

Outcome of the third meeting of HELCOM Fish Correspondence Group concerning a draft document on BAT/BEP descriptions for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region (CG AQUACULTURE 3-2020)

Introduction

0.1 With reference to the outcome of HOD 57-2019 2019 (paragraph 4.70) and in accordance with the HELCOM COVID-19 policy, the third Meeting of the HELCOM Fish Correspondence Group concerning a draft document on BAT/BEP descriptions for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region (CG AQUACULTURE 3-2020), was held as an online meeting on 25-26 June 2020.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by delegations from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Poland and Sweden as well as Observers from CCB, FEAP and WWF and Invited Guests from AquaBioTech Group and Recirkfisk PO. The List of Participants is contained in **Annex 1**.

0.3 Mr. Markus Helavuori, HELCOM Professional Secretary and Ms. Petra Kääriä, HELCOM Assisting Professional Secretary, acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

0.4 Mr. Markus Helavuori opened the Meeting, presented the HELCOM online meeting etiquette and important features of Zoom and welcomed the participants.

Agenda item 1 Election of Chair

1.1 The Meeting elected Ms. Anita Künitzer, Germany, and Mr. Orian Bondestam, Finland, as Co-Chairs of CG Aquaculture. Following the election, Ms. Künitzer chaired the remainder of the Meeting.

Agenda item 2 Adoption of the Agenda

2.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda of the Meeting as contained in document 2-1.

Agenda item 3 Matters arising from HELCOM work of relevance of the group

3.1 The Meeting took note of the Terms of Reference and Work Plan of CG Aquaculture, adopted by HOD 55-2018 (document 3-1), as presented by the Secretariat.

3.2 The Meeting took note of extracts from recent HELCOM meeting outcomes of relevance for CG Aquaculture (document 3-2), as presented by the Secretariat.

3.3 The Meeting noted that the Seventh Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation (PLC-7) Project Implementation Group had recently agreed on collecting further information on land-based aquaculture.

3.4 The Meeting discussed the request by FISH 9-2019 to consider parasites and pathogens as additional themes in the work on BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture. The Meeting agreed that if these themes are to be included, they should be considered from the environmental rather than human health perspective.

3.5 The Meeting took note of a comment that the phosphorous input from aquaculture should be compared with input from other sources in the Baltic Sea.

3.6 The Meeting took note of information by the Secretariat on the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) by 2021, noting inter alia that no proposals for new BSAP actions regarding aquaculture have been made

3.7 The Meeting noted that the next steps in considering fisheries related BSAP proposals will be at the HELCOM BSAP UP workshop on biodiversity, including extraction of species and spatial measures, for the consideration of proposed new actions ([BSAP UP WS-BIO 2020](#)), to be held online from 31 August to 2 September and FISH 12-2020 to be held from 11 to 13 November, tentatively in Denmark.

3.8 The Meeting noted that, following discussions held by CG AQUACULTURE 2-2018 and HOD 55-2018, FISH 9-2019 had agreed that HELCOM Recommendation 25/4 on *Measures aimed at the reduction of discharges from fresh water and marine fish farming*, as well as its reporting requirements, are still valid and applicable. The Meeting consequently encouraged Contracting Parties to provide reports in accordance with Recommendation 25/4.

3.9 The Meeting discussed reporting requirements and deadlines for HELCOM Recommendations in general and noted that these may differ as specified in each individual recommendation. The Meeting further noted that a request had been sent out to all Contracting Parties to report on the implementation of all HELCOM Recommendations as part of the preparatory work for updating the BSAP. In this context, the Meeting noted that more information on reporting regarding Recommendations related to fish can be found in [document 3-2 of FISH 10-2019](#), including for Recommendations 25/4 and 37/3.

Agenda item 4 Latest information on aquaculture techniques and BAT

4.1 The Meeting noted that the Work Plan of CG Aquaculture includes the task to compile the latest information on environmental and economic performance of various aquaculture techniques for different types of production, possibly contributing to the BAT/BEP descriptions.

4.2 The Meeting noted that no information in this regard was received by the deadline 18 June 2020 as specified in the annotated agenda (document 2-2).

4.3 The Meeting agreed that compiling information on environmental and economic performance of various aquaculture techniques is still a relevant task for the Group, noting that a lot of work on the matter is undergoing in several countries. The Meeting, however, noted that it is a time-consuming task, and that financial information from aquaculture producers is not available in all countries.

4.4 The Meeting welcomed the offer by Finland to take the lead in compiling this information and invited them to liaise with other Contracting Parties, relevant organizations and the Secretariat in this regard. The Meeting noted that Germany may be able to contribute with some data related to the economic aspects, but not on a company basis. The Meeting invited Finland to provide further information on the matter to the next meeting.

4.5 The Meeting agreed that the work on compiling information on environmental and economic performance of various aquaculture techniques should also take into consideration new innovations. The Meeting noted that BAT should be based on techniques that are proven to be viable.

4.6 The Meeting discussed various elements regarding environmental and economic performance, noting inter alia that the quality of the feed and overall management are key considerations and recognized that external costs for the environment should be taken into account when considering economic performance of various aquaculture techniques.

4.7 The Meeting agreed that the work on compiling information on environmental and economic performance of various aquaculture techniques should not preclude further development of BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture but should be done in parallel with this work and should result in a living document that can be updated as appropriate.

4.8 The Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties and observers to share relevant information e.g. on new aquaculture innovations and experiences by submitting information documents to relevant meetings or by requesting the Secretariat to circulate specific information to the contacts of CG Aquaculture. The Meeting also noted that, if so decided, the Secretariat could make this compilation available e.g. in a workspace on the HELCOM Meeting Portal or on the HELCOM website.

Agenda item 5 Aquaculture BAT/BEP definitions

5.1 The Meeting noted that the Work Plan of CG Aquaculture includes the task to complete a concise compilation of existing BAT and BEP definitions applied in the Contracting Parties or otherwise relevant for the Baltic Sea region.

5.2 The Meeting considered the compiled responses on aquaculture BAT/BEP definitions by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Poland and Sweden (document 5-1), as presented by the Secretariat.

5.3 The Meeting noted that no additional responses had been received by the deadlines established by AQUACULTURE 2-2018 or the new deadline of 15 June 2020 as set out in document 5-1.

5.4 The Meeting noted that Germany does not have a national definition on BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture, and considers the HELCOM definitions to be sufficient.

5.5 The Meeting recalled the BAT and BEP definitions set out in Annex II of the [1992 Helsinki Convention](#), noted the legal nature of the Convention, and acknowledged that these definitions form the basis for developing BAT and BEP for aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region. The Meeting also noted the guidance on BAT/BEP in Recommendation 37/3 (Annex 1) and agreed that further work on defining the terms is not needed, but instead the future work should focus on how they should be applied for different kinds of aquaculture.

5.6 Following discussion, the Meeting concluded that the compilation of existing BAT and BEP definitions for sustainable aquaculture was to be considered finalized and can be removed from the Work Plan.

5.7 The Meeting took note information provided by CCB on a draft report on how courts are using various definitions for BAT in their rulings related to environmental permits for aquaculture operations. In this context the Meeting noted that courts typically have discussions on how BAT/BEP should be defined, taking into consideration prior European Court of Justice decisions and interpretations.

Agenda item 6 Developing BAT/BEP under HELCOM Recommendation 37/3

6.1 The Meeting noted that the Work Plan of CG Aquaculture includes the task to jointly develop BAT/BEP descriptions for the aquaculture operations, relevant for both existing and new, sea-based aquaculture and land-based aquaculture with a potential impact on the Baltic Sea environment.

6.2 The Meeting recalled that CG AQUACULTURE 2-2018 had agreed that the BAT/BEP description should be initiated by the thematic leads (Germany for nutrient input, Estonia for monitoring of aquaculture operations).

6.3 The Meeting welcomed the comprehensive final report commissioned by Germany and produced by the AquaBioTech Group, on developing BAT/BEP with respect to pollution by nutrients and hazardous substances for sustainable aquaculture operations in the Baltic Sea region (document 6-1 and Presentation 1), as presented by Germany.

6.4 The Meeting discussed the report and agreed that the recommendations presented in the report would be discussed at a later stage in the context of document 6-2. The Meeting noted the following general and factual comments:

- various national and local regulations in the Baltic Sea set maximum allowable phosphorous (P) and nitrogen (N) discharge limits while the report considers setting a maximum allowable biomass production as the most effective method, or alternatively, a maximum allowable content of N and P in feed or maximum allowable biological feed conversion;
- the quality of the feed should also be considered as a way of preventing nutrients from ending up in the environment, rather than just the N and P contents of the feed;

- extracting species and land-based fertilizer free agriculture could be considered as nutrient compensation methods. The Meeting also noted information on an ongoing project in Finland involving the John Nurminen Foundation, which aims to describe and evaluate different methods for compensating nutrient discharges and may contribute with other proposals for compensation methods;
- aquaculture management zones (AMZ) are not considered as optimal tools, as setting up AMZ would in practice most likely require changes in national legislation;
- Denmark is reviewing their national legislation and in the future compensation methods will not be allowed. Therefore, updates to the Danish situation in the report will be provided.
- the report could include more detailed consideration of alternative feed types and ways of facilitating their establishment on the market.

6.5 The Meeting agreed that further detailed comments to the report should be sent to Dr. Wera Leujak (wera.leujak@uba.de), Germany, by **30 September 2020**. The Meeting agreed that as a first priority comments should be on factual issues, to be provided in track changes using the word version of the report available on the HELCOM Meeting Portal, and that broader comments on substance can also be provided.

6.6 The Meeting recalled that Recommendation 37/3 recommends that Contracting Parties should jointly develop BAT/BEP descriptions for sustainable and environmentally friendly aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region and apply them, based on Annex II of the Convention and principles set out in the Recommendation.

6.7 The Meeting welcomed the first proposal for BAT/BEP to avoid or minimize nutrient pollution from aquaculture operations in the Baltic Sea region (document 6-2), as presented by Germany.

6.8 The Meeting took note of the following general comments:

- a decision will be needed in what form the BAT/BEP descriptions should be adopted by HELCOM, e.g. as an annex to Recommendation 37/3 or a separate publication. Preference was given to adopting them as an annex to the Recommendation, which would in this case consequently have to be revised. The Meeting noted that this was also the original intention when drafting Recommendation 37/3, although the Recommendation itself does not explicitly mention this;
- introducing preferences or political choices for various types of aquaculture systems should be avoided.
- the BAT/BEP descriptions should not preclude any specific type of aquaculture but rather ensure that all types of aquaculture are done in an environmentally friendly way;
- the granting of permits based on biomass production rather than nutrient discharges was questioned;
- the document should reflect the effects of climate change to aquaculture, which may also lead to increased introductions of non-indigenous species, an increased need for medicines and anti-fouling systems, risks to fish populations etc.;
- the importance of finalizing the BAT/BEP descriptions and ensuring that the recommendations are put into practise was emphasized;
- the need to take into account all relevant policies and actors in the work on developing sustainable aquaculture BAT/BEP under HELCOM was highlighted.

6.9 In addition, a proposal to refer to the Aquaculture Stewardship Council in the document was considered but not supported by the Meeting.

6.10 The Meeting edited and amended the proposal and agreed that future work should be based on the version set out in document 6-2-Rev.1, which was made available in Word format with track changes and comments visible to facilitate written comments to be made. The Meeting agreed that clear text proposals

to document 6-2-Rev.1 can be submitted to Dr. Wera Leujak (wera.leujak@uba.de), Germany, by **31 November 2020**.

6.11 The Meeting took note of a presentation on the topic of hazardous substances (document 6-1 and Presentation 2). In the ensuing discussion the Meeting noted inter alia that immunostimulants, as mentioned in the document, are used to increase the resistance of fish to various diseases.

6.12 The Meeting noted that the topic of hazardous substances does not have an identified lead country, although both hazardous substances and pharmaceuticals are an important topic not only for sustainable aquaculture but within the HELCOM framework in general.

6.13 The Meeting welcomed the offer by Germany to take the lead on the topic of hazardous substances. The Meeting, however, encouraged other Contracting Parties with more experience on this specific topic, to consider taking the co-lead. In this respect, a proposal was made that Denmark may be a suitable co-lead due to their experience on this topic. The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties and Observers to submit written comments related to this topic, making use of the information contained in document 6-1, to Ms. Ulrike Pirntke (ulrike.pirntke@uba.de) by **31 November 2020**. The Meeting further invited Germany to develop a first proposal for BAT/BEP related to this topic, for consideration by the next Meeting.

6.14 The Meeting took note of matters related to monitoring of impacts from aquaculture operations, as presented by the thematic lead Estonia. In 2019 a research project analyzed current monitoring practices using information from Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Estonia and Germany. The results show that in general monitoring for aquaculture impacts should follow EU directives, including MSFD, WFD etc. The Meeting welcomed the offer by Estonia to develop a draft proposal for BAT/BEP on monitoring by **31 September 2020**, to be circulated for comments by **31 November 2020** and further consideration at the next meeting.

6.15 The Meeting noted that the topics of marine litter and non-indigenous species do not have any identified lead countries. The Meeting agreed that the non-indigenous species topic should also include consideration of parasites, pathogens and biodiversity impacts in general, e.g. related to escapees.

6.16 The Meeting noted that Poland is considering taking the lead on the either the topic of non-indigenous species or marine litter, to be confirmed at a later stage. The Meeting invited all other Contracting Parties to consider taking the lead on these topics and to prepare expert inputs on these and other relevant topics, for consideration by the next meeting.

6.17 The Meeting noted the suggestion to use information provided in document 8-2 as regards to marine litter.

Agenda item 7 Terms of Reference and Work Plan

Future work of CG Aquaculture

7.1 The Meeting noted that the Work Plan of CG Aquaculture further contains the following tasks for year 2020 relevant to this Agenda Item: following completion of BAT/BEP descriptions, develop an appropriate reporting format for demonstrating compliance with Recommendation 37/3; review and update Recommendation 37/3 as necessary and to identify possible research and development needs and knowledge gaps, with a view to improving the BAT and BEP descriptions for the Baltic region.

7.2 The Meeting emphasised the need to continue the work of CG Aquaculture beyond 2020, taking into account the delay in developing BAT/BEP definitions, techniques and practices applicable in the Baltic Sea region and updated the Terms of Reference and Work Plan for continuation and finalization of work as included in **Annex 3**. The Meeting invited FISH 12-2020 to approve and HOD 59-2020 to adopt the Terms of Reference and Work Plan.

7.3 In considering the Terms of Reference, the Meeting noted a proposal to include animal welfare in the work of CG Aquaculture. The Meeting, however, agreed that this should be done only in case a lead

country can be identified for the topic. In this context, the Meeting noted that Sweden may consider taking the lead on this topic.

Agenda item 8 Any other business

8.1 The Meeting took note of the document on legislation of aquaculture status and perspectives in the Baltic Sea and Nordic countries (document 8-2), as presented by FEAP.

8.2 The Meeting reviewed and updated the list of nominated contacts (document 8-1).

8.3 The Meeting provided updates to the list of nominated contacts as set out in **Annex 2**. The Meeting invited Contracting Parties and Observer organizations to inform of any new, or changed, nominations to the Secretariat (petra.kaarja@helcom.fi).

8.4 The Meeting agreed to organize an informal online meeting in mid-December to discuss the comments received on the BAT/BEP descriptions by the end of November 2020 (c.f. paragraphs 6.10 and 6.13 above). The Meeting invited the Secretariat to liaise with the lead countries and set up a doodle poll in order to agree on the date for this informal meeting.

8.5 The Meeting agreed to organize the next meeting of CG Aquaculture (CG AQUACULTURE 4-2021) as an online meeting in February or March 2021 to continue the work on BAT/BEP descriptions for nutrients and hazardous substances. The Meeting further agreed that CG AQUACULTURE 5-2021 should be organized as a physical meeting in June 2021 in Mariehamn, Åland Islands, Finland.

Agenda Item 9 Outcome of the Meeting

9.1 The Meeting adopted the Outcome. The Outcome, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting are available on the [CG AQUACULTURE 3-2020](#) meeting site.

Annex 1 List of participants

Representing	Name	Name of organization	E-mail address
Co-Chair	Anita Künitzer	Federal Environmental Agency	anita.kuenitzer@uba.de
Co-Chair	Orian Bondestam	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Orian.Bondestam@mmm.fi
Denmark	Thomas Bjerre Larsen	Ministry of Environment and Food	thobj@mfvm.dk
Estonia	Katrina Lang	Ministry of the Environment of Estonia	katrina.lang@envir.ee
Estonia	Rene Reisner	Ministry of the Environment	rene.reisner@envir.ee
Estonia	Ulvi Päädam	Ministry of the Environment	ulvi.paadam@envir.ee
Estonia	Tuuli Teppo	Ministry of Rural Affairs, Estonia	tuuli.teppo@agri.ee
EU	Celine Frank	DG MARE	celine.frank@ec.europa.eu
EU	Lorella De La Cruz-Inglesias	DG MARE	Lorella.DE-LA-CRUZ-IGLESIAS@ec.europa.eu;
Finland	Heikki Lehtinen	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	heikki.lehtinen@mmm.fi
Finland	Johanna Helkimo	Ministry of the Environment	johanna.helkimo@ym.fi
Finland	Jouni Vielma	Natural Resources Institute Finland	jouni.vielma@luke.fi
Finland	Mikael Wennström	Government of Åland	mikael.wennstrom@regeringen.ax
Finland	Mirva Wideskog	Southwest Finland ELY Centre	mirva.wideskog@ely-keskus.fi
Germany	Ulfert Focken	(Thuenen Institute of Fisheries Ecology) on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture	ulfert.focken@thuenen.de
Germany	Hans-Peter Damian	German Environment Agency	hans-peter.damian@uba.de
Germany	Ulrike Pirntke	German Environment Agency	ulrike.pirntke@uba.de
Germany	Wera Leujak	German Environment Agency	wera.leujak@uba.de
Poland	Katarzyna Kaminska	Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation	k.kaminska@mgm.gov.pl
Poland	Adam Lejk	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute	adam.lejk@mir.gdynia.pl
Sweden	Izabela Alias	Swedish Board of Agriculture	izabela.alias@jordbruksverket.se
Observer	Nils Höglund	CCB	nils.hoglund@ccb.se
Observer	Lisbeth Jess Plesner	FEAP	lisbeth@danskakvakultur.dk
Observer	Irja Skytén-Suominen	FEAP (Finnish Fishfarmers' Association)	irja.skyten-suominen@kalankasvatus.fi
Observer	Torben Wallach	FEAP	tw@musholm.com
Invited guest	Tamás Bardócz	AquaBioTech Group	thb@aquabt.com
Invited Guest	Lena Schenke	AquaBioTech Group	les@aquabt.com
Invited Guest	Kyra Hoevenaars	AquaBioTech Group	kyh@aquabt.com

Invited Guest	Steve Prescott	AquaBioTech Group	sgp@aquabt.com
Invited Guest	Ola Öberg	Recirkfisk PO	ola@svenskfiskodling.se
Secretariat	Markus Helavuori	HELCOM	markus.helavuori@helcom.fi
Secretariat	Petra Kääriä	HELCOM	petra.kaaria@helcom.fi

Annex 2 Nominated contacts and observers of CG Aquaculture

Country/ Observer	Name	Organization	E-mail address
Contracting Parties			
Denmark	Thomas Bjerre Larsen	Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark	thobj@mfvm.dk
	Alf Skovgaard	Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark	alsko@mfvm.dk
Estonia	Hendrik Põldja	Ministry of the Environment, Water Department	Hendrik.poldoja@envir.ee
	Ulvi Päädam	Ministry of the Environment	Ulvi.Paadam@Envir.ee
	Kaspar Anderson	Ministry of the Environment, Marine Environment Department	Kaspar.anderson@envir.ee
	Katrina Lang	Ministry of the Environment, Water Department	Katrina.lang@envir.ee
	Eduard Koitmaa	Estonian Ministry of Rural Affairs	eduard.koitmaa@agri.ee
EU	Andrea Weber	European Commission	andrea.weber@ec.europa.eu
	Antoine Kopp	European Commission, DG MARE	antoine.kopp@ec.europa.eu
Finland	Orian Bondestam	Ministry of the Agriculture and Forestry	Orian.Bondestam@mmm.fi
	Heikki Lehtinen	Ministry of the Agriculture and Forestry	heikki.lehtinen@mmm.fi
	Johanna Helkimo	Ministry of Environment	johanna.helkimo@ym.fi
	Jouni Vielma	LUKE Natural Resources Institute Finland	jouni.vielma@luke.fi
	Markus Kankainen	LUKE Natural Resources Institute Finland	markus.kankainen@luke.fi
	Mirva Wideskog	Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for Southwest Finland	mirva.wideskog@ely-keskus.fi
	Sonja Pyykkönen	Ministry of the Environment	sonja.pyykkonen@ym.fi
	Mikael Wennström	Provincial Government of Åland	mikael.wennstrom@regeringen.ax
	Jenny Eklund-Melander	Provincial Government of Åland	jenny.eklund-melander@regeringen.ax
Germany	Hans-Peter Damian	German Environment Agency	hans-peter.damian@uba.de
	Ulfert Focken	(Thünen Institute, TI) on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL)	ulfert.focken@thuenen.de
	Marina Carstens	Federal Coastal State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	m.carstens@lu.mv-regierung.de
	Christine Wenzel	Federal Coastal State of Schleswig Holstein	christine.wenzel@melur.landsh.de
	Roland Lemcke	Federal Coastal State of Schleswig Holstein	roland.lemcke@melund.landsh.de
	Thurid Otto	on behalf of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN Vilm) as observer,	totto@geomar.de

	Adrian Bischoff-Lang	University of Rostock, on behalf of the Federal Coastal State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	adrian.bischoff-lang@uni-rostock.de
	Bruno Hoffstadt	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture	Bruno.Hoffstadt@bmel.bund.de not registered in Meeting Portal
	Wera Leujak	German Environment Agency	wera.leujak@uba.de
	Ulrike Pirntke	German Environment Agency	ulrike.pirntke@uba.de
	Anita Künitzer	German Environment Agency	anita.kuenitzer@uba.de
Lithuania	Loreta Brazinskaite	Ministry of Agriculture	loreta.brazinskaite@zum.lt
Poland	Adam Lejk	National Marine Fisheries Research Institute	adam.lejk@mir.gdynia.pl
	Anna Pyć	Polish Trout Breeders Association PTBA	anna@pstragpustelnia.pl
	Igor Wawrzyniak	Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation	igor.wawrzyniak@mgm.gov.pl
	Katarzyna Kamińska	Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation	K.kaminska@mgm.gov.pl
	Zdzisław Zakęś	Inland Fisheries Institute	z.zakes@infish.com.pl (not registered in Meeting Portal)
Sweden	Annika Johansson	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	annika.johansson@havochvatten.se
	Izabela Alias	Swedish Board of Agriculture	izabela.alias@jordbruksverket.se
Observers			
CCB	Nils Höglund	CCB	nils.hoglund@ccb.se
FEAP	Irja Skytén-Suominen	Finnish Fish Farmers' Association	irja.skyten-suominen@kalankasvatus.fi
	Lisbeth Plesner	Dansk Akvakultur/The Danish Aquaculture Organization	lisbeth@danskakvakultur.dk
	Torben Wallach	Dansk Akvakultur/The Danish Aquaculture Organization	tw@musholm.com

Annex 3

Draft updated Terms of Reference for the HELCOM FISH Correspondence Group concerning a draft document on BAT/BEP descriptions for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region (CG Aquaculture)

In order to implement the Work Plan and as a follow up on HELCOM Recommendation 37/3 on sustainable aquaculture, the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (Fish Group) suggested to establish an intersessional Correspondence Group on Best Available Technology/Best Environmental Practices (BAT/BEP) for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region (CG Aquaculture) (c.f. outcome of HELCOM FISH 3-2015, §3.5-3.8). This suggestion was agreed HOD 49-2015 (c.f. outcome of HELCOM HOD 49-2015, paragraph 4.45).

Recalling HELCOM Recommendation 37/3, which:

- recalls the 2013 HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting agreement to develop a new HELCOM Recommendation on sustainable aquaculture by 2014 to substitute the existing HELCOM Recommendation 25/4;
- has regard to HELCOM Recommendation 25/4 on Measures aimed at the reduction of discharges from fresh water and marine fish farming, as far as it is not overridden by HELCOM Ministerial Declarations and Recommendations or other legal requirements;
- recognizes the need to maintain Recommendation 25/4 until adoption of BAT and BEP based measures for application in marine and freshwater fish farming;
- desires to limit the negative impacts on the environment from aquaculture facilities located in the catchment area of the Baltic Sea and in the Baltic Sea by applying Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BEP); and hence
- recommends to the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention to jointly develop by 2018 BAT/BEP descriptions for sustainable and environmentally friendly aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region and apply them based on Annex II of the Helsinki Convention;

the purpose of CG Aquaculture is to work towards adoption of BAT/BEP descriptions for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region.

The CG shall take account of the heterogeneous nature of aquaculture, variability in technology and geography with the need for a differentiated (if not locally- and/or sub-regionally concentrated) approach and aim at a developing comprehensive set of BAT/BEP descriptions on sustainable aquaculture for the benefit of the Baltic Sea region.

Objective

The HELCOM Correspondence Group on sustainable aquaculture (hereinafter – CG Aquaculture):

- exchanges BAT/BEP information and experience gained on aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region; and
- develops BAT/BEP descriptions for sustainable aquaculture for the Baltic Sea region, by:
 - i. defining environmentally acceptable, economically viable and socially equitable standards;
 - ii. differentiating between land- and sea-based aquaculture, where appropriate
 - iii. promoting innovation; and
 - iv. not prescribing any specific technique to be applied by all Contracting Parties.

Status and working procedures

The CG Aquaculture is:

- an ad hoc sub-group to the Fish Group which it reports to;
- supported by the Secretariat;
- established for a period of 48 months (the work to be finalized by the end of 2022); with a possibility to extend the mandate by HELCOM HODs decision;
- working mainly by correspondence, face-to-face or virtual meetings, as needed; and
- co-led by Germany and Finland.

Membership

Members of the CG Aquaculture are:

- nominated Contracting Party experts on aquaculture and other relevant matters;
- HELCOM Observers, as appropriate;
- additional experts may participate in meetings by invitation by the Co-Chairs of the CG Aquaculture (such as representatives of other organizations, technical experts, etc.); and
- the group should be led by a Chair or Co-Chairs appointed by the lead countries.

In executing its duties, the group shall

- base its work to the Helsinki Convention Articles 3 and 6 and Annex II;
- be guided by HELCOM Recommendation 37/3 on Sustainable Aquaculture and its Annex, and Recommendation 25/4 to the extent it is not overridden by HELCOM Ministerial Declarations and Recommendations or other legal requirements;
- be guided by matters related to nutrition impacts and thresholds of the Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration;
- promote innovation by considering the available new (open/closed) technologies/systems, such as IMTA or RAS;
- be guided e.g. by the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, HELCOM Ministerial Declarations, EU and national legislation, the report on existing BAT techniques applied in the Nordic countries (Nordic Council of Ministers report on aquaculture), national strategies and other relevant documents as deemed relevant; and
- recognize the commonalities between Contracting Parties, especially with regard to how BAT/BEP is expressed in national legislation.

Detailed tasks for the group are:

- a) to compile latest information on aquaculture techniques for different types of production, possibly contributing to the BAT/BEP descriptions;
- b) to jointly develop BAT/BEP descriptions for the aquaculture operators, relevant for both existing and new, sea-based aquaculture and land-based¹ aquaculture with a potential impact on the Baltic Sea;

¹CG AQUACULTURE 1-2017 considered and discussed different types of aquaculture to be covered by distinct BAT/BEP agreed with regard to land-based aquaculture that the focus should be on intensive inland aquaculture (see Annex 2 of the outcome of CG AQUACULTURE 1-2017, intensive in accordance with FAO definitions)

- c) to develop an appropriate reporting format for demonstrating compliance with Recommendation 37/3;
- d) review and update Recommendation 37/3 as necessary; and
- e) to identify possible research and development needs and knowledge gaps, with a view to improving the BAT and BEP descriptions for the Baltic Sea region.

The results of CG work shall be subject to consideration by the Fish Group and high-level HELCOM bodies as deemed necessary.

Draft revised work plan of CG Aquaculture 2021-2022

Tasks of the CG Aquaculture TORs	Responsible	Milestone	Output deadline
<p>To compile latest information on environmental and economic performance of various aquaculture techniques for different types of production, possibly contributing to the BAT/BEP descriptions,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - by inviting CP's to provide information in the first instance. - in the long term, investigate opportunities for producing a more advanced compilation e.g. through collaborating with the Nordic Council of Ministers BAT Group, or by using EMFF funding from the CP's to conduct the work. 	<p>Lead country Finland All participants to contribute</p>	<p>Report to meetings of CG Aquaculture Report to meetings of HELCOM Fish</p>	<p>First draft by the end of 2020 (2021 for more advanced compilation)</p>
<p>To jointly develop BAT/BEP descriptions for the aquaculture operators, relevant for both existing and new, sea-based aquaculture and land-based aquaculture with a potential impact on the Baltic Sea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – BAT/BEP for the establishment of aquaculture operations (site selection, permitting regulations, MPAs etc.); – BAT/BEP for aquaculture operation considering for example the following issues: hazardous substances, eutrophication, biodiversity impacts, marine litter and sustainable feeds; and – BAT/BEP for the monitoring of impacts from aquaculture operations. <p>The work should be initiated by the thematic leads (Germany for nutrient input and hazardous substances [Denmark as co-lead for hazardous substances], Estonia for monitoring of aquaculture operation) and Poland for [biodiversity (non-indigenous species including pathogens and parasites)] [marine litter] in consultation with the Correspondence Group.</p>	<p>Overall coordination by Lead Countries supported by the Secretariat</p>	<p>Report to meetings of CG Aquaculture</p>	<p>By end of 2022 (individual themes should aim to finalize earlier)</p>

Outcome of CG AQUACULTURE 3-2020

Following completion of BAT/BEP descriptions, develop an appropriate reporting format for demonstrating compliance with Recommendation 37/3.	All participants to contribute	Report to meeting of CG Aquaculture 2022	2022
Review and update Recommendation 37/3 as necessary.	All participants to contribute	Report to meeting of CG Aquaculture 2022	2022
To identify possible research and development needs and knowledge gaps, with a view to improving the BAT and BEP descriptions for the Baltic region.	All participants	Report to meeting of CG Aquaculture 2022 Report to meeting of HELCOM FISH in 2022	2022