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## NOTE

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 23-24 June 2025: Action for the recovery of fish stocks in the Baltic Sea and better future prospects for the sectors dependent on these stocks - Information from Sweden

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### **Action for the recovery of fish stocks in the Baltic Sea and better future prospects for the sectors dependent on these stocks**

Information from Sweden

Despite more than a decade of TACs for the Baltic Sea set in line with scientific advice on MSY or at levels below MSY, and despite the introduction of numerous remedial measures, many of the fish stocks are in poor condition. As several stocks are in bad condition, we need to be cautious when establishing fishing opportunities for 2026 in the Baltic Sea. Restrictive TACs as well as complementary measures are necessary to ensure the recovery of fish stocks.

The stock situation results in a struggling fishing industry and related value chain due to fluctuating or diminishing fishing opportunities. Hence, we need to focus on recovery and finding a path towards rebuilding the stocks. Rebuilt stocks would provide better possibilities to avoid large fluctuations and maintain healthy biomass levels, and at the same time foster socioeconomic stability and growth for our industries.

Until this day we have not delivered on the CFP-objectives regarding small scale fisheries and Sweden thus calls for giving priority to finding solutions for small-scale coastal fishermen,

including in times when strict fishing rules are required. We need a strategic direction towards using more fish for human consumption and need to ensure local food production from our coastal fishermen and coastal communities. Strengthening food security is high on our agendas which requires both stocks that can be fished and a robust processing chain that can supply food.

The ecosystem in the Baltic Sea is volatile/unstable and the sea basin faces many challenges. For many stocks ICES highlight a high natural mortality caused by other factors than fisheries. There is thus a need to take a holistic approach. In addition to a responsible fishery management, we also need to improve the environmental situation and address other pressures on the fish stocks, such as the increased populations of seals and cormorants. Seal and cormorant populations in the Baltic Sea have now reached such high numbers that their impact by far exceeds the landings from the commercial fishery. Therefore, we need to reduce the number of cormorants and seals and to allow trade in seal products to incentivise game management. We urge the Commission to propose necessary changes to the annex of the Birds Directive as well as to the Regulation on ban on trade of seal products.

For a truly holistic approach to become reality there is also a need to discuss how the Commission requests for advice from ICES could change. The advice on fishing opportunities should take into account how the size and population structure is affected by fishing and other human influencing factors, as well as mortality from predators. This is something Sweden put forward in the process leading up to the Oceans Pact where we note that this issue has not been included. We have also highlighted the need to consider this in the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy.

In addition, we must address the degraded ecosystem resulting from cumulative anthropogenic pressures and climate change through implementation or update of relevant environmental directives

We also need to strengthen and integrate coastal management. The coastal zones interact with the open sea and most of our common stocks have a clear connection to the coastal zone. Hence, we would also like to highlight the need for particular attention to management measures in the coastal areas. Through a more holistic management of the Baltic Sea we could strengthen the ecosystem and ultimately rebuild the fish stocks of the Baltic Sea guided by all three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic and social to the benefit of all sectors depending on ecosystem services.

The CFP needs to deliver strong stocks and good conditions for the blue value chain, especially the small-scale coastal fishery for human consumption.

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