



**25** YEARS IN FAVOR OF THE PEOPLE AND THE  
SALMON OF THE VALLEY OF TORNE-MUONIO RIVER  
TORNE-MUONIO RIVER ASSOCIATION

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR  
MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

**Maria Damanaki**

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*We wish to take this opportunity to thank you, Commissioner Maria Damanaki and Director Carla Montesi, for excellence in management and efforts to improve the chances of survival of the Baltic Sea salmon stock in 2011.*

*You changed the course of history: because of your politically courageous actions the Baltic Sea salmon fishing quotas were decreased by half. The fishing of mixed wild salmon stocks of Bothnian Bay was clearly reduced in the Baltic Sea. This has resulted in a significant increase in numbers of wild salmon that have returned to their rivers of origin.*

However,

we are disappointed in what has followed. The salmon quotas are still much larger than what is recommended by scientific research. There has been advance in switching to stock-based fishing, but the salmon quotas based on mixed stock fishing prevent the development.

The method of determining the salmon quotas is also a discriminatory process, since the rights of the native populations of the river fronts and their ancient culture of salmon fishing is disregarded, when these decisions are made. The salmon fishing, that has been practiced by these populations for a millennium, has deep roots in their culture in a way that is protected by Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Helsinki is farther from here than Rome is from Brussels. We don't believe that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the agency that governs fishery in Finland, represents our region in salmon affairs. The Ministry is willing neither to recognize our

historical fishing rights nor the laws, and is not interested in seeking the greatest economical yield from the salmon fishing, but supports maritime fishing.

The Ministry's opinion also differs from the opinion of the Parliament of Finland. The Parliament has requested the ministry to initiate a process that aims to change the criteria for relative stability regarding the salmon fishing quota. Chancellor of Justice of Finnish Council of State has urged the ministry to pay attention to the fishing rights of the people of these river fronts, as the same resources are fished at the sea and in the rivers.

Your agency addresses economy, environment and social factors, but does not consider the fact that the salmon return from the sea to their rivers of origin, and that fishing salmon in the rivers would be economically, and biologically, and socially much more beneficial than catching it in the sea.

We do understand very well the difference between the fishing culture of our region and that of the rest of Europe. We understand that when decisions are made with background in continental Europe, the focus is in sea fishing and its development. Salmon has historically been fished in the river mouths and along the bodies of rivers; in this regard salmon fishing has been different from fishing non-anadromous sea fish.

### A Brief Illustration of the Origins of Salmon Fishing Rights

The land surrounding Bothnian Bay was developed because it was rich in salmon. The population was concentrated along banks of the salmon rivers, for after the long and cold arctic winters, which were scarce in nourishment, the salmon arrived as a savior and was abundant. The salmon fishing around Bothnian Bay was organized centuries before Swedish King's dominance reached the area.

Unlike the rest of Europe, these river fronts by Bothnian Bay were never a part of any fiefdom. Land, and lakes, and rivers were owned by local yeomen. Most estates are still owned by the same families. The salmon fishing rights always belonged to the land owners even though the government taxed the income it provided.

The King's rule came to the area in the beginning of 17th century after Sweden gained her independence from Denmark with the help of the Germans. The help was so expensive, that the king Gustav I had to confiscate all gold from the church and all the property in the land he ever could, to pay what he owed to the Germans. The salmon was then considered the crown's regal right.

As a result of a war between Sweden and Russia, in 1809, this region and its inhabitants were divided. The border line was drawn along *River Torne* and *River Muonio* from Bothnian Bay to Norway. The east side was left under Russian rule for a century. The czar was little interested in this hinterland of Finland regardless of the fact that the people's salmon waters were in the way of Swedish logging industry.

After Finland became independent the people of the River Torne and their properties have been submitted to the "colonial" rule of Stockholm and Helsinki. Based on the before mentioned king's illegally taken regal right concerning salmon, Finland and Sweden in their Border River Agreement 1927 destroyed or moved the yeomen's salmon weirs in order to enhance the logging industry.

When Finland lost her greatest hydroelectric power plants to the Soviet Union due to the war in 1940's, the northern rivers became more important. The Power companies had purchased the rights (not including fishing rights) for waters of the great rivers of northern Finland during the war. As a result the great salmon rivers of Gulf of Bothnia:

rivers *Kemi*, *Oulu*, and *Ii* in Finland and rivers *Lule*, *Ångerman*, and *Indals* in Sweden were harnessed to produce electricity and the rivers' salmon stocks were driven to extinction.

The remaining great salmon rivers of the Baltic Sea, *Rives Kalix* and *Torne*, which belong to the same body of water and are connected by River *Tärendö*, were saved from the dam building even in the 1960's, though power companies were buying water areas on the River *Torne*. There were even plans to divert the flow of the waters all the way to the Atlantic.

Thus the salmon fishing was transferred to the sea. The last one of the centuries old salmon weirs was removed from the mouth of River *Torne* in 1972. When wild salmon stocks diminished, especially Finland started extensive sea ranching, which increased the salmon catches in the Baltic Sea in the 80's. 99% of all the caught salmon was fished in the sea. In 1990; the salmon catch was over 5,600 tonnes; 1991 only 3% of the salmon catch of the Bothnian Sea was of wild salmon stock.

In 1991 the Baltic Sea fishery was shared according to the plan the EEC had applied in the North Atlantic, where the catch in the sea is divided into national quotas TACs based on the principle of relative stability. It was the golden era of *hatchery-reared* salmon, for which the TACs were given, since the wild stocks were considered to be insignificant.

(Sweden and Finland became members of the European Union in 1995. United Nations maritime law was ratified by the Baltic Sea Countries 1996.)

### The Nature and Legal Rights

Rivers *Torne*, *Muonio*, *Lainio*, and *Kalix* are unique among great salmon rivers in the European Union. They are in excellent natural state and thus significant. These rivers have never been dammed and their waters are clean; their value is in the salmon stocks that can thrive in peace without their worst threats: agriculture and forestry. The spawn can survive the winters and these salmon are some of the most reproductive in the Baltic Sea.

We cannot accept that the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council makes decisions concerning the salmon of our rivers as a regional plaintiff. BS RAC supports the powers centralized in continental Europe, where the privileged commentators are the professional maritime fishermen and their interest groups, e.g. the European transportation unions. Maritime fishing of salmon in the Baltic Sea is a ruthless exploitation of the people residing on the river fronts of Bothnian Bay and an abolishment of their legal fishing rights. The salmon fishing rights are still today an inseparable part of the value of our real estate.

Even though the wild salmon stocks of so many rivers have been exterminated by the terms of agriculture and forestry and hydroelectric power companies, we have no right to let any of the remaining wild salmon stocks become extinct. The most senseless act would be to annihilate them by fishing. The value of the salmon catch of the Baltic Sea, approximately two million Euros, is not such a significant common interest that it would justify depriving us of our human rights and properties.

We kindly ask you to make yourselves familiar with the fishing of Atlantic salmon and the problems with it elsewhere in the European Union e.g. Scotland and Ireland, and other Atlantic countries like Norway, Iceland, and Canada. This is a different Europe. Please come and see yourself; and then you can re-evaluate whether the BS RAC is the correct agency to advise the European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries about salmon affairs in the Baltic Sea.

We kindly remind you that the salmon in the Baltic Sea does not have the protection provided by wide open sea as implied in the United Nations Law of the Sea article 66 for anadromous stocks. All the waters of the Baltic Sea are a part of an Exclusive Economic Zone of some country. Sustainable fishing of Baltic salmon can only be accomplished by strictly complying with Article 66, which would also follow the Article 17 of Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

## Our Opinion and Questions

Salmon TACs were originally established for hatchery-reared salmon. Today 80% of salmon catch is of wild origin. There is absolutely no grounds for current TAC practice. The quotas for mixed stock fishing should be cancelled even before establishing a new Baltic Salmon Management Plan.

In order to survive, each stock should only be fished according to its limits. Therefore, there simply cannot be one single quota for the mixed wild salmon stocks feeding in the Baltic Sea.

*We would like to ask, whether the European Union will continue the present practice, which was intended for hatchery-reared salmon, but is destroying the Bothnian Bay's wild salmon stocks, and does the salmon fishery system applied in the Baltic Sea differ from the one applied in the Atlantic and if so, for what purpose?*

*There are intentions in the European Union to share the salmon fishing quotas between individual fishermen as their permanent property. Is the European Commission working on this kind of plan?*

*Will the Commission honour the Bothnian Bay's actual plaintiffs' (the people of the region) historical fishing rights, interests and opinions, when addressing the salmon fishery in the Baltic Sea?*

*When can the salmon affairs in the Baltic Sea be solved based on facts of economical, environmental, and social factors?*

*We also would like to know how much does the administering of the Baltic Sea salmon fishing cost for the European Union?*

Pello the 15th october 2013

Yours faithfully



Kalervo Aska  
Chairman in Finland

Torne-Muonio River Association  
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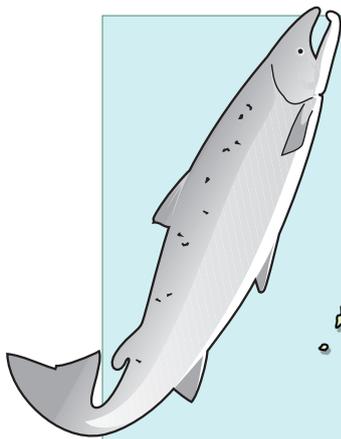


Roland Henriksson  
Chairman in Sweden

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Torne-Muonio River Association <http://www.tornionjoki.fi/jokiseura> is working in Lapland on both sides of Torne river and Muonio river in Finland and in Sweden. We have been working for 28 years in favor of our people and our salmon. We say our salmon because salmon has been a very important nature resource for us as long as Lapland has been inhabited.

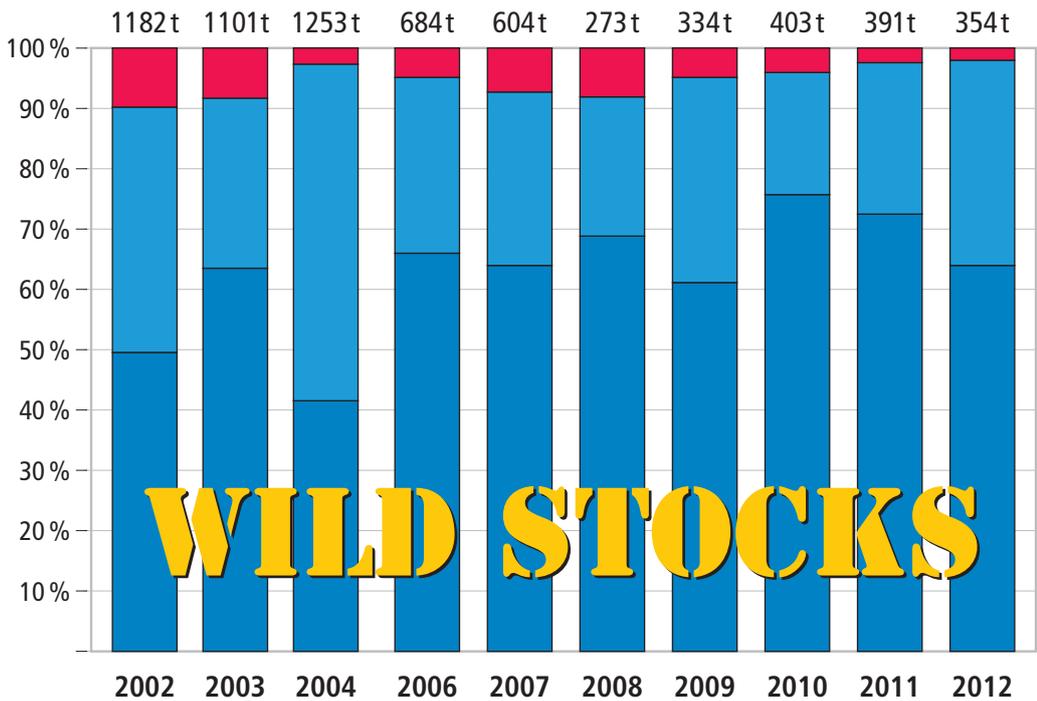
The River Torne (510 km) and it's tributary the River Muonio (387 km) are rivers in the Natura 2000 both in Finland FI1301912 and in Sweden SE0820430; nowadays it is widely accepted that the river system have potential to more than 3,5 million smolts.



■ Wild salmon of G. of Bothnia  
■ G. of Bothnia hatchery  
■ Main basin salmon – OTHER



PROPORTION OF BOTHNIAN SALMON IN BALTIC SEA MAIN BASIN SALMON CATCHES



**WILD STOCKS**

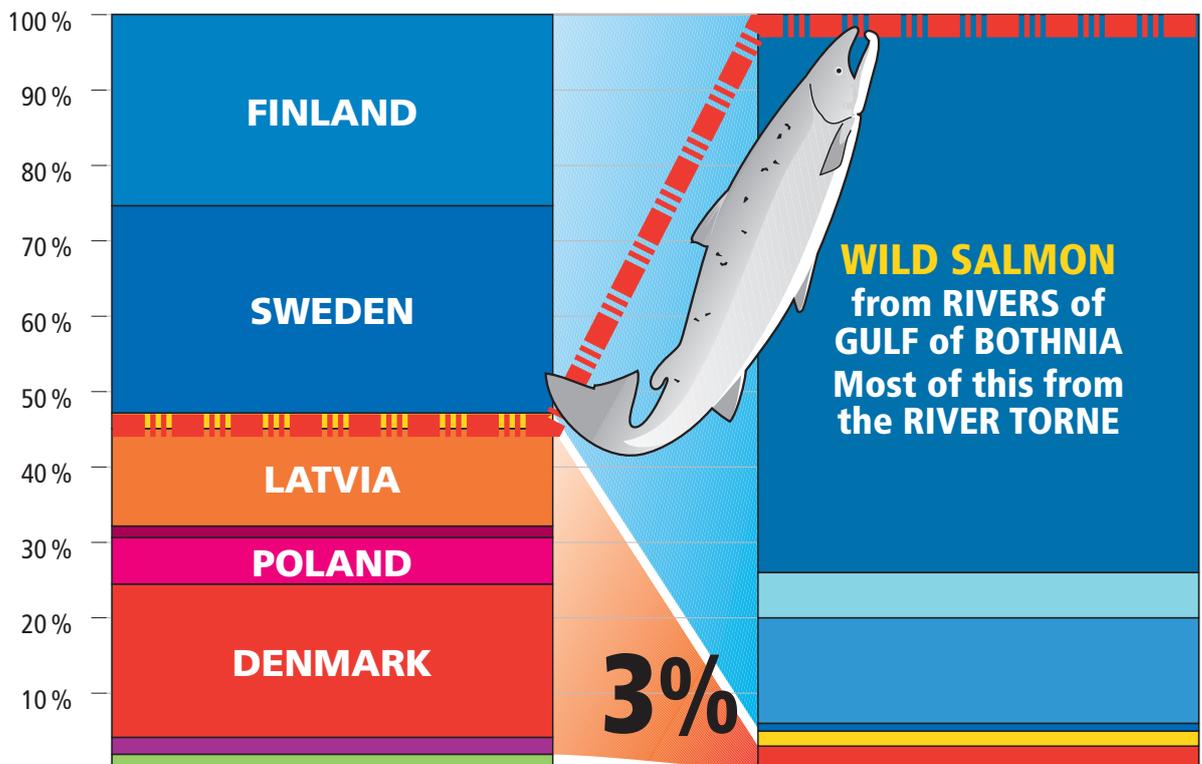
For TORNE-MUONIO RIVER ASSOCIATION by Antti@Sorro.com 15102013  
 Stock group proportion of salmon catches in the Baltic Sea main basin  
 is based on ICES WGBAST Reports 2011, table 2.7.1. and 2013 table 2.8.2.

# SALMON FISHING ON THE MAIN BASIN OF BALTIC SEA

## TACS & QUOTAS and REPORTED CATCHES 2010

COUNTRY	ALLOCATION KEY % Sub.div.22-31	TAC & QUOTA 2010	CATCH 2010 Sub.div.22-29	DISTRIBUTION %
Finland	25,3485 %	76 031 pcs	9 227 salmon	10,91 %
Sweden	27,4783 %	82 420 pcs	37 475 salmon	44,32 %
Estonia	2,0660 %	6 197 pcs	396 salmon	0,47 %
Latvia	12,9300 %	38 783 pcs	1 092 salmon	1,29 %
Lithuania	1,5200 %	5 594 pcs	408 salmon	0,48 %
Poland	6,1670 %	18 497 pcs	5 718 salmon	6,76 %
Denmark	20,3287 %	60 975 pcs	<b>29 637</b> salmon	<b>35,05 %</b>
Germany	2,2617 %	6 784 pcs	606 salmon	0,72 %
Russia	1,9000 %			
Total	100,0000 %	294 246 pcs	84 559 salmon	100,00 %

TACs & QUOTAS by EUROPEAN UNION compared to ESTIMATED STOCK GROUP PROPORTION by ICES



For TORNE-MUONIO RIVER ASSOCIATION by Antti@Sorro.com 01012012  
 Based on ICES WGBAST Report 2011 – Estimated stock group proportion  
 is based on Danish, Finnish, Latvian, Polish and Swedish catch - table 2.7.3.

## HOW IS THIS FAIR?

EU countries which produce just **3%** of salmon they catch at the main basin of Baltic Sea have lawful quota to **more than 43% of all salmon** on Baltic Sea including the great Gulf of Bothnia from where **93%** of all Baltic Salmon originate.

- Wild salmon of G.of Bothnia **74%**
- G.of Bothnia hatchery FIN 5%
- G.of Bothnia hatchery SWE 14%
- Wild salmon of main Basin SWE 1%
- G. of Finland hatchery 2%
- Main basin salmon OTHER 3%

There are NO SALMON RIVERS IN DENMARK. Apart from the fact that Denmark has never invested a coin for Baltic salmon Denmark has a great 20% lawful part of salmon at Baltic Sea. 2010 more than 13 000 wild salmon from Torne river was fished by Danes while only 4 000 salmon was caught on the river. Only 17 000 salmon returned to home river while reported catch on the main basin of Baltic sea only included more than 37 000 Torne river salmon. Much more wild salmon from the rivers of Gulf of Bothnia have been killed at sea illegally every year by professional equipment. All salmon fishing at the Baltic Sea should be finished! *JUST BE FAIR – LEAVE OUR SALMON IN PEACE.*