

Let environmental considerations govern cod fishing

The International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) today put forward its recommendations for cod fishing in the Baltic Sea for the year 2010. These recommendations will serve as the basis for decisions on fishing quotas taken by the Commission and the Council of Ministers.

ICES notes the continued improvement of the cod stock and recommends that the fishing quota for the principal, eastern stock be increased by 15 per cent, the maximum increase allowed under the EU's management plan for Baltic cod fishing.

"We see an increase of the cod stock, but it's still at a historically low level and far below the level required for long-term sustainability. The increase of the stock is due to whims of nature and to the fact that politicians have dared to adhere to last year's decisions. But we're still teetering on the verge of success in terms of recreating a sustainable cod stock. The EU's management plan does not tolerate any deviations or changes. This year it's even more important that the fisheries ministers have the courage to resist pressure and adhere to the decision they made two years ago", says Katarina Veem, program director at Baltic Sea 2020.

A recovered cod stock can have a significant impact on the Baltic's marine environment within five to ten years. Virtually all other measures require a much longer period of time to produce an effect. Cod fishing must therefore be treated as an environmental issue. When the cod stock increased in the early 1990s, politicians were quick to allow increased quotas and cod was again fished down to historically low levels. This time around, the politicians must put the environment first and continue to follow the management plan.

A recovered cod stock will improve the Baltic's marine environment as well as providing better catches for professional and local fishermen. But for this to happen, the fisheries ministers must keep their heads when voices are raised in support of increased fishing quotas.

FOR FURTHER COMMENTS:

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