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Commission proposes Baltic Sea fishing opportunities for 2019 with increased quotas for plaice and Western cod and reductions for Western herring

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The Commission has adopted a proposal for fishing opportunities for 2019 for the commercially most important fish stocks in the Baltic Sea.

In particular, the Commission proposes to increase catches for plaice, Western cod, sprat, Gulf of Riga herring and the Main Basin salmon stocks. For the remaining stocks covered by the proposal the Commission proposes a reduction in catches.

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, said: "*We are proposing a balanced package that will ensure sustainable fisheries in the Baltic Sea. The good news is that important quotas for Western Baltic cod can be increased, after several years of hardship for the fishermen. The sacrifices are paying off as the stock is recovering. As per usual, the picture is mixed, as this year we will have to reduce the quotas for Western herring in order to make sure that it is soon in a better state.*"

The proposed total allowable catches (TAC) are based on scientific advice from the [International Council on the Exploration of the Seas](#) [1] and follow the [Baltic multiannual management plan](#) [2] adopted in 2016 by Member States and the European Parliament.

Efforts by stakeholders in recent years have already succeeded in rebuilding important stocks in the Baltic Sea and in allowing that, where complete scientific advice is available, 7 out of 8 catch limits are set in line with the principle of maximum sustainable yield, covering 95% of fish landings in volume. But further action remains necessary to ensure all stocks grow to levels that allow for sustainable exploitation.

The Council will now examine the Commission proposal, and European Ministers for Fisheries aim at adopting it during their meeting of 15-16 October.

Cod

Western Baltic Cod is an important stock for many small-scale fishermen, and has been at very low levels in recent years. For 2019 there is good news with a strongly increasing stock size. The Commission therefore proposes to increase the total allowable catches by 31%. The Commission also proposes to lift the current closure period and to set the bag limit for recreational fishermen to 5

specimen all around the year.

For **Eastern Cod**, scientists advise that catches are reduced as the fishing pressure is too high on this stock. The Commission is therefore following a precautionary approach and proposes a reduction of 15%.

Herring

The largest proposed decrease (63%) for 2019 concerns the Western Herring stock. This stock is not within safe biological limits anymore. This is not due to a reduced stock size but due to the fact that the most recent scientific advice advocates a bigger stock size to ensure that enough offspring is produced and to avoid the risk of stock collapse. For Central Herring the Commission is proposing a reduction of 26%, following the plan that was agreed by Member States and the European Parliament. For the Gulf of Bothnia a 7% reduction is proposed, while Riga herring can be increased by 9%.

Plaice

The two plaice stocks in the Baltic Sea continue to grow. The Commission proposes to follow scientific advice based on the maximum sustainable yield which would lead to an increase by 43%.

Possible measures concerning European Eel will be addressed by the Commission in its proposal for fishing opportunities in the Atlantic and the North Sea, which will be adopted later this year.

Table: Overview of TAC changes 2017-2018 (figures in tonnes except for salmon, which is in number of pieces)

	2018	2019
Stock and ICES fishing zone; subdivision	Council agreement (in tonnes & % change from 2017 TAC)	Commission proposal (in tonnes & % change from 2018 TAC)
Western Cod 22-24	5,597 (0%)	7,340 (+31%)
Eastern Cod 25-32	28,388 (-8%)	24,112 (-15%)
Western Herring 22-24	17,309 (-39%)	6,404 (-63%)
Bothnian Herring 30-31	84,599 (-40%)	88,703 (-7%)
Riga Herring 28.1	28,999 (-7%)	31,044 (+9%)
Central Herring 25-27, 28.2, 29, 32	229,355 (+20%)	170,360 (-26%)
Sprat 22-32	262,310 (+1%)	270,772 (+3%)
Plaice 22-32	7,076 (-10%)	10,122 (+43%)
Main Basin Salmon 22-31	91,132 (-5%)	104,996 (+15%)
Gulf of Finland Salmon 32	10,003 (-5%)	9,879 (-1%)

Background

The proposal is part of the European Union's approach to adjust the levels of fishing to long-term sustainability targets, or [maximum sustainable yield](#) [3] (MSY) by 2020 as agreed by the Council and the European Parliament in the Common Fisheries Policy. The Commission's proposal is also in line with the policy intentions expressed in the Commission's [Communication on Fishing Opportunities for 2019](#) [4] and with the [Multiannual Plan for the management of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea](#) [5].

More information

[Proposal for a COUNCIL REGULATION fixing for 2019 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Baltic Sea - COM\(2018\) 608](#) [6]

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Links

[1] <http://www.ices.dk/Pages/default.aspx>

[2]

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2016.191.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2016:191:TOC

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules_en

[4] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2017:368:FIN>

[5] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32016R1139>

[6] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2018:608:FIN>