

Possibilities for Sustainable Fisheries in the Baltic Sea

Most models used for fishery management today are not acceptable since aspects other than commercial fishing, for example ecological and recreational functions, are not considered.

Developing sustainable fisheries in the Baltic Sea will demand a new, ecosystem based management. This involves:

- ❖ To decide on fish stock levels, within safe biological limits, that shall be respected.
- ❖ To keep the populations of zooplanktivorous fish species and piscivorous (predatory) fish species at certain sustainable levels.
- ❖ To create a sustainable spawning stock size and a sustainable stock age structure for Baltic Sea fish species.
- ❖ Precautionary approach: all fishing activities must be kept within long-term safe ecological limits as defined by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, ICES.
- ❖ The use of long driftnets in the Baltic must be phased out. EU must apply the same rules in all its waters.
- ❖ Management of the cod stock must make it possible for the cod to reach its normal distribution area for the Baltic Sea (up to Aaland Sea).

Coastal fisheries

A vision for sustainable fisheries in the Baltic Sea must include a strong position for coastal and local fisheries. A number of measures should be taken:

- ❖ All Baltic region countries should redirect substantial parts of the national fishing quotas for cod, herring and salmon from open-sea to coastal fisheries.
- ❖ Initiatives should be taken to preserve the traditional fishing techniques and to create financial conditions for its survival and to attract new generations of fishermen for coastal fisheries.
- ❖ National licensing systems, where local authorities can give licensing for local fishermen, should be developed.
- ❖ Baltic governments should be recommended to develop strong restrictions for fisheries using trawl and seine nets inside the 12 nautical miles national zone.

Protected areas

Some marine offshore, as well as coastal, shallow areas such as banks, estuaries and archipelago areas are very important as they comprise marine ecosystems with rich biodiversity and/or high productivity. Many of these areas are also crucial as spawning and/or nursing grounds for many fish species of high commercial interest.

The proper protection of these valuable areas is of great importance to the marine ecosystem and fisheries of the Baltic Sea as a whole.

Studies in protected areas, where fisheries were closed, indicate that fish populations can recover and later contribute to increased catches outside the protected areas.

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Sustainable Baltic Sea Herring Fishery

The German Herring Fishery in the Greifswalder Bodden area, practising gill and trap nets, is one of the few examples in Baltic Sea fisheries where close to sustainable fishery is applied. To create a sustainable fishery is to deal with three different aspects: ecological, economical and social sustainability.

The **ecological** aspect is met since only 10–15% of the total German catch quota for herring is used. The Western Baltic Sea herring stock is in a healthy condition. Destructive fishing gear is not used – the gill and trap nets used have limited negative impacts on the ecosystem. By-catch rates are low and this static gear brings very little damage to the bottom structures.

The **economical** sustainability of the fishery in the area is a problem – fishermen who use static gear have low incomes. Better economical conditions can be achieved by paying fishermen for ecological services or by seeking market solutions to increase prices for their products (eco-labelling).

In the region a **social** sustainability is promoted by coastal fishing since the methods used are labour intensive as opposed to the use of few big trawlers.

