BALTIC SEA 2020'S VISION OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE BALTIC

Fishery management is based on the environmental requirements of the Baltic Sea rather than the fishing industry's financial needs. The Baltic Sea Region is a leading region in Europe and has established an integrated management system which on the one hand enables people to use what the ecosystem produces and on the other ensures that all species, habitats and structures are protected and exist at sufficient levels so that they survive for the foreseeable future. The ability of the fish stocks to regain their necessary structure, function and productivity has increased considerably and increased the stock's resistance to environmental change. Cod stocks have grown and are once more large enough to control prey fish, mainly sprat.

The Baltic Sea Region has worked determinedly to protect the ecosystem and brought together different users of the sea's resources for joint discussions on problems, effects and measures. A regional forum comprising representatives of governments in the region, fishermen, researchers and environmental organisations is working to constantly adapt management to the various events and changes in the environment and the world around us. This has been achieved through management plans spanning several years and by introducing measures such as:

- Reducing overcapacity in the fishing fleet and introducing measures to adapt capacity to the balance of resources (including rights based systems)
- Abolishing subsidies
- Banning discards and high-grading

Working together on controls in the Baltic Sea Region has succeeded in preventing illegal fishing at the same time as consumers are demanding legally caught fish. Global quality and certification schemes such as MSC have been crucial in creating traceability and so increasing the value of fish.

Agricultural use of fertiliser and cultivation methods shift depending on the area and the season to minimise leaching of nutrients to the Baltic Sea. The impact of chemicals and shipping, for example, is effectively regulated to safeguard the quality and productivity of the ecosystem.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In today's system there is a peculiar distinction drawn between fish, fishing and the marine environment – it is almost like saying "fish don't live in the sea". Fish are seen as a resource which must be harvested but the ecosystem of which fish are a part and also a cornerstone of is not included in the assessment of how much should be harvested. This distinction has brought us to the situation where we are today. The complicated web of the marine environment that links together species and habitats must be an essential element of fisheries management.

Given ordinary common sense, most people understand that the lack of cod in the Baltic is an environmental issue, in other words the result of overfishing affecting the Baltic environment. It goes without saying that fish are an important part of the Baltic environment and that fishing affects this environment. Too many cod have been fished from the sea and as a result, the relationship between species in the food chain has been changed; when cod has decreased, sprat have increased, leading to reduced amounts of zooplankton, contributing to an increase in phytoplankton.

If the ecosystemapproach is implemented as a scientific basis for decision making, it will help managers of fisheries and marine resources to reach decisions which take into account regime shifts between species and in the food web.

The Baltic environment is in poor condition and due to many years of overfishing the environment which produces fish must be assigned sufficient protection. The economic benefit from Baltic fishing is limited, which further indicates that social and economic considerations are of secondary nature. If the environment cannot maintain production of the resource, there will be no economics of fishing at all. . A good marine environment is essential if we are to have fish at all.

Baltic Sea 2020 thinks that it is of vital importance that the reform of the fisheries policy guarantees ecological sustainability as a prerequisite for fishing. In turn, this means a shift to catches regulated by "maximum sustainable yield" and the precautionary principle. For this to succeed, the barriers separating environmental management and fisheries management must be broken down.

THE CONTROL REGULATION

The Control Regulation currently being drawn up by the Commission is of course welcomed – we need to combat illegal and unreported fishing! However, it is remarkable that the link to reform of the CFP is not apparent.. It is hoped that the reform will be as progressive as the Commission expressed. Baltic Sea 2020 **considers that the Control Regulation should clearly be linked to the CFP, e.g. the regulatory framework should be adapted by 2014 to reduce any delay in adopting new measures.**

MARKET-ADAPTED FISHERIES INDUSTRY

The gap between fishermen, researchers and administrators is currently too large. Decisions on technical regulations are made by ministers far away from fishing villages and it is almost impossible to effectively and quickly amend rules to change environmental conditions or stocks. Also the industry is stimulated by an extensive system of subsidies making it impossible to adapt production to the market.

Baltic Sea 2020 suggests that subsidies must be abolished. The current system, with all its excess capacity, harms the environment and is hard to defend as an economic system. When subsidies are abolished, there is an "automatic" adjustment of the capacity of the fleet, based on supply and demand. Subsidies should be

abolished over a transitional period of – we suggest – 5 years. Baltic Sea 2020 holds the view that only a time-limited subsidy for scrapping vessels could be considered. Implementation in other countries has demonstrated that tradable fishing rights can ease the process of adapting capacity to fish resources.

REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

To strengthen responsibility and increase involvement, a regional management organisation should be set up. Decision making should be delegated from the Council of Ministers to this forum. A regional management forum would be an extension of the RAC and should include representatives of – governments in the region, fishermen, researchers and environmental organisations. HELCOM, responsible for environmental monitoring and environmental measures in the Baltic Sea, should be given a particular role in the work of drawing up data to provide a clear picture of the environmental position.

The goal of the regional management organisation should be to replenish overfished stocks and to implement measures which are adapted to changes in the ecosystem of the Baltic on an ongoing basis. This demands management plans spanning several years and the implementation of measures such as:

- Reducing overcapacity in the fishing fleet and introducing measures to adapt capacity to the resources (including trade in fishing rights)
- Abolishing fishing subsidies
- Banning discards and high-grading
- Controls and monitoring of the entire production chain must be guaranteed with the help of traceability and labelling systems such as MSC, for example.