
Brussels, 23 September 2021

EAA position on recreational fishing for Western Baltic cod in 2022

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) published its catch recommendations for western cod in the Baltic Sea on September 10, for the year 2022, significantly later than usual. The reason for the delayed announcement was a re-examination of current scientific data.

Current scientific information shows that the Baltic western stock cod population suffers from both environmental factors affecting reproductive success, a previous history of overfishing and that selective commercial fishing gears that could reduce bycatch of small cod have not yet been utilised.

Due to the very low reproductive success of the last four years, it was to be expected that the fishing opportunities would be significantly lower than in previous years.

For cod in the western Baltic Sea, ICES has recommended within the framework of the EU management plan a total catch of 698 tonnes, which is to be shared between commercial and recreational fishers. This is a major reduction compared to 2021s commercial quota of 4000 tonnes.

Recreational fishing vs commercial fishing – a totally different approach

While commercial fishers want to get their permitted catch, the so-called quota, as quickly as possible with as little effort as possible, recreational fishers prefer a different approach. Profit is not a motive for recreational anglers as the sale of recreationally caught fish is forbidden. With a-bag limit the angler is given a daily maximum catch whether they reach this or not, is not the primary reason to fish from the coast or to venture out onto the Baltic Sea. Just the experience of fishing together with the chance of catching a fish is what drives most anglers. The ability to perhaps take home a fish and not just the size of the bag limit is often seen as a goal and not, as in commercial fishing, as the sole motivator for going fish. **MSS (Maximum Sustainable Satisfaction) instead of MSY (Maximum Sustainable Yield).**

Recognize the added value of recreational anglers

Total economic impact of marine recreational fishing amounts to 10.5 billion euro, supporting almost 100,000 jobs in Europe. (Hyder et al. 2017). The largest share of this expenditure is on boats, fishing tackle, travel and overnight stays. Anglers are therefore an important source of income for tourism in coastal regions, especially in the off season.

Anglers live for the enjoyment of fishing and the chance of catching a fish, not for the amount caught

The so-called bag limit (daily catch limit) has been in effect for recreational cod fishing in the western Baltic Sea and Öresund region since 2016. This means that the daily catch allowed for all recreational fishers is limited to a certain number of fish. In 2021 the daily catch limit is 5 fish per angler and fishing day and 2 fish during the spawning season in February and March.

The organized anglers in Sweden, Denmark and Germany have recognized that, as protectors and users of the stock, they have made their contribution to the recovery of the stock and will continue to do so in the future.

These are the demands of the anglers from Deutscher Angelfischerverband (Germany), Sportfiskarna (Sweden) and Danmarks Sportsfiskerforbund (Denmark) for 2022

- The possibility of recreational fishing for cod must be preserved.
- Consider alternative management measures which further lower the recreational catch: e.g., increased minimum landing size; introduce a maximum landing size - to protect the biggest cod, the 'super spawners; targeted management of recreational fishing; intensification of the dialogue between the interest groups, science and politics.
- No dedicated fishing activities on spawning cod.
- Improvement and obligatory use of selective gear to reduce bycatch of cod in commercial fisheries, is urgently needed.

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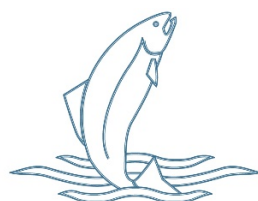
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