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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER

Executive Summary of the Impact Assessment

Accompanying the document

**Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council
establishing a multiannual plan for the Baltic salmon stock and the fisheries exploiting
that stock**

**This report commits only the Commission departments involved in preparing it and in
no way prejudices the final form of any decision to be taken by the Commission.**

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INTRODUCTION

The Impact Assessment concerns a draft proposal that will set long-term management objectives and implementing methods concerning the Baltic salmon stocks (*Salmo salar*, L.). Salmon is an anadromous fish species, which spends its juvenile and adult phases in the sea, while spawning and nursing in rivers. In the Baltic Sea, currently around 30 rivers hold native self-reproducing populations.

Since 1997 there has been a Salmon Action Plan (SAP) in the Baltic developed by the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission (IBSFC) and with the objective to recover wild Baltic salmon river stocks, maintain the genetic diversity of the stocks, re-establish salmon populations in potential salmon rivers and to keep the level of fishing as high as possible by steering catches towards reared salmon¹. Since 2005, when the IBSFC ceased to exist and the SAP in theory became obsolete, the European Community has been managing marine salmon fishing by setting TACs on an annual basis, combined with technical measures such as closed seasons and minimum landing size. However, scientific advice are still based on the targets set in the SAP and some Member States are still working with measures to fulfil the objectives of the SAP as well as to fulfil the objectives stated through the Habitats Directive (HD)² and the Water Framework Directive (WFD)³. Some objectives for the Baltic salmon are also agreed by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and covered by the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action plan⁴. The people affected by this initiative are approximately 400 commercial fishermen actively targeting salmon and at least 40.000 recreational fishermen fishing for salmon in Baltic rivers and Sea.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

There are some core problems that need to be addressed for the successful management of Baltic salmon:

Some wild salmon populations are still outside safe biological limits (see State of the stock). This is partly due to natural causes or unfavourable situations in the rivers which can not be fully addressed with this initiative. However, some marine fishing is still of concern for weak stocks and without a new management system in place, there will be a lack of long term agreed objectives for setting annual fishing opportunities to avoid that decisions are made in an *ad hoc* manner.

Rearing and stocking of Baltic salmon is a widespread activity in the region with more than twice as many reared as wild salmon smolt leaving the Baltic rivers each year. There is a risk that these reared salmon could negatively influence the genetic diversity of the wild salmon stock. Safeguarding genetic diversity that would ensure resilience to different external threats to the stock is a priority.

There is too little wild salmon to fish and the production capacity for the stock is not sufficiently used.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/governance/consultations/baltic_salmon/action_plan_en.pdf

² Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

³ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

⁴ Adopted on 15 November 2007 in Krakow, Poland by the HELCOM Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting:

http://www.helcom.fi/BSAP/en_GB/intro/

The salmon stock in the Baltic Sea consist of many different river stocks that all migrate to the Main Basin and are found in waters of all Member States bordering the Sea. Actions taken by Member States separately will hence not be sufficient to guaranty the sustainable exploitation of the stock and community action is required in accordance with the Basic Regulation⁵ which provides for the establishment of management plans for fisheries exploiting stocks within and outside safe biological limits. The proposal would fall under the exclusive powers of the Community and so as a general principle the subsidiarity principle would not apply.

OBJECTIVES

The proposal aims to set objectives and procedures but as much as possible leave the implementation work to Member States. The general objective of the plan is to ensure that the conservation status of the entire Baltic stock, i.e. all populations, is favourable and above safe biological limits to provide for sustainable exploitation of the resource. The plan should also contribute to the Plan of Implementation agreed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002⁶ and would therefore be based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries management⁷ and be designed to exploit the stocks concerned up to their maximum sustainable yield^{8, 9}. In order to reach the objectives Member States must also comply with the relevant provisions of community environmental legislation (HD, WFD and MSFD).

The specific objectives of the initiative are to:

- (a) contribute to the favourable conservation status of the Baltic salmon stock and provide for exploitation at sea of wild salmon river stocks within safe biological limits and according to their maximum sustainable yield;
- (b) contribute to the safeguarding of the genetic diversity of the Baltic salmon stock,
- (c) ensure that both commercial and recreational fishermen in the Baltic Sea and its rivers shall be able to exploit the Baltic salmon stock in a sustainable way.

POLICY OPTIONS

⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002 of 20 December 2002 on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy

⁶ Johannesburg Plan of Implementation: www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/POIToc.htm.

⁷ SEC(2001) 1696: Commission staff working paper 'The ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM): possibilities and priorities for international cooperation'.

⁸ COM(2006) 360: Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament 'Implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield'.

⁹ SEC(2006) 868: Commission staff working document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament 'Implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield' — Technical background to the Commission Communication 'Implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield: a strategy for growth and employment'.

1.1. Presentation and screening of high level options

The 3 policy options that have been considered for the management of the Baltic salmon with the aim to fulfil the objectives are:

Option 1- No EU management plan

The first option is the current management system consisting of the components already in place in the Baltic Sea region and include:

Annual marine total allowable catch for 2 areas.

Technical measures at sea including summer closure for the offshore fishery and minimum landing size.

Member States voluntary actions and implementation of current environmental legal frameworks expected to influence the Baltic salmon stock (seasonal and area closures, fin-clipping programmes, habitat and water quality improvements, restocking activities, etc.).

1.1.1. Option 2 - Marine management plan

The second option corresponds to a normal multi annual management plan as set out in the Basic Regulation⁵. The option would include the Member States measures as stated in Option 1 but would add features on marine management of salmon fisheries such as:

Multi annual harvest control system including conservation reference points and harvest control rules for setting of TAC.

Technical measures (present and/or new)

Research

1.1.2. Option 3 - Integrated management plan

Option 3 is in many aspects a continuation of the SAP and hence contains measures for both marine and some freshwater management of salmon. It would include the management measures as described in option 2 and also possible additions such as:

The definition of a conservation reference point for the species, taking into account the whole life cycle of the species.

A harvest control system taking into account the compensatory releases of reared salmon

A restocking programme for rivers with extinct salmon populations as a conservation measure for the stock

Guidelines for stocking of salmon

Table 1 summarises the pre-screening of the three options proposed in regards to their economic, social and environmental impact. It also offers a summary of the likely impact of the three different options on achievement of the specific objectives with conclusions.

	Option 1 — No EU multiannual plan	Option 2 — Marine multiannual plan	Option 3 — Integrated multiannual plan
Economic impact	* Overall low economic profits as the full production potential may not be reached	* Harvest control rules bring predictability and increase profits *Overall low economic profits as	* Harvest control rules bring predictability and increase profits * Development of the full potential of the wild river stocks give higher

		the full production potential may not be reached	profitability in commercial and recreational fisheries
Social impact	* Risk of continues distrust between different user groups		* Closer coordination between implementation of fishing and environmental policies * Strong commitment among Member States and stakeholders while continuing the work started by the SAP
Environmental impact	* Genetic risk to the stock as it does not cover reared salmon and stocking *Some drivers such as diseases are not addressed	* Genetic risk to the stock as it does not cover reared salmon and stocking	* Common agreed objectives and conservation reference points for salmon throughout its whole life-cycle * Together with the environmental legal frameworks, could address all drivers and threats to salmon, which could lead to stronger river stocks and retain genetic diversity
Contribute to the favourable conservation status of the Baltic salmon stock and provide for exploitation at sea of wild river stocks within safe biological limits and according to their maximum sustainable yield.	+/-	+	+
Contribute to the safeguarding of the genetic diversity of the Baltic salmon stock.	+/-	+/-	+
Enable both commercial and recreational fishermen in the Baltic Sea and its rivers to exploit the Baltic salmon stock in a sustainable way.	+/-	+	+
Conclusion	Discarded	Discarded	Selected

Table 1: Social, economic and environmental impact of the three different policy options and likely future performance of the three options on the specific objectives with conclusions.

+/- = no or slow change; + = likely to reach; - = unlikely to reach

Based on the screening of the impact and the likely achievement of the objectives, Options 1 and 2 has been discarded.

1.2. Presentation of suboptions

In the case of option 3 — the integrated management plan — there are in essence three key choices to make in order to identify the suitable suboptions in order to address all the drivers and threats to the stock (see Figure 1).

- (1) The first choice concerns the issue of compensatory releases of salmon and if these should be slowly phased out of the system.
- (2) The second choice to make is which harvest control system, and particularly which TAC system, to use.
 - An overall TAC that would embrace all catches, including river catches
 - A marine TAC
 - A TAC for offshore commercial catches outside 4 or 12 nautical miles (nm) from the baseline.
- (3) The third choice concerns all the other policy measures that could form part of an integrated management plan.

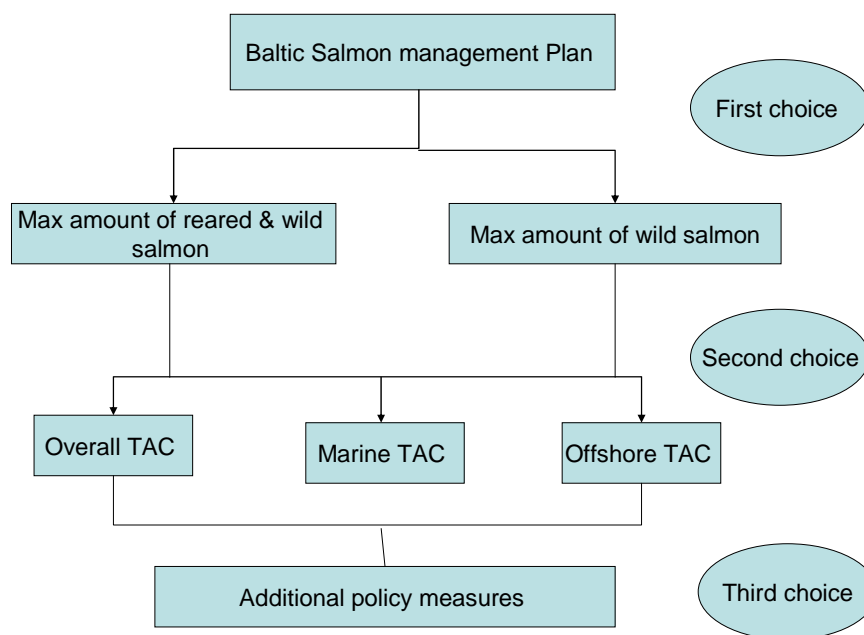


Figure 1: Flowchart to visualize the three choices to be made to identify the suboption that will be most likely to fulfil the objectives of the plan.

ANALYSE OF IMPACTS

1.2.1. *The analysis of the likely impact for the different options has been done in 3 steps and in accordance with the different choices to make.*

1.3. Step 1 – Reared vs wild salmon

The main arguments for and against a system that would favour the phasing out of compensatory releases of salmon, steering resources to the improvement of wild salmon habitat in favour of a more wild salmon dominated system, are summed up below.

	Negative impact	Positive impact
Environmental		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Lower risk of genetic pollution and competition from reared salmon. *Financial resources made available for improving river capacity for natural salmon production. *More wild salmon and stronger river stocks. *Possible improvement for other migratory species
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Risk of loss of fishing opportunities for fisheries targeting mainly reared salmon. *Risk of overall reduction in the number of fish (reared + wild) to catch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * More wild salmon to catch, both at sea and in rivers. *Possible increase in tourism opportunities along rivers.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Risk of loss of job and know how at rearing facilities. 	

Table 2: The main arguments for and against a system that would favour the phasing out of compensatory releases in favour of a more wild salmon dominated system.

1.4. Step 2 – Choice of harvest control system

The main environmental, social, management and economic impacts for the different TAC harvest control systems are summed up below.

	Overall TAC	Marine TAC	Offshore TAC
Management impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Difficult for MSs to control. * Difficult for EU to enforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Possible for MSs to control. * Possible for EU to enforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * TAC only addresses allocation of offshore MSF between MS. * Not possible for MS to control without some changes to the control system.

Environmental impact	*TAC useful to regulate total salmon fishing mortality.	* TAC useful to regulate marine fishing mortality * MSs responsibility to ensure protection for wild salmon river stocks. * Incentive for MSS to restore their rivers and reintroduce salmon for river and coastal fishing.	* TAC useful to limit offshore MSF, but not to regulate total fishing mortality. * MS responsibility to ensure protection for wild salmon river stocks. * Incentive for MS to restore their rivers and reintroduce salmon for river and coastal fishing.
Economic impact	* Overall reduction of the fishing opportunities for MSs with a lot of river and/or recreational fishing.	* No EU limit on river catches, benefiting MSs with productive rivers.	* Increases fishing opportunities for MS with productive rivers and high shares of coastal, river and recreational fishing.
Social impact	* TAC useful for allocation of all catches between MSs * Enhance trust between different user groups.	* TAC useful to regulate marine allocation between MSs. *Big responsibility for MSs to ensure fair allocation of fishing opportunities.	*Big responsibility for MSs to ensure fair allocation of fishing opportunities.

Table 3: Summary of impacts for the 3 different TAC harvest control systems.

1.5. Step 3 — Choice of policy measures

A description of the likely impact of all the analysed policy measures could not be included here but for a summary of the likely impact of the measures on some key issues please see Table 4 below.

2. COMPARING THE OPTIONS

Table 4 summarises and compare the likely future impacts of the policy measures and choices that were analysed in Step 1, 2 and 3 on some key issues. The conclusion of the comparison is also included.

Key issues Policy measures and alternative solutions	Economic and social impact commercial sea fishing	Economic and social impact recreational and river fishing	Environmental impact on the stocks	Administrational impact on Member States	Stakeholder and BSRAC support	STECF /Scientific support	Decision making level	Conclusions	
	Step 1 = choice of fish to target								
Stock consisting of mainly reared salmon	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	-	EU/MS	Discarded	
Stock consisting of mainly wild salmon	+/-	+	+	+	+/-	+	EU/MS	Selected	
Step 2 - choice of harvest control system									
Overall TAC	+	-	+	-	+/-	-	EU	Discarded	
Marine TAC	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	+	EU	Selected	
Offshore TAC	+/-	+	-	-	+/-	+/-	EU	Discarded	
Step 3 – Choice of additional policy measures									
Technical measures	Keep closed season offshore	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+	+	EU	Selected
	Closed season coast and rivers	+/-	+/-	+	-	+	+	EU/MS	Selected
	Keep Minimum Landing size	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+	+	EU	Selected
	Set minimum hook size	-	+/-	+	-	-	+/-	EU	Discarded
	Closed areas coast and rivers	+/-	+/-	+	-	+	+	EU/MS	Selected

Additional harvest control measures	2 TAC areas for marine or overall catches	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	EU	Selected
	1 TAC area for marine or overall catches	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	EU	Discarded
	Harvest control rules	+	+	+	+	+	+	EU	Selected
	Effort regime for longlines	-	+/-	+	-	-	+/-	EU	Discarded
Conservation reference targets	Differentiated smolt production targets	+/-	+/-	+	+	+	+	EU	Selected
	One smolt production target	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	-	EU	Discarded
	Returning spawners target	-	+	+	+/-	+/-	+	MS	Voluntary
Protecting the wild salmon genetic pool	Recommendations on stocking practices	+/-	+/-	-	+	+/-	+	EU	Selected
	Fin clipping program	+	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	-	MS	Voluntary
	Identification of terminal fishing areas	+	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	-	MS	Voluntary
Re-stocking program	With means from European Fisheries Fund	+	+	+	+/-	+	+	EU/MS	Selected
Implementation plans	As part of WFD	+/-	+/-	+	+	+/-	+	MS	Voluntary
Control	Production	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+	EU	Selected
	Catches	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+	EU	Selected
Research		+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+	+	MS	Voluntary

Table 4: Likely impact of the different policy measures and alternative solutions analysed in Step 1, 2 and 3 on selected key issues and with conclusions.

+/- = no impact/no change/partly support; + = positive impact/support; - = negative impact/no support

The preferred option include the selected policy measures in Table 4 and would bring added value for management of the species in comparison with the current management as it would

address all the issues identified for the scope of the initiative. It is however fundamental to realise that the successful management of the species can not be reached by this initiative alone but relies on the successful implementation of the environmental directives and other frameworks affecting the species.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Any multiannual plan must have means to ensure implementation of the mandatory aspects and fulfilment of the objectives. The core indicators for evaluating achievement of the objectives of the Baltic salmon multiannual plan are:

- (a) development of the national fishery;
- (b) production of parr, smolt and estimated smolt production capacity;
- (c) the genetic composition of the stocks;
- (d) fisheries measures implemented;
- (e) objectives established;
- (f) the activity of stocking and restocking of salmon;
- (g) national control action plans.

The indicators should be monitored by Member States six-yearly intervals in order to detect any deficiencies in operation of the plan. Member States reports will be assessed by STECF and if advice from the STECF and ICES indicate that the plan is not achieving its objectives, a review could be initiated by DG MARE.