

RECOMMENDATIONS TO BALTFISH FOR THE SETTING OF FISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BALTIC SEA FISH STOCKS IN 2016

25 August 2015

The Fisheries Secretariat supports the setting of Total Allowable Catches (TACS) for the Baltic Sea in 2016 according to scientific advice provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). Our recommendations are in line with international and EU commitments for sustainable management of fisheries resources. We urge BALTFISH to consider our summary recommendations below which are described fully in the attached annex.

The Western Baltic cod stock is severely overfished, and continued overfishing is substantial. The stock assessments are highly uncertain for Eastern Baltic cod and Bothnian Bay herring. Salmon stocks remain depressed across most of the Baltic and particularly in the Gulf of Finland. Fishing mortality for sprat has increased to unsustainable levels.

ICES advice¹ shows a commitment to implement Article 2 of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and specifically the CFP's Maximum Sustainable Yield objectives. The advice identifies total fishery removals (total catch) from a stock regardless of fishery type or management area, which is a new approach from previous years. The TAC for 2016 should be determined by deducting recreational fishing, and accounting for stock portions caught in adjacent management areas to avoid exceeding the total catch advised by ICES.

RECOMMENDED TAC FOR 2016, IN TONNES (EXCEPT SALMON, NUMBER OF FISH)

Stock by management area, subdivision (SD)	Current 2015 TAC	Recommended 2016 TAC
Cod, Western Baltic, 22-24	15 900	*5 239
Cod, Eastern Baltic, 25-32	51 428	**29 220
Herring, Central Baltic, 25-29 & 32	163 451	176 527
Herring, Gulf of Riga, 28.1	38 780	32 963
Herring, Bothnian Sea and Bothnian Bay, 30-31	158 470	103 254
Sprat, Baltic, 22-32	213 581	205 000
Plaice, Baltic, 22-32	3 409	4 091
Salmon, Baltic, 22-31 (number of fish)	95 928	89 300
Salmon, Gulf of Finland, 32 (number of fish)	13 106	10 100

* Total advised catch of 7797 tonnes minus 2558 tonnes of estimated recreational fishing mortality (see below). The TAC for SD 24 may be adjusted upward to account for cod stock mixing **only** if separate sub-TACs are allocated and managed for areas SD 22-23 and SD 24 (see below).

** This TAC may be adjusted downward to account for E. Baltic Cod in area SD 24 **only** if separate sub-TACs are allocated and managed for areas SD 22-23 and SD 24 (see below).

¹ ICES advice released 29 May 2015 (W. Baltic cod updated 16 July 2015) <http://www.ices.dk/publications/library/Pages/default.aspx>

Recreational catch of Western Baltic cod

Recreational fishing catch is considered significant on Western Baltic cod. Only one Member State currently provides adequate recreational fishery data, which alone represents over 20 % of the anticipated 2016 advised total catch. Until other adjacent Member States contribute recreational fishing data, the current estimate is most likely an underestimation of true mortality.

Sub-TACs for areas SD 22-23 and SD 24

ICES has identified significant mixing in SD 24 of the Eastern and Western Baltic cod stocks. Reallocating a portion of the Eastern Baltic cod TAC to SD 24 would account for this stock mixing, but only if the extra TAC is restricted exclusively to SD 24 where the stock mixing occurs. There is a risk of overfishing Western Baltic Cod in SD22-23 if the extra TAC is caught over the whole management area SD 22-24. Thus we support the ICES scenarios which deduct unchanged recreational fishing catch and create separate sub-TACs for SD 22-23 and SD 24, prioritising protection of the weaker Western Baltic cod stock.

The attached annex provides more details of the ICES advice and rationale for the recommended TACs.

You can also find the annex and this letter on our website, at the following link:

<http://www.fishsec.org/position-papers/>

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