



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels  
MARE.C.1/AK/ds/Ares(2021)

Mr Kalvervo Aska and Brynolf  
Tjärner  
Chairmen of the Tornio-Muonio  
River Association  
[kalervo.aska@hotmail.com](mailto:kalervo.aska@hotmail.com)

**Subject: Your letter about the high survivability exemption to the landing obligation for Baltic salmon**

Dear Mr Aska, dear Mr Tjärner,

Thank you for your letters sent on 29 March and 7 April 2021 to Commissioner Sinkevičius and myself in which you express your concerns regarding the possible adoption by the Commission of a new exemption to the landing obligation for Baltic salmon. Your letter has retained the Commissioner's full attention and he has asked me to reply to you on his behalf.

The Common Fisheries Policy's (CFP) Basic Regulation (EU) 1380/2013<sup>1</sup> establishes the landing obligation, but also provides for the possibility to adopt exemptions, notably on grounds of high survival supported by scientific evidence. As you correctly point out, such an exemption from the landing obligation was adopted by the Commission in 2014 for Baltic salmon caught with certain passive gears since 2014<sup>2</sup>, and prolonged in 2017<sup>3</sup>. The latest exemption expired on 31 December 2020.

BaltFish submitted on 12 May 2020 a joint recommendation to the Commission requesting the adoption of a renewed exemption. When preparing its joint recommendation, BaltFish consulted the Baltic Sea Advisory Council in April 2020,

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p.22).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1396/2014 of 20 October 2014 establishing a discard plan in the Baltic Sea (OJ L 370, 30.12.2014, p. 40).

<sup>3</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/211 of 21 November 2017 establishing a discard plan as regards salmon in the Baltic Sea (OJ L 41, 14.2.2018, p. 1).

which sent its assessment to BaltFish on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020<sup>4</sup>. The Advisory Councils regroup stakeholders from all relevant sectors and are a privileged partner of the Commission for the development and the implementation of the CFP. Hence, I regret to read that you were not aware of this procedure.

BaltFish via its joint recommendation requested to discontinue the exemption for pontoon traps, which are not equipped with a knot-less bag, because the survivability rate is too low. Moreover, the exemption should be limited to low release levels. The joint recommendation was accompanied by several pieces of scientific research, notably the studies you mention by Siira of 2006 and SLU Aqua of 2020. The joint recommendation and the underlying scientific evidence were assessed by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) in May 2020.<sup>5</sup> Overall, the STECF assessment was sufficiently positive while indeed mentioning that more research should be undertaken, notably as regards post-release mortality of salmon caught with pontoon traps. The Commission is currently assessing the information.

I hope this clarifies the matter for you.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA

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<sup>4</sup> The BSAC assessment is available under <http://www.bsac.dk/BSAC-Resources/BSAC-Statements-and-recommendations/BSAC-reply-to-BALTFISH-consultation-on-exemption-o>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/2694823/STECF+20-04+-+Eval+JRs+LO+and+TM+Reg.pdf/6176f9ad-0855-4985-b7de-64685862b6cb>.