



Mr. Fokion Fotiadis, Director General
D.G. Mare
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium
And member states around the Baltic

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BS RAC recommendations for the fishery in 2010: Herring in SD 22-24

Mr. Fokion Fotiadis,

Please find enclosed the final part of the BS RAC recommendations on the fisheries for Baltic Sea fish species in 2010, namely for herring in Sub-divisions 22-24 (Western Baltic spring spawners). We thank you very much for extending the deadline for us to consider the ICES advice and to prepare a recommendation.

The BS RAC encourages the Commission and Member States to take our recommendation into account when preparing and deciding on the regulation of the Baltic Sea fisheries in 2010.

Kind regards,

Reine J. Johansson
Chairman of the BS RAC

Ewa Milewska
Vice-chair of the BS RAC

c.c. Fisheries Council of the European Community, European Parliament, Community Fisheries Control Agency, ACFA, ICES and HELCOM.

BS RAC recommendation for the fishery of pelagic species in the Baltic Sea in 2010. Herring in Subdivisions 22-24 (Western Baltic spring spawners)

Due to the mismatch in timing of the ICES advice for herring in SD 22-24, DG Mare has agreed that the deadline for the BS RAC to send its recommendation is the beginning of September.

As with the ICES advice for 2009, there are no agreed reference points for the spawning stock biomass. There are still no management objectives for this stock. This is regrettable, and the BS RAC looks forward to the consultation process later this year to address the long-term management for all pelagic stocks in the Baltic.

The BS RAC is unable to support the premise from ICES that there has been low recruitment. Fishermen have observed a lot of small herring this year. The BS RAC can point to a report detailing hydroacoustic research carried out by the Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut, Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries Institute of Sea Fisheries.¹ This research is coordinated in the ICES working group. Among other things, the report points out the occurrence in a couple of ICES areas at 55⁰N of a lot more young herring than in 2008. This would indicate a good recruitment of herring. However, complete comparison with previous years needs further analysis. The BS RAC looks forward to further findings from the Institute.

It has also been observed that the spawning stock biomass has remained stable over a long period of time, and that mortality has remained stable in the same period.

The BS RAC therefore strongly recommends that the TAC for western Baltic herring in Sub-division 22-24 be set as a rollover at 27 176 tonnes, until the time when a long-term management plan is adopted and implemented. This would give the fishing industry stability, and allow it to adapt to any new situation that may apply in connection with a long-term management of this stock.

If this recommendation is unacceptable from a political viewpoint, the BS RAC can accept a reduction in mortality of 10%, which is in line with the procedure for all other management plans. This would lead to a mortality of 0.33 and a TAC for western Baltic herring in Sub-division 22-24 of 24 459 tonnes.

Minority position from WWF, Fisheries Secretariat and Coalition Clean Baltic

As long as no long-term management plan for the pelagic fisheries (sprat and Baltic herring) in the Baltic Sea has been adopted, WWF, FISH and CCB advocate that the TACs for the pelagic stocks be set in accordance with the precautionary approach.

¹ Institut for Seefischerei: Bericht über die 607. Reise des FFS „SOLEA“ vom 26.06 bis 15.07.2009
Fahrtliter: E. Götze „Hydroakustische Bestandsaufnahme pelagischer Fischebestände in der Nordsee“ www.vti.bund.de

In the absence of defined reference points, the state of the herring stock in subdivision 22–24 cannot be fully evaluated. However, recruitment has declined since 2003 and is currently at the lowest observed level, while fishing mortality is well above the range that would lead to high long-term yields. Therefore we strongly recommend that the ICES advice is followed and fishing mortality reduced by 31%, corresponding to a 2010 TAC of 18,800 tonnes.