

BSAC recommendation for the fishery in 2025 for the herring stock in SDs 30-31

Ref: BSAC/2024-2025/23

Date: 18th October 2024

Herring SDs 30-31

The BSAC takes note of the ICES advice on **herring in SDs 30-31** published on 16th September 2024 and presented to the BSAC members during the Pelagic Working Group meeting on 3rd October 2024.

The BSAC has agreed on a general recommendation with regard to this stock in June 2024¹.

The BSAC recommended an increased sampling programme so that more and better-quality data can be gathered on herring in SDs 30-31.

The recommendations presented below had been developed during and after the presentation of the ICES advice by ICES Vice-Chair of ACOM, Dorleta Garcia, and the following discussions, at the Pelagic Working Group held on 3rd October 2023. A draft was sent for written input to the Working Group members and the Executive Committee members and was finalised by the Executive Committee by fast-track written procedure on 19th October 2024.

The views of the BSAC members on the 2025 TAC for herring in SDs 30-31 are varied.

Some fisheries organisations² support setting the TAC for this stock in line with the scientific advice (74,515 t³).

The Swedish and Danish fisheries organisations⁴ recommend setting the 2025 TAC for this stock at F lower value (66,446 t).

The Finnish fisheries organisations⁵ support setting the herring TAC in SDs 30-31 in accordance with the scientific advice (between 66,446 - 74,515 t). They comment that the bycatch of salmon is a rare coincidence in pelagic fishery and amounts to few individuals per

¹ The recommendation agreed upon in June 2024: **The BSAC** takes note that the stock has been declining in biomass for the past 30 years despite the stock being fished below FMSY. This has led to ICES re-evaluating the reference points causing a delay to the advice. The decrease of SSB in recent years is presumed to be largely a consequence of a change in the food chain, which caused a remarkable decrease in weight at age, deteriorated body condition and even starving and dying especially among the larger herring. Furthermore, the overall decrease in SSB after the peak in 1994 corresponds to an overall increase in fishing mortality during the same period up until 2016. After 2016, while fishing mortality has in general decreased, the SSB has not increased. In 2023 the Finnish catch decreased by 7% (4,155 t) and the Swedish catch by 34% (5,716 t) compared to 2022. **The BSAC recommends** an increased sampling programme so that more and better quality data can be gathered.

² Danish Fishermen PO (DFPO), The Fishermen's Association of Bornholm and Christiansø, EFFOP

³ EU MAP: FMSY × SSB(2025)/MSY Btrigger

⁴ Swedish Fishermen PO (SFPO), Swedish Pelagic Fishermen PO (SPFPO), Danish Pelagic PO (DPPO)

⁵ Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations (FFFA), Finnish Fishermen's Association

year. From their point of view that is no valid argument against herring fishery. Scientists ⁶are busy estimating what are the main reasons behind the increased natural mortality of salmon in the Baltic. According to the Finnish organisation⁷ this is a larger environmental issue and the small changes of a single factor, for example the present TAC level of herring would have a very tiny effect.

Some small-scale fisheries representatives⁸ recommend setting the TAC for this stock at **27,000 t**, $F=0.068$. This is the FMSY value based on the entire time-series data for the stock. This will increase stock growth and improve the age and size structure of the stock. **The representatives of recreational anglers⁹** support setting the TAC for herring in SDs 30-31 at 27,000 t.

A group of OIG members¹⁰ recommends setting the 2025 TAC well below FMSY lower value (66,446 t), to improve the age and size structure of the stock. They recommend to ask ICES for advice on additional measures to improve the age and stock structure. One of these OIG members¹¹ recommends setting the TAC 30% to 50% below FMSY lower value to account for the uncertainties (risk) in the advice. Essentially, they recommend asking ICES to evaluate and quantify the risks in their models, data, and advice, as well as to provide advice on additional measures to improve the stock structure.

Another representative of the OIG¹² proposes to stop all herring fishing in SD 30 and 31, to protect several very weak salmon stocks by avoiding salmon smolt bycatch in pelagic fishery.

The lack of herring fry when smolts leave the rivers is believed to be one of the reasons for the sharp decline in returning salmon we have seen in recent years. The lack of herring in the area is also clearly shown by the fact that commercial fisheries in both the Finnish and Swedish waters have not used their allocated herring quota.

⁶ The Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has given a task to Natural Resources Institute to clarify the reasons affecting to poor salmon survival at sea. Deadline is at the end of 2025. There will be some mid-term results at the end on this year (*info given by FFFA*).

⁷ FFFA

⁸ Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE)

⁹ European Anglers Alliance (EAA)

¹⁰ Fisheries Secretariat, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, BalticWaters, WWF

¹¹ BalticWaters

¹² Baltic Salmon Rivers Association