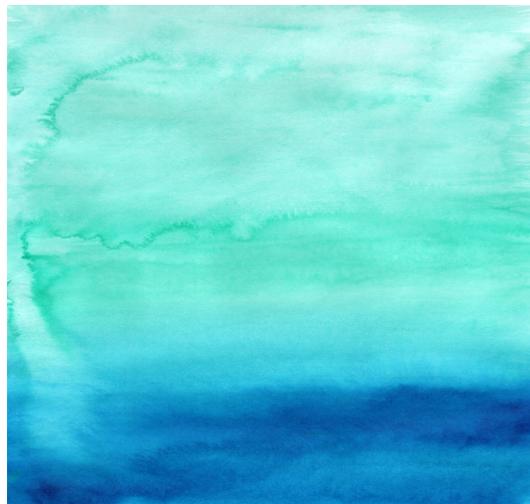




Second Annual Report of the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council



April 2008

Introduction

The Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council (BS RAC) was established in March 2006 to prepare and provide advice on the management of Baltic Sea fisheries in order to contribute to the successful implementation of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy.

The BS RAC consists of representatives from the fishing sector and other interest groups affected by the Common Fisheries Policy. These include fisheries' associations, producer organisations, processors, market organisations, environmental NGOs, aquaculture producers, consumers, women's networks and recreational and sports fishermen.

The RAC is made up of a General Assembly, an Executive Committee and 3 Working Groups (demersal fisheries, pelagic fisheries and fisheries for salmon and sea trout). The Working Groups have been set up to help the Executive Committee in its work.

This annual report provides a presentation of the activities of the BS RAC in its second year (16 March 2007-15 March 2008). More information about the BS RAC activities and recommendations can be accessed on its website: www.bsrac.org

Main results achieved by the BS RAC

The BS RAC work programme for 2007-2008 contains a number of priorities. These priorities, as well as the outcomes/results, are listed below:

Priority: Long-term management of Baltic fish stocks.

Results: BS RAC recommendation on a multi annual plan for cod in the Baltic (30 May 2007).

Priority: Initiatives to reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities.

Results: - BS RAC Conference on Control and Compliance in the Baltic cod fishery (28-29 March 2007).

- BS RAC endorsement of the conclusions from the Conference (29 May 2007)

- Request to the Commission and MS etc. to take immediate steps to minimise the unreported landings of cod in the Baltic Sea (28 September 2007)

- BS RAC statement on compliance and the sustainability of the Baltic cod fishery (25 Oct 2007)

Priority: Short- and medium-term fisheries management (TACs and quotas in 2008).

Results: BS RAC recommendations on the TACs for the Baltic Sea fish stocks in 2008 (12 July 2007).

Priority: Initial discussions on the long-term management of the pelagic species in the Baltic.

Results: Working Group discussions on 24 October 2007 and 21 January 2008 on elements to be included in a long-term management plan for pelagic species.

Priority: Preparation and holding of a workshop on the future work of the BS RAC.

Results: The Executive Committee agreed in October 2007 to adapt the intended workshop to meet the immediate needs to consider and respond to the on-going debate and consultation on "Rights-based Fisheries Management"(RBM). The workshop took place on 15-16 January 2008.

Immediately after the workshop participants were given the opportunity to discuss the long-term priorities of the BS RAC. (In order to aid discussion, prior to the workshop, the

Secretariat had invited all RAC members to complete a questionnaire on what they considered to be the long-term priorities.)

Priority: Follow-up on the BS RAC recommendation on a salmon management plan for the Baltic.
Results: The Commissions proposal for a salmon management plan has been delayed. The consultation procedure is expected to begin in the autumn of 2008.

Priority: Baltic fisheries research.

Results: Ad-hoc discussions took place during the year through the BS RAC focus group on Baltic fisheries research.

All the BS RAC recommendations and statements can be downloaded from the website:
<http://www.bsrac.org/ooizzCMS/DA/statementsandrecommendations>

Meetings during the year:

BS RAC Conference on Control and Compliance, 28-29 March 2007, Copenhagen, Denmark

The BSRAC conference on Control and Compliance in the Baltic cod fishery was held on 28 - 29 March 2007 in the Danish Parliament building in Copenhagen. Among the 139 participants were Fisheries ministers from around the Baltic, the European Commission, the Community Fisheries Control Agency, representatives from all sectors of the fishing industry, environmental organisations and other RAC members and observers.

The Conference agreed that unreported catches of Baltic Sea cod are the main problem associated with non-compliance and that unreported landings create a significant threat to the sustainability of the cod stocks and the Baltic Sea ecosystem.

The Conference called upon the national authorities of EU Member States in the Baltic Sea Region to commit and undertake actions which will contribute to a culture of compliance.

The conference also identified how various stakeholders involved in the Baltic Sea cod fisheries might influence or take action to reduce the problem of unreported landings and illegal fisheries. A list of actions was produced, although full consensus on all points was not reached.

Demersal WG, 7 May, Gdynia, Poland

The meeting was held in the offices of the Sea Fisheries Institute in Gdynia. At the meeting there were 27 participants from 7 member states, representing the fishing industry and environmental organisations.

The aim of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the Working Group to discuss the latest ICES scientific advice for the Baltic Sea cod stocks and progress on the European Commission's proposed multi-annual plan for Baltic Sea cod stocks.

Among the decisions by the WG was a recommendation to the ExCom to write to the European Commission confirming the consensus view that was achieved at the Klaipeda WG meeting in August 2006 as well as to highlight a number of supplementary recommendations regarding the management of the Baltic cod stocks.

Representatives from the EU funded project Scientific Advice For Fisheries Management on Multiple Scales (SAFMAMS) provided a presentation on their work and there was a discussion on how the BS RAC and, in particular, the WG could contribute to their work

Executive Committee, 22 May 2007, Helsinki, Finland

The meeting was held in Helsinki at the Ministry of the Interior, with 22 participants mainly from the fisheries sector. Observers from national administration in Denmark, Finland, Germany and Latvia also participated in the meeting.

The meeting adopted a recommendation on a multi-annual plan for the Baltic cod stocks based on the recommendation from the Demersal WG, as well as some additional proposals.

The meeting had a brief discussion on the Conference on control and compliance in the Baltic cod fishery and decided to endorse the conclusions from the Conference and to inform the member states and the Commission of this.

It was also decided to prepare a response to the Commission on its ongoing hearing of the RACs on the Communication on discards. It was agreed that the draft letter would be circulated to ExCom members for comment.

The BS RAC's interpretation and translation policy was discussed. It was decided that the RAC will pay for the translation of recommendations, statements and other core documents produced by the BS RAC. The request for translation must come from an ExCom member.

Finally, it was agreed that interpretation at meetings will be offered in the language of the country where the meeting takes place and at the request of an ExCom member. The Secretariat will be responsible for arranging the interpretation. It was noted that the request has to be forwarded well in advance of the meeting and with confirmed participation of stakeholders.

Executive Committee, 25 June 2007, Copenhagen, Denmark

The meeting was held in the offices of ICES in Copenhagen. Among the 28 participants were representatives from the fisheries sectors and environmental NGO's of the Executive Committee, the European Commission, scientists from ICES and representatives from the member states (Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden).

The main objective of the meeting was to come up with a recommendation on the TACs and quotas for the Baltic fish stocks in 2008. The meeting succeeded in this but with minority positions on the TACs for some of the fish stocks.

The meeting decided to organise a Pelagic WG meeting in the late summer or autumn 2007 to discuss additional views on the ICES assessment/advice for herring and sprat and to initiate the discussion on a possible BS RAC recommendation on a management plan for pelagic species.

The meeting also agreed on rules to be followed when presenting minority positions in meeting reports and recommendations as well as guidelines for the reimbursement of travel and hotel expenses in 2007 - 2008.

ICES informed the meeting about the invitation to young fishermen to visit the ICES Annual Science Conference in Helsinki 17-19 September 2007. It was decided to invite RAC members to suggest candidates to the Secretariat.

Pelagic WG, 24 October 2007, Warsaw, Poland

The WG meeting was held at Hotel Polonia Palace in Warsaw with 21 participants, mainly from the fishing industry.

The main agenda item for the meeting was the long-term management of pelagic species in the Baltic. The discussion was based on a number of questions prepared in advance by the WG chair, as well as comments from a group of scientists from the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group which the WG Chairman and the Secretary had consulted before the meeting.

The WG agreed that before the next WG meeting, WG members should prepare a paper (on a member state basis) about their pelagic fishery in the Baltic. It was also agreed that WG members should (if they wish so) make direct contact with their national research institutes to discuss relevant elements to be included in a management plan(s) and to agree as appropriate with the scientists on further cooperation with the Pelagic WG.

The BS RAC Secretary was asked 1) to prepare a proposal for input to the Commission's request to ICES for advice on the establishment of a multi-annual plan for pelagic fish stocks in the Baltic, 2) to contact the Commission and ask for clarification concerning the process for the preparation of the management plan for herring in ICES area IIIa and request to be involved in the process and 3) to contact the pelagic RAC to look into the possibility of possible cooperation on the management of herring in IIIa.

Extraordinary Executive Committee, 25 October 2007, Warsaw, Poland

The Executive Committee met on 25 October 2007 in Warsaw at Hotel Polonia Palace to discuss the present situation of the Baltic cod fishery and decide as appropriate on a possible recommendation/statement to safeguard a sustainable fishery. The meeting was held as an open Executive Committee meeting to continue the process initiated with the Conference on Control and Compliance in the spring of 2007.

Among the 54 participants were members of the Executive Committee, representatives from other fisheries organisations and environmental organisations of the RAC, the Polish vice minister for Maritime Affairs Grzegorz Halubek, a member of the newly elected Polish Parliament, Mr. K. Plocke, Reinard Priebe, Olle Hagström and Marta Janakakis from the European Commission, Ole Tougaard from the Community Fisheries Control Agency, Steve Karnicki in his capacity as moderator at the BS RAC Conference on Control and Compliance and representatives from the fisheries administrations in Denmark, Germany, Sweden and Poland.

The Executive Committee agreed on a statement on additional measures needed to promote a sustainable cod fishery in the Baltic Sea.

Workshop on Rights-based Management, 15 January 2008, Copenhagen, Denmark

In the autumn of 2007, the Executive Committee agreed to organize a workshop on Rights-based Management.

The workshop was held on 15-16 January 2008 in Copenhagen in Forsikringens Hus. Among the 43 participants were representatives from the fishing industry, environmental NGOs and scientists as well as representatives from the national fisheries administrations and the European Commission.

The aim of the workshop was to improve the knowledge of the different kinds of allocation schemes in the Baltic Sea Member States with respect to rights-based management, and through a debate among RAC members, to inform the European Commission's ongoing examination on this issue.

The workshop agreed on a conclusion paper which highlighted the different views expressed by the participants.

Following the workshop, the participants were invited to participate in a 2 hour discussion on the long-term priorities of the BS RAC. The RAC members had been invited to send proposals to the Secretariat before the meeting. The participants agreed on a list of priorities which would be forwarded to the General Assembly and the Executive Committee for further consideration.

Executive Committee, 16 January 2008, Copenhagen, Denmark

The Executive meeting was held in Copenhagen in Forsikringens Hus and was attended by 35 participants. The main agenda item was the preparation of the General Assembly in Berlin on 28 February.

The provisional plan for the General Assembly was approved and the Executive Committee agreed on a proposal for next year's work programme and a provisional proposal for next year's budget. The provisional proposed budget included a membership fee of 100 Euros, but it was agreed that the Chairman and the Secretariat should investigate other possibilities and get back to the Executive Committee on this.

The outstanding payment of membership fees for the current RAC year was also discussed. Several member organisations had still not paid their membership fee and some of these had decided to leave the RAC because of a lack of financial resources. The Executive Committee decided to give member organisations another two weeks to pay the membership fee. The Secretariat would then inform the Executive Committee about the status and present a proposed solution for this RAC year.

At the meeting, Dr. Dirk von Ameln from Nord Stream gave a presentation on the Nord Stream gas pipeline project. It was decided that Nord Stream and the RAC should consider ways of future cooperation. One possibility mentioned was the establishment of an organisation such as "Fishermen's information on Oil and Gas Activities" (FOGA), or alternatively to invite FOGA to act as liaison between fishermen and Nord Stream in the Baltic Sea as well.

Pelagic WG, 21 January 2008, Tallinn, Estonia

The meeting was held in Tallinn at the St. Olav Hotel, and was attended by 16 participants, mainly from the fisheries sector.

The meeting had a second round of discussions on elements to be considered in a long-term-management plan for pelagic species. The questions and replies from the WG meeting in October 2007 as well as a Power Point presentation and supplementary comments provided by ICES formed the basis for the discussions.

WG members presented fact sheets about the pelagic fisheries in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Germany and Sweden.

The WG agreed to prepare a letter or a position paper to the European Commission and member states on the BS RAC initial position on the long-term management of pelagic species. The paper would be presented to the Executive Committee at its next meeting.

General Assembly, 28 February 2008, Berlin, Germany

The third General Assembly of the BS RAC took place in the German Federal parliament building in Berlin. The meeting was attended by 58 participants.

The president of the German Fisheries Association, Holger Ortel welcomed all the participants to the General Assembly. He had followed the work of the RAC with great interest and highlighted the Conference on Control and Compliance in March 2007 which had caused many repercussions in Germany.

Haitze Siemers, from DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, gave a presentation on the EU's Maritime Policy and on the link to other EU initiatives such as the Strategy for the Baltic Sea, the Marine Strategy and the Helcom Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Haitze Siemers informed the meeting that it is the member states and not the Commission who have the competence to decide how to use the marine space and what activities they will allow in the marine protected areas. The Commission will only facilitate the process and look at best practice.

He underlined that input from the BS RAC would be very welcome at any point of time in the process.

The three WG chairmen and the BS RAC Secretary gave a presentation of the BS RAC activities during the second RAC year.

The General Assembly agreed to approve the annual report and the annual accounts by email correspondence as soon as possible after the end of the RAC year. The proposed work programme and budget for next year were approved.

Executive Committee, 29 February 2008, Berlin, Germany

The Executive meeting was held in the German Federal parliament building in Berlin. 42 participants took part in the meeting.

Ewa Milewska was re-elected Vice Chair of the BS RAC by consensus.

The meeting decided to send a letter to the Commission regarding the problems with the current 8% tolerance rule, asking it to react immediately to the BSRAC recommendation from September 2006 ("to change the 8% tolerance on logbook estimates to 10%"). It was agreed also to take up the problem with the 8% tolerance rule at the next Demersal WG meeting in April 2008.

The functioning of the focus group on Baltic fisheries research was evaluated and it was decided to continue the focus group with the current terms of reference.

Also the BS RAC participation in the ICES Annual Science Conference was evaluated. The EXCOM supported the basic idea of bringing scientist and fishermen together but it was also somewhat sceptical regarding the possible benefit of the current young fishermen's programme at ICES ASC. It was decided to nominate a young fisherman also in 2008 in order to get more experience with the programme and to send some comments and suggestions to ICES.

The meeting had a discussion on the working procedure to be followed in situations where there are not sufficient members present at meetings to take decisions. The Secretariat was asked to prepare a proposal for procedure until the next meeting.

The discussion of a first position on the management of pelagic species was postponed until the next meeting, as the draft paper had been sent out to EXCOM members too late.

Salmon WG, 12 March 2008, Copenhagen, Denmark

The salmon WG met on 12 March 2008 in the BS RAC Secretariat in Copenhagen. The meeting was attended by 20 participants.

The WG had a discussion on the smolt quality and the problem of low survival of reared salmon. Lars-Ove Eriksson, from Wild Life Fish and Environmental Studies, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, gave a presentation of the problem.

Also the survival of wild post-smolts was discussed. The chairman of ICES WGBAST, Atso Romakkaniemi was invited to give a presentation. Romakkaniemi stated that survival of reared smolts is steadily diminishing (1987-2005) especially during the last 10 years. He further said that this part constitutes an important piece of information when creating the assessment models and the annual ICES advice. The development between wild (Torne and Simojoki rivers) and reared (Gulf of Bothnia) seems to be similar.

The WG members were concerned about the scientific background for the presented results and about the fact that this would affect the fishing possibilities negatively.

The WG agreed to work on a proposal to have more co-operations between fisheries science and environmental monitoring activities in rivers and their drainage areas. The researchers were asked to formulate essential proposals to improve the quality of reared smolts and to improve science on salmon and co-operation between environmental and fisheries science.

Päivi Haapasaari, Timo Karjalainen and Kalle Reinikainen presented the outlines of the future report on socio-economic impact of both the earlier and planned management plan for salmon. Key stakeholders will later be invited to participate in interviews and to fill out questionnaires.

Members of the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council by 15 March 2008

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International	European Transport Workers' Federation	Henrik Stachowiak	fisheries@nms.org.pl
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