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River Torne 26.8.2024

Salmon fishing in the Gulf of Bothnia is against EU law!

EU has stated in "REGULATION (EU) No 1380/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL" that "*In order to reach the objective of progressively restoring and maintaining populations of fish stocks above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, the maximum sustainable yield exploitation rate shall be achieved by 2015 where possible and, on a progressive, incremental basis at the latest by 2020 for all stocks.*" The maximum sustainable yield, MSY, is determined for Baltic salmon in Finland and Sweden so that it will result in a spawning population that will reproduce approximately 80 % of maximum smolt production in a given river, in this case the River Tornionjoki.

According to the latest scientific knowledge by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and the Finnish Institute for Natural Resources (LUKE), the MSY based spawning stock should be approximately 44 000 salmon, females and males together. In 2023 and 2024 only about 20 000 salmon entered the river Tornionjoki. During the previous 11 year time period, the lowest number of salmon that entered the River Tornionjoki was 41 000, average 67 000 and maximum 100 000 salmon.

For the second summer in a row, the number of salmon will be half of the minimum level required by Article 2 of EU law 1380/2013. Decrease in salmon numbers has been dramatic during the last two years. **It has been less than 50 % compared to the MSY level.** Despite the fact that marine quotas for salmon have been reduced every year, Finland and Sweden have not managed to fulfill their quotas.

We consider this situation to be very alarming for wild salmon. The salmon fishery policies in Finland and Sweden in 2023 and 2024 have not been legal, because according to the above mentioned EU statement, all fishing of Baltic salmon should have been closed in these years.

According to the ICES advice 31.5.2024, however, **ICES demonstrates MSY based Scenario 2 for salmon fishing.** In that scenario, all salmon fishing at the sea should be closed, but a total of 28 400 salmon catches are allowed for all rivers that enter the Baltic Sea. Rest scenarios by ICES are not MSY based.

CHANGES IN THE MEDIAN VALUES OF BOTNIAN SALMON IN 2025 COMPARED TO 2024 (159 300 FISH)
Comparison of ICES scenarios 2 and 7 for 2025 - All values in the table are in thousands of fish
 Origin ICES Advice on fishing opportunities, catch, and effort, published 31 May 2024, side 8 table 2 - Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in subdivisions 22-31, Baltic Sea excluding the Gulf of Finland. Catch scenarios for 2025

	Total commercial + recreational sea catch	F total sea catch	Offshore catch	Coastal catch (Finland + Sweden)	River catch	Spawners (wild fish) 2025	Change in spawners 2025 %	Reared surplus 2025	
MSY approach									
ICES scenario 2	0	0	0	0	0	28,4	163,3	+2,5	40,7
ICES scenario 7	40	0,074	0	40,0	24,3	139,4	-12,5	35,1	

ICES has recommended that the MSY principle should be the base for fishing of Atlantic salmon. This has not been true for the River Tornionjoki salmon in 2023 and 2024. Moreover, fisheries policies have allowed relatively large salmon fishing at the Bothnian Bay that is illegal and caused a strong decline for salmon fishing in the River Tornionjoki. In the historical perspective, salmon has fished in the river, not at the sea. Therefore, we note that current fisheries policies are not only illegal, it also discriminates against local fishing possibilities on the contrary of the Rio 10/c agreement.

In summary, we require that fishing of Baltic salmon should be based on the MSY principle. In addition, we require that fishing of Baltic salmon should be stock specific, not mixed stock fisheries. Both requirements are satisfied in the ICES advice Scenario 2, which should be a guideline for salmon fishing at the Baltic Sea and specifically in the River Tornionjoki.

Sincerely Yours

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