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THE COUNCIL

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~~ORIGINAL~~ PECHE 318

REPORT

of: Working Party on External Fisheries Policy  
dated: 6 September 1996  
to: Permanent Representatives Committee

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Subject: 22nd session of the International Baltic Sea Fishery  
Commission (Warsaw, 16-22 September 1996)  
- Community negotiating position on salmon  
management in the Baltic Sea

1. In preparation of the position to be adopted by the Community at the forthcoming session of the IBSFC, the Working Party had an in-depth discussion on the question of salmon management in the Baltic.
2. Setting out his Institution's views on this issue, the Commission representative:
  - referred to the latest advice from the Advisory Committee on Fisheries Management (ACFM), and drew attention to the continuing concern at the low level of wild salmon - despite a recently increased wild salmon run in some rivers - and the persistent negative impact on both wild and reared salmon stocks of the M74 syndrome;

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- considered in these circumstances, that the 1997 TAC in the Baltic for both wild and reared salmon, whilst not a perfect management tool for this fishery, should be reduced as part of a global Salmon Action Plan 1997-2000<sup>(1)</sup>, in line with ACFM recommendations and in view of the IBSFC objectives (increase of natural production of wild Baltic salmon to at least 50% of the natural production capacity of each river by 2010).
3. The Finnish delegation, recalling the importance of the salmon fishery in the Baltic Sea for its industry,
- claimed that national measures (seasonal closures) taken over recent years, whilst entailing severe sacrifices for economic operators, had resulted in large increases of wild salmon in the rivers of the Gulf of Bothnia and thus produced better results<sup>(2)</sup> than the TAC management, which was not a proper management tool for that particular fishery<sup>(3)</sup>;
  - stated that in these circumstances, a reduction of the salmon TAC for 1997 was unacceptable given the serious socio-economic repercussions that would result;
  - could, however, consider the possibility of reducing the 1997 salmon TAC in the Baltic in the framework of the Salmon Action Plan as presented by the Commission, if the Action Plan were amended along the following lines<sup>(4)</sup> :

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<sup>(1)</sup> This (draft) action plan, which the Commission suggests be put forward as a Community position at IBSFC, is set out in Annex I.

<sup>(2)</sup> The Finnish delegation circulated a memorandum of 30 August 1996 from the Finnish Game and Research Institute concerning recent findings (Summer 1996).

<sup>(3)</sup> The Finnish delegation drew delegations' attention to the ACFM comments on this aspect. It also pointed out that stock management through the settings of TACs would have little impact on the wild salmon population, bearing in mind the existing ratio between reared and wild salmon in the Baltic (90/10).

<sup>(4)</sup> Cf. Finnish position paper (Annex II).

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- = compensation for the TAC reduction in the form of a separate terminal fishery TAC<sup>(5)</sup> for Finland in the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland;
  - = no extension of the area (to the baselines) or duration of the summer ban;
  - = no limitation on smolt production.
4. The Danish delegation generally shared the concerns of the Finnish delegation, particularly with regard to a further reduction of the TAC for 1997. However, the Danish delegation could accept a minor reduction of the TAC for 1997 as part of the global approach of the proposed Salmon Action plan, together with a limit on smolt releases through the traditional techniques but not in respect of the "delayed releases" technique.
5. The Swedish delegation - whose views were largely shared by the German delegation - whilst recognising the potential drawbacks of TAC management, and the positive contribution of complementary national technical measures, argued that it was important, *inter alia* for the international credibility of the Union, to support all measures, in line with ACFM advice, on the level of the TAC, to achieve the basic objectives such as maintaining the bio-diversity in the Baltic basin and increasing the stocks of wild salmon.
6. Consequently, this delegation argued in favour of a reduced salmon TAC to be set at 300,000 individuals for 1997, as part of a global approach, in the framework of the above-mentioned Salmon Action Plan. Noting that this Plan comprised several positive elements, this delegation, subject to further scrutiny of the text in writing, made a number of specific comments regarding :

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<sup>(5)</sup> Clean fishery of reared salmon having reached the end of its reproductive life span.

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- the need for re-directing traditional smolt releases towards delayed releases;
  - the need for a transitional period (5/6 years) in the event of the establishment of closed areas ("salmon box");
  - the timing of a possible increase in mesh sizes (after a transitional period);
  - the early establishment of a Surveillance group.
7. Other delegations generally took the view that the Community negotiating position should reflect the concerns of Member States concerned, *inter alia* those of the Finnish delegation regarding the socio-economic repercussions of further reductions of the salmon TAC. However, delegations, referring to the scientific advice of ACFM, considered that it should be possible for the Community to negotiate a minor reduction of the salmon TAC in the context of a global package.
8. In conclusion, the Working Party
- noted the understanding expressed for the Finnish delegation's views;
  - agreed that the Community should ensure that the matter of the salmon management in the Baltic Sea be dealt with on a global long-term basis (global package) permitting the smallest possible reduction of the TAC for 1997 consistent with the scientific advice of ACFM;
  - noted that the Finnish delegation reserved the possibility of raising the issue at COREPER level on 18 September 1996, bearing in mind the timing of the IBSFC discussions.

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## IBSFC Salmon Action Plan 1997-2010 (\*) (Long Term Objective and Short-Medium Term Strategies)

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<b>Long Term Objective</b> 2010	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Further decrease of naturally produced smolts should not be allowed in order to prevent wild stocks from extinction</li><li>2. The production of wild salmon should gradually increase to attain at least 50% of the natural production capacity of every individual river before the year 2010, this in order to achieve a better balance between wild and reared salmon.</li><li>3. The level of fishing should be maintained as high as possible. Only restrictions necessary to achieve the first two objectives should be carried out.</li></ol>
<b>Medium Term Strategy</b> 2002	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Gradual introduction of "delayed release": 50% of all reared smolt shall be delayed released by 2002 (see also (11))</li><li>2. A "salmon box" shall be closed for fishing</li><li>3. The meshsize shall be increased from 165mm to 200mm</li><li>4. Salmon stocks shall be restored in potential rivers (see also (12))</li><li>5. Reared smolt releases shall be closely monitored (see also (13))</li></ol>
<b>Short Term Strategy</b> 1997	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Further reduction of the TAC</li><li>7. Maintain summerban and apply up to the baselines</li><li>8. Introduce general fin-clipping of all reared salmon</li><li>9. Establish list of wild salmon rivers, estimated maximum and current production capacity</li><li>10. New resolution on directed wild salmon fisheries</li><li>11. 10% of 1997 smolt shall be "delayed" released</li><li>12. Salmon stocks shall be re-established in the following three rivers: "... .."</li><li>13. No more than four million artificially reared smolts shall be released in the course of 1997</li></ol>

(\*) A "Surveillance Group" shall be set up for constant monitoring of the impact of the Action Plan

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## Mandate of the "Salmon Action Plan Surveillance Group"

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- To monitor the impact of the Action Plan
  - To report to the annual session of the IBSFC on progress achieved
  - To recommend any measures or amendments to the Action Plan necessary to achieve the 2010 objective
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### Definitions

1. Wild Baltic salmon:  
*"an offspring of natural spawning salmon, having spent its entire life in the wild"*

2. Wild salmon river:  
*"habitat where wild salmon populations spawn"*

The following list of rivers is considered by the IBSFC as a wild salmon river to meet with the 2010 objective.

3. Potential wild salmon rivers:  
*"rivers currently lacking wild salmon populations, but having a potential for re-establishment of same"*

The following list of potential rivers is considered by the IBSFC as suitable for re-establishment of wild salmon populations.

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Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU  
Brussels 11.9.1996

## Salmon Action Plan in the Baltic Sea

The elements in the salmon action plan proposed by the Commission in the external fisheries working party on the 6th of September can be accepted with the exception of the following points.

### 1. Salmon-TAC

The Finnish salmon fishing restrictions during the principal fishing season (total prohibition in Finnish waters incl. the fishing zone, 1.3.-end of June) have resulted in very large increases of wild salmon into the rivers of the Gulf of Bothnia. According to scientific trials and estimates the increase in the number of salmon in the rivers is in the magnitude of 30-50.000 salmon. This figure has to be compared with the saving of only 15.000 wild salmon (the ratio between reared and wild salmon in the Baltic is 90/10) if the TAC was to be reduced to 300.000 units. This would concurrently prevent the fishing of 135.000 reared salmon. Our national measures are thus clearly more efficient and should permit a higher TAC level until the system of delayed releases is introduced.

Our arguments are supported by the ICES advise, which states that TAC-management is not a proper tool for salmon management. A TAC of 300.000 units (Commission non-paper) would mean that 600-700.000 reared salmon would remain unutilised which potentially could harm the wild stocks by entering into rivers supporting wild stocks.

In the Gulf of Finland the Finnish salmon fishery is a coastal fishery which takes exclusively reared salmon produced by Finland. This fishery should be treated as a sea ranching activity where reared salmon should be utilised fully. A reduction of the current TAC is therefore totally unacceptable.

The only way for Finland to accept a reduction in the TACs would be that the Community in Warsaw successfully introduced separate terminal fishing TACs for the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland. These TACs would have to be given to Finland as a compensation for a reduced quota. The amount of the terminal fishing TACs should correspond to the reduction of the Finnish quotas. These TACs were to be fished in areas and during seasons when no or only sparse straying individuals of wild salmon are present. Such areas have already been identified in Finland and include mostly coastal regions such as sea areas in the proximity of dammed river mouths where no wild salmon occur. This fishery would allow Finland to harvest a part of the salmon which are a result of Finland's annual releases of 2 million salmon smolts. Otherwise the reduced TACs would cause socio-economic difficulties. Furthermore it would be a conservation measure as it would decrease straying of reared fish into rivers supporting wild salmon stocks.

With the term terminal fishing Finland means a fishery where reared salmon at the end of their lifespan (which would otherwise die and could not reproduce in a river) are fished. Such a fishery would be a clean fishery for reared salmon and if wild salmon were caught these would be extremely rare individuals. Such a fishery would be totally in line with

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sustainable and responsible fishing and Finland would undertake to provide the Member States and the Commission (together with the Contracting Parties of the IBSFC) with information on the composition of salmon in catches. Furthermore Finland agrees to together with the Commission examine the scientific information and the possibilities and areas for undertaking such fisheries. This would be a solution for 1997 on an experimental basis in order to find pathways for a future management scheme including delayed release.

## 2. Extension of summer ban to the baselines

This is a measure which would concern Finland to a large extent due to our long shoreline. The coastal fishery with trapnets is to a large extent situated outside the baseline. Therefore our second most important salmon fishing method would more or less be whiped out. This measure would also give rise to regional differences along our coast. This has been proposed without any socio-economic or biologic analysis or advise from the ICES. The Finnish national measures already regulates these coastal fisheries allowing for wild salmon to migrate into home rivers.

Furthermore the summer ban for the longline-fishery in the Gulf of Finland can not be prolonged to 7.5 months because that would totally eliminate this fishery. The Gulf of Finland does not allow for driftnetting as an alternative because of marine transports and limited areas. Due to its small area the Gulf of Finland freezes early and prevents in itself fishing for many months. This factor does not limit salmon fishing in the southern Baltic.

## 3. Limitation of smolt production

Finland and Sweden are the principal producers and releasers of salmon smolts. Most of these releases are based on water court decisions which could not be changed suddenly. Furthermore the future management scheme of delayed releases/terminal fishery would be in need of a stable smolt production. There would also be socio-economic difficulties if the releases were to decrease. Some of our releases are based on earlier wild salmon stocks which are now reproduced only in our production units. These stocks can be regarded as gene banks and decreasing or stopping releases would mean their final extinction.

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