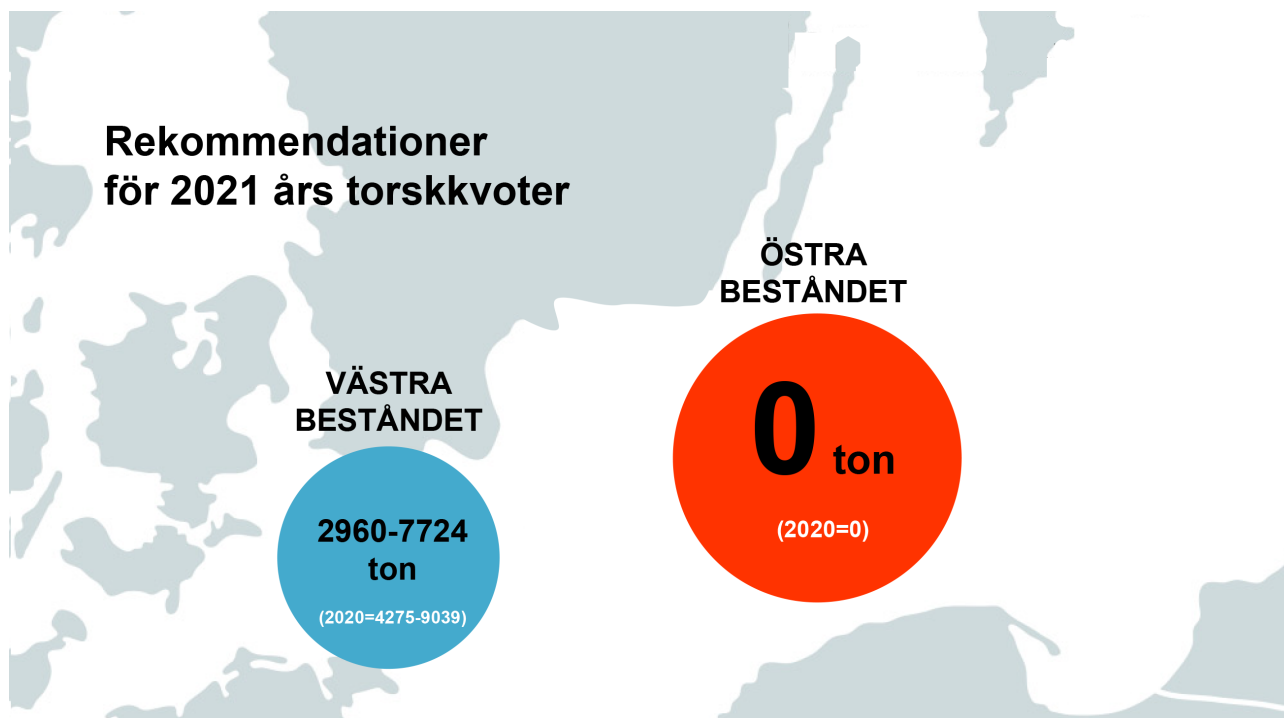


Fishing quotas 2021: Long-term focus is needed

On Friday 29 May, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), which advises on EU fisheries management, presented its recommendation for next year's fishing quotas for Baltic cod.



Text in chart: Recommendations for 2021's cod quotas. The eastern stock 0 tonnes (2020 = 0). The western stock 2,960-7,724 tonnes (2020 = 4,275-9,039)

Clear message to the Commission and fisheries ministers

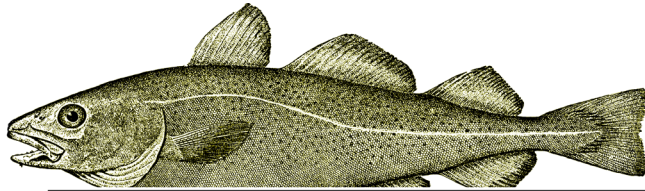
When all targeted fishing for cod in the eastern stock was stopped in July 2019, the European Commission described the decision as an emergency measure to save the Baltic cod. This year's ICES recommendation makes it clear that they continue to believe that there should be no fishing of the declining eastern stock.

It is a very wise decision. Firstly, BalticSea2020 considers that fisheries management should not be managed based on short-term objectives, as is currently the case within the framework of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Experience from other fish stocks is clear: stocks do not recover in a year, but require long-term efforts and ambitions. Secondly, we believe that management should not be limited to individual species and stocks. The fish live in an ecosystem, where changes in one stock also affect other fish species.

Western stock is in trouble

For the western stock, ICES is recommending a quota in the range of 2,960-7,724 tonnes. This is a year-on-year decrease, but it is still very unclear advice. Such a wide range leaves more room for interpretation and arbitrariness than is desirable. Scientific advice must provide the policy with clearer answers as to what stocks can actually tolerate.

The cod fished in the western stock tend to be born in the same year; if we deplete this age group, then we risk causing serious harm to the western stock as well. ICES also notes that fishing pressure is too high and that the stock remains below the reference point for sustainable growth.

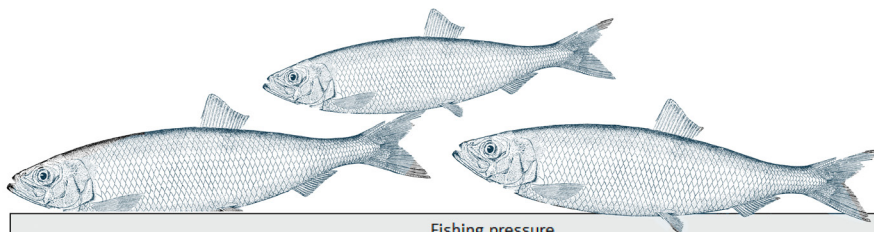


		Fishing pressure			Stock size		
		2017	2018	2019	2018	2019	2020
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	✗	✗	✗ Above	$MSY B_{trigger}$	✗	✗ Below trigger
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	✓	✓	✓ Harvested sustainably	B_{pa}, B_{lim}	✗	○ Increased risk
Management plan	F_{MGT}	✗	✗	✗ Above the range	SSB_{MGT}	✗	✗ Below

In this uncertain situation, BalticSea2020 believes that politicians need to be extremely cautious, and that a quota at the lower end of the proposed range is the only reasonable decision.

Herring and Baltic herring

UDuring the spring, the crisis facing Baltic herring in the Stockholm archipelago has attracted considerable attention. Coastal fishermen are having difficulty finding any Baltic herring, while industrial trawlers are making large catches just off the coast. The ICES recommendation for herring (Baltic herring) in the central Baltic Sea contains warning signs. Fishing pressure is too high and the stock has fallen below the reference point for sustainable growth. The catch is still mainly based on a single year class (2014).



		Fishing pressure			Stock size		
		2017	2018	2019	2018	2019	2020
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	✗	✗	✗ Above	$MSY B_{trigger}$	✓	✓ Below trigger
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	✓	✓	○ Increased risk	B_{pa}, B_{lim}	✓	✓ Increased risk
Management plan	F_{MGT}	✗	✗	✗ Above the range	SSB_{MGT}	✓	✓ Below

ICES proposes a reduced quota for 2021, down from approx. 180,000 tonnes this year to approx. 110,000 tonnes for next year. However, there are concerns that we recognise from the Baltic cod a number of years ago: zero catches for coastal anglers, quotas based on single year classes and an uneasiness among authorities to address the problem at an early point. We will look further at herring and Baltic herring in the archipelago in the next Fisheries Brief.

Ecosystem management

ICES makes recommendations for 15 species and stocks in the Baltic Sea. The Commission and the Council of Ministers then decide on quotas for 10 stocks. With a few exceptions, the importance of the different species in the ecosystem is not addressed.

The Baltic Sea is a species-poor inland sea where fisheries management ought to incorporate in some way a holistic view of the ecosystem and take into account interactions between species. The current management approach tends to focus on the catch potential of commercial fishing, but as we have written about many times before in the Fisheries Brief, the EU's CFP needs much more active regional management in the Baltic Sea, where good ecological status is put first.

Large-scale industrial fishing by a few fishermen cannot be given priority over the environment and ecology of the Baltic Sea.

Long-term visions for fisheries management

In recent years, the Commission and the Council of Ministers have dealt, somewhat belatedly, with some of the most critical stocks in the Baltic Sea, such as cod, salmon and trout. In order to ensure that these stocks are rebuilt in a sustainable way, and before more fish stocks find themselves in the same situation, it is time to start taking a long-term approach to fisheries management in the Baltic Sea.

Swedish politicians, led by the Minister for Rural Affairs, must take advantage of the opportunities for more active regional management. The commitment to Baltic cod and Baltic herring in the archipelago shows that there is public opinion on this issue and voters who will demand accountability.

The ICES recommendations form the basis of the Commission's proposed quotas at the end of August. In mid-October, the Council of Ministers will decide on the fishing quotas for 2021. The process involves ongoing consultation with various stakeholders. The Commission is calling on Member States and regional bodies to submit comments at an early stage.

BalticSea2020
FÖR EN LEVANDE ÖSTERSJÖ

ÖSTERSJÖ
RÄDDATORSKÉN