

Director Bernhard Friess
The European Commission, DG Maritime Affairs & Fisheries
1049 Brussels
Belgium

RE: Fishing Opportunities in the Baltic for 2017

Brussels, 28th November 2016

Dear Mr. Friess,

We welcome the Commission's exchange with the European Parliament on the implementation of the multi-annual plan (MAP) for the Baltic and the fishing opportunities set for Baltic Sea fisheries in 2017, which took place on November 9th. Large numbers of EU fish stocks are still subject to overfishing and it is important that Parliament and the public are able to scrutinise how Total Allowable Catches (TACs) contribute to achieving the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), namely to end overfishing and to restore and maintain fish stocks above levels capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield.

We welcome the offer you made during the exchange to explain the Commission's calculation of the expected fishing mortality for western Baltic cod in more detail. We would appreciate such a detailed calculation in writing, including how many tonnes of recreational catches are expected to be reduced by the agreed temporary closure and the daily catch limits.

We note your remark that many of the NGOs do not understand fully the calculations the Commission and Council have made for western Baltic cod. We very much share the concern that stakeholders are not in a position to analyse such calculations, as neither the figures nor the underlying scientific information used are in the public domain. The Commission endorsed the Council's decision as being fully consistent with the Baltic MAP without substantiating how that is the case, despite the public interest in the issue of ending overfishing. The scientific evidence that was used in the negotiations was only released following access to information requests made by NGOs, and to our knowledge is not available on the Commission's website. We therefore welcome your reassurance that there is no secrecy regarding scientific advice used in the TAC negotiations and that "nothing is hidden away". In that context, we would like to ask how the Commission can in future proactively ensure that the information used in the negotiations is publicly available.

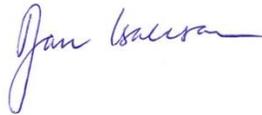
NGOs remain troubled about the lack of transparency in the process of setting fishing opportunities and encourage similar exchanges as the one mentioned above for all relevant decisions on fishing limits. In addition, we urge the Commission to share its calculations demonstrating that TACs are set in line with the CFP and agreed multi-annual plans. Lastly, we ask the Commission to consider only scientific advice in the negotiations that is peer reviewed and already in the public domain.

We thank you for your efforts and look forward to your response. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact any of us if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,



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