

Recommendations

on the management of demersal fisheries

- September 2006 -

The Executive Committee of the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council (ExCom) during their meeting in Stockholm August 28th 2006 was given a summary report of the Demersal Working Group (WG) meeting in Klaipeda, held August 22nd and 23rd.

ExCom agreed to forward the summary report (annexed) to the EU Commission, Member States, and other relevant parties, despite the informal format, as it reflects the discussions at the WG meeting in a manner which highlights some important concerns from the various stakeholders – as well as some recommendations that all could agree on. These recommendations are:

With respect to the European Commission's proposed management plan:

- To request an impact analysis on the social and economical consequences of the plan.

- To ask the Commission if there was any evidence that a problem with misreporting area of capture had been created with the division of the two Baltic cod stocks. If it has, the Working Group would reconsider the value of having two distinct stocks for management purposes.

- To seek opinion from the Commission as to whether Article 7 is redundant.

- To request that Article 8 (1)(b) shall include Subdivisions 28.2.

- To ask the Commission to initiate a study into what the capacity/resource balance should look like within the Baltic region, taking into account the points of view of Member State fishing industries and the members of the RAC.

- To change the 8% tolerance on logbook estimates to 10%.

- To include subdivision 28.2 in “Area B” when referring to the commencement of fishing activity for vessels with less than 100 kg of cod.

- To allow vessels to enter and exit ports with cod catches in excess of 100 kg.

- To increase the weight at which vessels are required to report to the authorities before landing from 100 to 300 kg.

- To request that the Commission present their analysis of “Inspection Benchmarks” to the Working either on a formal or informal basis.

With respect to improving compliance:

- To request early access to the Commission’s evaluation report of the implementation of Annex III of Regulation 52/2006.

- To request a presentation and opportunity to discuss with the Commission and the Member States control and enforcement agencies the results of the evaluation report of Annex III of Regulation 52/2006.

- To request the establishment of regular meetings with the Commission and Member State control and enforcement agencies to discuss issues related to compliance of EU fisheries regulations.

Further to the recommendations in the WG report a number of issues were discussed at the meeting in Stockholm.

First and foremost, ExCom strongly supports the conclusion of the WG, that without significantly improved compliance any plan will fail. ExCom therefore agreed on the following statement:

Recognizing that the lack of compliance to existing regulation is one of the major barriers to the establishment of sustainable fisheries in the Baltic Sea, the Baltic Sea RAC ExCom encourages the European Commission to actively promote the implementation of the EU Community Plan of action to combat IUU and the FAO International Program of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU and Member States to apply appropriate measures. The Baltic Sea RAC ExCom members will support the European Commission and Members states in their efforts to combat illegal fisheries.

ExCom agreed to organise a conference on how to combat IUU fisheries in the Baltic in the spring of 2007. It was an explicit wish to involve the EU-Commission in these deliberations as the highest possible level.

ExCom also discussed the possible benefits and detriments of combining a days-at-sea system with closed periods during spawning. There was widespread support for the idea and only one member voiced a preference for just regulating effort with closed periods.

There was not however, consensus on the duration of the spawning closures. The fishing industry argued that a shorter spawning closure *i.e.* one month in West and two in East, would enable the small scale fishery to survive with a days-at-sea system regulating their effort the remainder of the year, and that there was no unambiguous scientific documentation that spawning closures would enhance stocks. The green organisations argued for a spawning closure of two and three months, respectively.

ExCom saw no constructive outcome of discussions about the level of TACs for demersal species and refer to the opinions and concerns raised in the WG summary report.

Attached: “**Key points and recommendations from the Demersal Working Group meeting ...**”