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Ministry of Agriculture Sweden

*Game Management, Fisheries and Sami Affairs
Division*

Baltfish – A proposal for structure and plan of action

Background

Within the framework of EU:s strategy for the Baltic Sea region a fisheries forum, Baltfish, is being developed. The primary goal of Baltfish is to improve and strengthen coordination and cooperation of fisheries administration among Baltic Sea member states, but also among the administrations and other key stakeholders relevant for the Baltic Sea fisheries. It is a forum for exchanging ideas, views and information and a forum that can facilitate joint forces in various concrete projects aiming at achieving sustainable fisheries in the Baltic.

The Forum will also play a central role in a more regionalised CFP, bearing in mind the ongoing ideas and discussion within the CFP reform process.

Proposed structure of BaltFish

A two step level is proposed for the functioning of the Baltfish – a High Level Group and a Forum Seminar.

- High-level group (HLG)

The core or steering body of Baltfish is a high level group (HLG) consisting of the fisheries directors of the Baltic Sea member states as well as the director of Baltic Sea fisheries at the Commission. The high level group will meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of common interest. A HLG-meeting is always held during the Baltfish Forum Seminar (see below). However, there need not always be a forum meeting in conjunction with a meeting of the HLG.

The HLG should also use the opportunity meet in conjunction with Ministerial Council meetings as well as the meetings of the Fisheries Directors. The HLG will discuss any issues both inside and outside the scope of the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, to reflect a broad view of regional cooperation. Baltfish will offer an opportunity to seek common goals and strategies and make suggestions and common actions in relevant fora.

During HLG-meetings there will only be personnel from the member states administrations and the Commission present. Participants includes the directors accompanied by preferably one staff member each, but not more than two. The high-level group may invite other stakeholders that are deemed relevant for the discussions in the group. The atmosphere during HLG-meetings should aim to be less formal.

An administrative officer is identified in each member state as responsible for the administrative work in relation to Baltfish (Baltfish coordinator).

- Extended meeting/Baltfish Forum Seminar

Once or twice a year, there will be a larger meeting. The idea is to have efficient meetings where the participation matches the aim of the meeting and mirrors the agenda of the meeting.

These meetings/seminars should focus on certain topical issues and invite stakeholders such as NGO:s, industry and scientific community to meet and exchange views and experience in such issues. This would secure transparency and openness and dialogue in issues regarding Baltic Sea fisheries – its challenges, possibilities and problems.

A meeting of the Baltfish Forum Seminar could thus look like the following in a step wise approach:

(1) Forum Seminar

The Baltfish Forum Seminar starts the whole Baltfish meeting with a broad based participation as outlined above. The meeting should be kept simple and straightforward and focus on specific items, therefore the chairing country should set a maximum limit of persons representing the fishery sector and NGO:s, as well as representatives from Member state governments, the EU-Commission, Helcom and BSRAC respectively. During the Baltfish Forum Seminar flag ship project leaders for the fishery projects within the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region will report on the progress of their projects.

(2) High level group

The Baltfish Forum is ended with an HLG-meeting, taking stock of the discussions at the seminar, discussing current issues relevant for the Baltic Fisheries and looking ahead to the next meeting.

- Chairmanship and Coordination

The chairmanship of Baltfish HLG will change each year (i.e. 12 month period) starting with Sweden 2010/2011 then following in an agreed order among the member states. Sweden has the chair until 1 July 2011. Sweden proposes a clockwise order of the chair meaning SE, FIN (2011/12), EE 2012/13), LV (2013/14), LT (2014/15), PL (2015/16), DE (2016/17) and DK (2017/18).

The default would thus be that the Baltfish Forum Seminar is held in the country being chair of the HLG. The chair country will also propose agendas for the meetings. Any additional HLG-meetings will be decided from one meeting to the other. It will also be for the chair member state to decide upon the need or desire of additional participation at the Forum meetings in addition to the above mentioned stakeholders.

In terms of coordination, as stated in the Action plan for EU:s strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the Ministry of Agriculture in Sweden is the priority area coordinator for priority area 9 / fisheries and project leader of the Baltfish project.

Proposed plan of action for BaltFish (incl. HLG)

I. General activities to improve coordination within the Baltic Sea Region

- initiate and follow flag ship projects within the Baltic Sea Strategy
- discuss priorities related to the Baltic Sea Region in light of the CFP-reform and other relevant actions and organisations (Scheweningen-group etc...).
- exchange views and share experiences with regard to national organisation, implementation and development of related issues.
- facilitate collaboration in various scientific and other projects of relevance for fisheries.
- enhance compliance in enforcing new legislation.

- develop methods for rapid exchange of views before the implementation of EU regulations.

II. Specific activities

- to be decided upon during the meetings of the Baltfish (incl. HLG) in the light of future developments