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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council Regulation fixing the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Baltic Sea for 2024 and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/194 as regards certain fishing opportunities in other waters - Political agreement - statements

Commission statement on Bothnian herring and central Baltic herring

The Commission takes note of the decision of the Council to set total allowable catches (TACs) for Bothnian herring and central Baltic herring at low levels, together with remedial measures aimed at rebuilding those stocks to levels above MSY Btrigger.

However, the Commission regrets that the Council did not decide to close the targeted fisheries for both stocks for 2024, which would have allowed a more rapid recovery of the stocks.

Commission statement on the multiannual plans

The Commission understands the reasons for the Member States' requests to submit a proposal for a targeted amendment of the multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the Western Waters. The Commission recalls that according to the Treaty, it has the right of legislative initiative. It is notably for the Commission to appreciate the timing and the content of any such proposal to be submitted.

Declaration by Commission, Finland and Sweden on the management of salmon fisheries in sub-divisions 29N and 30

Finland and Sweden consider that the Ljungan salmon stock has suffered from a disease, but that the situation for the stock has however developed positively in 2023 with a larger spawning run and larger estimated smolt numbers.

Finland and Sweden also consider that the probability of reaching Blim for the Ljungan salmon stock to a lesser degree depends on fishing mortality. Therefore, they consider that targeted management measures are more effective for the recovery of the Ljungan salmon stock.

Finland and Sweden consider that a delayed start of commercial and recreational salmon fishing until 20 May 2024 would be a significant restriction compared to a start at 1 May as advised by ICES. They consider that this would allow for early migrating and valuable large wild salmon including individuals from the Ljungan salmon stock to migrate towards their spawning rivers before the salmon fisheries commence. Sweden would be ready to furthermore implement regional restrictions on salmon fishing in and outside the Ljungan River.

Finland and Sweden also agree that a reduced TAC to 53 967 salmon is a significant measure for the conservation of salmon stocks.

The Commission, in close cooperation with Finland and Sweden, will urgently request ICES to provide scientific advice as soon as possible, on the management measures that Finland and Sweden are ready to put in place for salmon fisheries in sub-divisions 29N and 30. Finland and Sweden will provide ICES and the Commission the necessary scientific information and expertise needed for such advice. On the basis of that ICES advice, the Commission will, if appropriate, submit a proposal for an amendment to the Baltic Fishing Opportunities Regulation.

Joint Statement by Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Poland and Sweden on recreational fisheries for Western cod

Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Poland and Sweden continue to be worried about the status of Western cod and remain committed to its recovery. At the same time, they acknowledge the socio-economic and cultural importance of recreational fisheries. The aforementioned Member States call on the Commission to consider reopening recreational fisheries for Western cod in future proposals, as soon as the scientific advices allow for reintroducing an appropriate bag limit. Further common measures for recreational cod fishery could also be considered to protect the Western cod stock, such as minimum and maximum reference sizes.

Joint Statement by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden on the application of Article 15(9) of the Basic Regulation as regards eastern Baltic cod and western Baltic cod in 2024

Given that the biomass of the stocks of eastern Baltic cod and western Baltic cod are below B_{lim} , and in order to ensure the recovery of the stock in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden undertake not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to these stocks in 2024. This undertaking is a response to the current exceptional circumstances for the eastern Baltic cod and western Baltic cod stocks.

Joint Statement by Denmark, Finland, Germany, Poland and Sweden on the application of Article 15(9) in the Basic Regulation as regards western Baltic herring in 2024

Given that the biomass of the stock of western Baltic herring is below B_{lim} , and in order to ensure the recovery of the stock in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Poland and Sweden undertake not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to this stock in 2024. This undertaking is a response to the current exceptional circumstances for the western Baltic herring stock.

Joint Statement by Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on the application of Article 15(9) in the Basic Regulation as regards main basin salmon in 2024

Given that in ICES subdivisions 22-30 almost all wild salmon river stocks are well below R_{lim} , and in order to ensure the recovery of the stocks, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland undertake not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to these stocks in 2024. This commitment is a response to the current exceptional circumstances for the wild salmon river stocks in ICES subdivisions 22-30.

Joint Statement by the Commission, and Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden on exchanges of eastern and western Baltic cod quotas

In a spirit of solidarity, a Member State not needing its entire by-catch quota for eastern or western Baltic cod will seek to agree on quota exchanges with a Member State that can demonstrate it will be confronted with a choke effect due to its limited eastern or western Baltic cod quota.

Joint Statement by Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania and Poland on transfers of Main Basin salmon quotas

In a spirit of solidarity and recognising the conservation efforts made by Finland and Sweden, which have led to healthy stocks in their waters, a Member State which cannot use its entire quota for Main Basin salmon will consider a voluntary transfer of the unused or unusable part of that quota to Finland and/or Sweden.

Joint Statement by the Commission and Germany on the option of support for the temporary cessation of fishing activities by the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

1. According to Article 5(3), point (a) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, remedial measures for the purpose of Article 5 of that Regulation may include Member State emergency measures pursuant to Article 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, under certain conditions.

2. Given the assessment of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) on cod and herring in subdivisions 22-24 Germany therefore deems it necessary to adopt emergency measures pursuant to Article 13(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013. The emergency measures in subdivisions 22-24 for German fishing vessels consist in introducing a closure of 30 days for the protection of cod in addition to the cod spawning closure established by Article 7(3) of the Regulation fixing for 2024 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Baltic Sea during which the exemption contained in Article 7 (4)(b) shall not apply, and limiting by additional 30 days the herring fishery during which the exemption for certain small-scale coastal fisheries from the prohibition to target western herring is interrupted and fisheries with substantial by-catches of herring.

3. The Commission and Germany agree that this emergency measure is eligible for funding from Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 of the European Parliament and the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 provided that it is in accordance with the conditions set out in Article 21(2)(c) of that Regulation.

Declaration by Finland and Sweden on the management of herring fisheries in the Gulf of Bothnia (SD 30 and 31)

Finland and Sweden agree that remedial measures are important in order to further support a positive development of the Gulf of Bothnia herring stock. Such measures are optimally designed when they support the spawning of herring and the preconditions for strong year classes.

Therefore, Finland and Sweden agree on a time limited project including fishery regulations to be carried out in defined areas considered as important for the development of herring biomass, stock and population structure. An evaluation of the fishery regulation should include an analysis of the environmental factors (including predation from fish, birds and seals) affecting the herring stock parameters. Therefore, both Member States will for 2024 implement national non-discriminatory measures based on adequate and relevant Articles in the Basic Regulation 1380/2013.

In addition, other planned measures will in Finland and Sweden include a temporal prohibition on trawling in the territorial waters in the Bothnian Sea (SD 30) from 25th May to 30th June 2024 with the possibility of an exception for Union fishing vessels that fish for direct human consumption and whose landings are sorted. These remedial measures aim to support the forming of spawning shoals and their undisturbed migration to the coastal spawning areas, and hence serve to strengthen spawning success and a larger year-class. Both Member States give their consent to these planned remedial and non-discriminatory measures.