stocks is in line with ICES advice. However, adjustments are made taking into account the mixing of central Baltic and gulf of Riga herring and the respective Russian share, where appropriate.

Salmon stocks in subdivisions 22-31 and 32

The Commission proposed quotas for salmon stocks based on scientific advice and following the proposed salmon management plan. Certain adjustments will be necessary to account for respective Russian share of both salmon stocks.

Thank you for your continued interest and constructive input. If you have any question on this reply, you can contact Ms Evangelia Georgitsi, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (evangelia.georgitsi@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.295.04.43).

Yours sincerely,



Lowri Evans

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