

BSAC INPUT TO BALTFISH HIGH LEVEL GROUP

Agreed by the BSAC Executive Committee by writing on the 19th April 2023.

Introduction

The BSAC would like to thank the Lithuanian Presidency for the very efficient and close cooperation in 2022-2023. Monthly informal meetings between the Presidency and the BSAC Management Team allowed for an efficient flow of information. This setting needs to be sustained in the future.

BSAC would like to bring the following points to the attention of the BALTFISH High-Level Group meeting:

1. Commission policy package including the Communication on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries.

Landing Obligation: The Commission's Communication on the CFP calls on Member States, the scientific community, the Advisory Councils and producer organisations, by spring 2024, to **provide the Commission with the key data that would be required for an evaluation of the landing obligation**. The Commission signals that it will provide guidance to that extent.

- **The BSAC calls on BALTFISH to cooperate closely with stakeholders and discuss together with BSAC how to provide the best advice to the Commission.**
- **BSAC has initiated work on the topic and will start discussing with its members during the Executive Committee in May and will further work on the topic in a meeting with EFCA in June 2023.**
- **BSAC workplan also includes co-organisation of a workshop with BALTFISH and EFCA following the publication of the EFCA report on the evaluation of compliance with the Landing Obligation in the Baltic in 2019-2021, scheduled for spring 2023.**

Eel: The BSAC will work on new recommendations regarding eel in the autumn 2023. The BSAC recommendation will specifically look at the Council Regulation 2023/194, Article 13 on measures concerning the European eel fisheries introduced fixed closed periods and additional 3 months determined by Member States. Furthermore, the Action Plan of the Commission requires Member States, by the end of June 2024, to improve the protection of the European eel by adopting or updating existing Eel Management Plans under the Eel Regulation.

- **In order to prepare for such recommendation, the BSAC invites BALTFISH Member States to hold a roundtable to share information on how they have implemented in practice the new measures and introduced the time closures.**

Harbour porpoise: The Action plan calls on BALTFISH to submit joint recommendations to the Commission to **minimise by-catch of harbour porpoise** in the Baltic Proper by the end of 2023. **BSAC stands ready to comment on future draft joint recommendations on the topic.**

- **BALTFISH** is invited to update BSAC members on the status of the draft Joint Recommendations scheduled by the end of the year.

Further deadlines are included in the Action Plan on selectivity, MSFD, and MPAs.

2. BSAC recent recommendations

Scientific expertise: The BSAC has been informed by ICES in January 2023 that one key reason for the missing knowledge on species interactions and mixed fisheries assessment in the Baltic Sea is the **lack of scientists working on the topic resulting in an expertise gap in the marine institutes.**

Additional explanation clarifies that the Member State should provide adequate funding and guidance to foster more interest and support the current researchers in the field.

In its latest meetings with the BALTFISH Presidency and with the Commission, the BSAC has raised and shared its concern about this problem and about the gap in the expertise – relevant for management of the mixed stocks in the Baltic Sea-, highlighting that the gap in scientific knowledge on these fragile ecosystems is a real threat both for the fish stocks and the fishing communities and industry relying on them.

The Commission has informed the BSAC that the EMFAF annual plan had been modified in February to include an open call for proposals for scientific projects/studies in fisheries. This call was published on the [CINEA website](#).

- **Member States are invited to inform their respective national research institutes and encouraged to propose research projects in the Baltic Sea,**
- **BALTFISH is invited to present what steps have been taken on this matter and the status of discussions with the scientific institutes.**

Offshore Windfarm developments: The BSAC has also published its **recommendations concerning the development of offshore windfarms and fisheries interactions** on the 11th April 2023. This valuable piece of advice is the result of 2 meetings of the BSAC Ecosystem-based management Working Group, including a number of scientific presentations and discussions of stakeholders. 5 key consensus recommendations have been put forward by the BSAC:

- Identified effects of OWF on the ecosystem and fisheries, both negative and positive ones, should be recognised along with persisting knowledge gaps.
- Consultation and involvement of all stakeholders, and coordination of Member States are given the highest priority.
- Co-existence plans are developed and access to fishing within OWF should always be preferred to compensation.
- Standardised and cumulative environmental and socioeconomic impact assessments are carried out independently and transparently and accompanied by continued long term monitoring.
- Compensation schemes (both environmental compensation and socio-economic compensations) should be implemented where residual effects persist and/or where co-existence between offshore wind farms and fisheries is not possible.

- **BALTFISH Member States are invited to take on board these recommendations.**

Harmonised implementation of legal rules in geographically close areas: The BSAC has finalised its recommendation on harmonised implementation of legal rules in geographically close areas. It was sent on the 21st April 2023. It calls on Member States to consult each other and prevent uneven conditions for fishers in different countries.

- **BALTFISH Member States are invited to acknowledge the letter and take on board this recommendation.**

3. Further work of the BSAC in 2023

Workshop on Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan: Following on an invitation to the Fisheries Committee hearing on the **Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan** in January, it appeared to the BSAC that there was interest to further discuss it. A specific workshop will be organised by BSAC on the topic on the afternoon of the 17th May in Brussels, following the BSAC ExCom and the General Assembly meetings. The [Commission report from 2020](#) will be presented along with the links with the newly published policy package of the Commission. This will be followed by a discussion with the Commission and MEPs. The event should leave some time for stakeholders to voice their concerns and formulate improvement proposals for the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan.

- **The BSAC will also welcome some advice from BALTFISH in the discussion, and active attendance of the representatives of the Member States at this meeting. The workshop agenda will follow.**

Workshop on predators -seals and cormorants-: The BSAC has been discussing with the BALTFISH Presidency the organisation of a **workshop on predators in the Baltic Sea, focusing on seals and cormorants**. The BSAC membership has already suggested speakers and expected outcomes of this workshop. The aim of this workshop is to progress on the complex issue, that **will require continuous involvement of BALTFISH Presidencies in the future, along with the BSAC**.

- **BALTFISH Member States are invited to indicate when would be the most appropriate timing for this workshop to actively involve their scientific institutes to achieve possibly the best outcome and useful advice.**

Conclusion

As of 2023, the Commission's Communication on the CFP calls on the Member States' fisheries regional groups, to better involve stakeholders, particularly the Advisory Councils, in the regional groups, and to ensure involvement of both fisheries and environmental authorities. The BSAC work programme for 2023-2024 is ambitious and the BSAC counts on continued close cooperation with BALTFISH through regular meeting with this and the next Presidencies to achieve it.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned actions, the Chair and Vice Chair of the BSAC Executive Committee, and Chairs of the BSAC Working Groups remain at your disposal to engage in further work during BALTFISH meetings in June and later under the Polish Presidency in Autumn 2023.