



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S ACTIONS IN THE BALTIC SEA AND THE EU
SINGLE MARKET
Information from the Lithuanian, Estonian, Latvian, and Swedish
delegations

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Lithuanian, Estonian, Latvian and Swedish delegations on the abovementioned subject with a view to the meeting of the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 24 June 2024, where it will be presented under "Any Other Business"

AGRIFISH COUNCIL

24 June 2024

IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S ACTIONS IN THE BALTIC SEA AND THE EU SINGLE MARKET

Information from the Lithuanian, Estonian, Latvian, and Swedish delegations

In the context of the beginning of the new cycle of setting fishing opportunities for 2025 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden would like to bring to the attention of the EU Council and the EU Commission the intolerable situation we are facing concerning Russia's activities in the Baltic Sea and the broader impact thereof.

In the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2025¹, it is once again highlighted that 'the situation in the Baltic Sea, [...] remains extremely worrying as populations of previously important commercial stocks continue to decline due to multiple sources of pressure'. Four out of ten targeted fisheries have been prohibited for several years now for our Baltic Sea fishers including five-year long fisheries ban of eastern Baltic cod.

Russia is systemically implementing autonomous fishing opportunities for targeted cod, herring and sprat fisheries in the Baltic Sea. Such extremely unsustainable fishing activities in the Baltic Sea are undermining our joint efforts to rebuild the biological resources of this sea basin in line with scientific advice. Alarming information by the stakeholders has repeatedly been received that Russian fishing vessels are engaged in targeted commercial fishing of herring, cod and sprat in the exclusive economic zone of the Russian Federation, which falls under the ICES subdivision 26, during May and June when fishing is prohibited in the EU.

Moreover, it is of our great concern that fish caught in the Baltic Sea, including cod (*Gadus morhua*), originating from Russia, may be entering the EU single market.

Two years ago, the Baltic Sea Member States issued a Joint statement where we highlighted the issue of unsustainable fishing activities by Russia and requested the Commission to employ all available tools to address Russia's behaviour regarding the sustainability of fishing activities². Adequate response at the EU level so far has been absent, even though access to the EU single market provides a forceful policy instrument and is the source of an exceptional EU leverage.

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden believe that further delay at the EU level is no longer justifiable. Time to act is past due and adequate EU action is inevitable.

Access to the EU single market must be subject to conditions. It is a powerful tool to eliminate the possibility that Baltic Sea fish originating from Russia, as well as all fisheries products originating from the aggressor country well known also for low sustainability standards could reach the EU market.

¹ ST 10679 2024 INIT

² Doc. 10215/22

In view of the above, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden call the Commission to address this issue with great devotion, deploying tools available for the Commission in a broader extent and inform the Council on the actions envisaged prior to October Council meeting.

