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| From: | General Secretariat of the Council |
| To: | Delegations |
| No. Cion doc.: | ST 11735/18 PECHE 320 + ADD 1 - COM (2018) 608 final + Annex |
| Subject: | 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 |

Delegations will find attached written comments by the German delegation on the above-mentioned proposal.

Comments by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

regarding the 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

(11735/18)

I. General comments

Germany thanks the Commission for the early submission of its proposal fixing for 2019 the fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea, and broadly welcomes it. This applies particularly to the proposed total allowable catch (TAC) for western herring, with regard to which the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) recommended a closure of the fishery.

However, we have concerns about the proposals for both cod stocks. On western cod, the Commission's proposal falls far short of the ICES recommendations, although this stock has already increased markedly. For eastern cod, by contrast, the Commission proposes a far lower reduction than the ICES has recommended.

In view of the marked increase in the western cod stock, we think that there is scope to increase the daily bag limit for recreational fishing. In our view, commercial and recreational fisheries should be treated equally and the bag limit should be increased in proportion to the TAC.

II. Comments on the proposals regarding individual stocks

1. Western herring (subdivisions 22-24)

We welcome the fact that the Commission has not followed the ICES recommendation, which would have led to closure of the fishery. Given the great economic importance of this stock to many fishers in the Baltic, we believe that a 63 % reduction in the TAC is too much. The key consideration is that the stock should be able to continue to recover. It will be able to do so with a smaller reduction in the TAC, by 40-45 %.

From a legal point of view, the existing reference values in the current Baltic Sea plan must be used to establish the TAC. Based on those values, a reduction of at least 22 % is required, together with additional measures such as a greater reduction in the TAC. In our view, taking this aspect into account, a more moderate reduction in the TAC would therefore be appropriate.

2. Other herring stocks

We broadly support the Commission's proposals on other herring stocks.

3. Western cod (subdivisions 22-24)

We do not understand why the Commission's proposal for western cod falls so far short of the ICES recommendation, which envisages a TAC of up to 22 238 tonnes. This cod stock has recovered so well, thanks to a strong 2016 year class, that increasing the TAC by only 31 % is not at all adequate in view of the difficult situation faced by fishers in the Western Baltic. Even if account is taken of the fact that the 2017 year class is weak, the TAC can be raised significantly more in this case (by about 100 %) without jeopardising sustainable management in the years ahead.

4. Eastern cod (subdivisions 25-32)

We have strong concerns about the fact that the Commission also diverges very considerably from the ICES recommendation in its proposal for eastern cod and – invoking the precautionary approach – proposes a reduction of only 15 % instead of the recommended minimum 50 % reduction. The stock is in very poor condition and its biomass continues to decrease. In our view, an appreciably stronger cut is required for this stock.

5. Plaice

Owing to the low TACs for western cod and herring, plaice is an important additional source of income for many fishers in the Western Baltic. We therefore advocate following the ICES recommendation and increasing the TAC by 100 %.

6. Salmon and sprat

We can support the Commission's proposals on salmon and sprat.
