



Outcome of the 12th Meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 12-2020)

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Introduction

01. The 12th Meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 12-2020), was held online on 11-13 November 2020.
02. The Meeting was attended by delegations from Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, as well as observers from BSAC, CCB, FEAP, ICES and WWF. The list of participants is contained in **Annex 1**.
03. The Meeting was chaired by Marianne Goffeng Raakil (Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation). Markus Helavuori, Professional Secretary and Petra Kääriä, Assisting Professional Secretary, acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

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

Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from HELCOM work of relevance of the group

2.1 The Meeting took note of the Outcome of HELCOM HOD 58-2020, held as an online meeting on 9-10 June 2020 (document 2-1), and noted matters related to the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP).

2.2 The Meeting took note of the outcome of EG MAMA 14-2020, held as an online meeting on 22-24 September 2020 (document 2-2).

2.3 The Meeting took note of the protocol of the EG STUR Online meeting held on 28-29 of September 2020 (document 2-3), as presented by Poland. The Meeting discussed how to improve collaboration between scientific institutes responsible for coordination of sturgeon restoration and fisheries organisations as well as the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC). Following discussion, the Meeting:

- noted that there is a need for further cooperation between national authorities, the BSAC and local fisheries organizations to improve the protection of the Baltic sturgeon;
- noted that it would be useful to circulate document 2-3 to relevant organizations for input. The Meeting invited EG STUR to prepare and circulate a shorter version of document 2-3 (with the full document as an annex) to BSAC with concrete requests for comments and input by countries;
- requested EG STUR to submit the received comments and input to FISH 13-2020;
- noted that the matter could be put on the agenda of the BSAC Working Group on Ecosystem Based Management (EBM WG), noting however, that there are no more meetings of this group planned during 2020.
- noted a comment by ICES that its WGBYC could be consulted for data on the matter;
- agreed that HELCOM and national administrations are not in a position to promote certification of sustainable fisheries under private labels such as MSC. It was however noted that the document could be sent to MSC for information.

Agenda Item 3 Implementation and update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan

3.1 The Meeting took note of the updated Work Plan for the BSAP update (document 3-1, Presentation 1), as presented by the Secretariat.

3.2 The Meeting noted that HOD 58-2020 agreed on the year 2030 as the target year for implementing the BSAP. With regard to the target year for achieving good environmental status for the Baltic Sea, the meeting further agreed to include in the updated BSAP a reference to the 2007 BSAP and the HELCOM assessments.

3.3 The Meeting took note of the detailed plan for drafting of the updated BSAP and the preliminary timetable (document 3-2, Presentation 1), as presented by the Secretariat.

3.4 The Meeting noted that the updated BSAP should contain concise and concrete actions, while its Annex can provide further background information about the rationale and implementation of the individual actions.

3.5 The Meeting noted that Working Groups have the possibility to make additional proposals for new BSAP actions for consideration by HOD 59-2020 as part of the consideration of gaps in the set of measures under Agenda Item 3, and that consequently the present Meeting is the last chance to do so.

Drafting of the updated BSAP

3.6 The Meeting reviewed the first draft BSAP segment preamble on sea-based activities (document 3-3), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that the preamble is focused heavily on maritime issues while fisheries need more focus.

3.7 The Meeting noted that the biodiversity segment of the updated BSAP contains agreed management objectives of relevance to fisheries, namely “*Human induced mortality, including: hunting, fishing, and incidental bycatch, does not threaten the viability of marine life*” and “*Reduce or prevent human pressures that lead to imbalance in the foodweb*” while the sea-based segment does not. Nevertheless, the Meeting noted that fisheries is among the activities addressed by the sea-based activities segment.

3.8 The Meeting agreed that fisheries related issues do not fit in the preamble of the biodiversity segment and therefore agreed that fisheries should be addressed in the sea-based preamble. The Meeting requested that this should be thoroughly addressed in the further work by the BSAP Drafting Group (DG BSAP) and its segment teams. In this regard, the Meeting requested that the DG BSAP ensure that all activities covered by the sea-based segment, including fisheries, are addressed in a comparable and objective way in the segment preamble.

3.9 The Meeting provided comments and made indicative proposals on the kind of amendments that may be needed to the text, as set out in document 3-3 Rev-1. The Meeting emphasized that due to lack of time the text was not finalized, and the proposed amendments have not been agreed by the Meeting, but simply present various proposals made during the Meeting for further consideration in the continued drafting of the preamble. The Meeting invited HOD 59-2020 to consider the views expressed at the Meeting, and the DG BSAP to consider them in its further work in spring 2021.

3.10 The Meeting noted that the DG BSAP will play an important role in the further development of the preambles as well as operative sections of the BSAP. The Meeting encouraged participation in the work of the DG BSAP by contacting national Heads of Delegation who are responsible for nominations to the DG BSAP.

3.11 The Meeting considered the draft Annex of the updated BSAP related to the Fish Group, as presented in document 3-4. The Meeting discussed the way forward to finalize the BSAP Annex prior to HOD 60-2021 and agreed to invite the Secretariat to develop a more complete draft, including also new actions after HOD 59-2020. The Meeting further agreed that the new draft should be circulated for comments in early 2021 and that an intersessional online meeting should be organized in February or March 2021 to finalize the work to enable submission of the Annex to HOD 60-2021 for approval.

3.12 The Meeting noted a proposal of a new column with information on what body or pools of expertise could support the implementation of the actions.

3.13 The Meeting noted that Denmark and Sweden have study reservations regarding some of the existing actions agreed in principle by HOD 58-2020. The Meeting noted that Denmark and Sweden should address these study reservations by HOD 59-2020.

Guidance and validation of work under the SOM Platform

Progress on analysing sufficiency of measures

3.14 The Meeting considered the preliminary results of the SOM analysis (document 3-8, Presentation 2), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that work is ongoing to improve the topic reports. The Meeting noted the following comments:

- a proposal by Denmark that only results of significance to the updated BSAP should be presented in the final report, and that standard deviations would be presented, while ensuring also that all figures are easy to understand, and that the number of experts that contributed to the questionnaire should be shown in the figures;
- a comment by Finland was noted that some of the SOM results are contradicting results of national studies on the same topics. In this regard it was noted that while results are valuable, they represent data points reached by the SOM approach while other methodologies could give rise to different results. The Meeting noted that the SOM analysis has a regional perspective and is not intended to replace national assessments. The Meeting further noted that the one-out-all-out approach used by e.g. coastal fish could result in assessment results that differ considerably from local conditions;

- the results should be complemented by clarifications and expert input as e.g. results presented as percentages can be very difficult to interpret, represent just one data point and may lead to erroneous conclusions. The Meeting noted that the Secretariat is seeking expert input from the SOM Topic Teams and other topic experts to provide perspective and insight to the SOM results. The Meeting noted that discussion and summary of the results are often presented in a qualitative manner;
- there are hesitations with regard to the approach of presenting quantitative results based on expert interviews and input;
- it was clarified by the Secretariat that many results in the report are independent of each other and that concerns regarding one result may not apply to all other results. It was also clarified that ICES data is being used as part of the SOM analysis of fish related topics;
- the Meeting noted that according to ICES data the eastern Baltic cod stock is highly affected by natural mortality and other pressures than fishing. The Meeting noted that the SOM results in this regard are based on 2016-2018 conditions and that adaptive management is challenging to incorporate in the current SOM approach;
- the SOM analysis should not be seen as the ultimate answer to the question on what measures to take to reach GES, but is to be used as one source of supporting information for such deliberations, among other assessments.

3.15 The Meeting took note of the preliminary results of the analysis of sufficiency of measures for all topics and of the validation of input data to the SOM analysis.

3.16 The Meeting discussed in general that defining good environmental status (GES) for particular species or fish stocks is a challenge, may differ between sub-regions and as a result of local conditions (especially for coastal fish) and has an impact on how the SOM results should be interpreted. In this context the Meeting noted that ICES is looking into the definition of GES, noting that it is also a partially political decision. Reference was made to the Baltic Ecosystem Overviews by ICES and the possibility of using data from them also in the SOM analysis report.

3.17 The Meeting took note of information on the cost-effectiveness of new measures (document 3-9, Presentation 2).

Actions to be included in the updated BSAP

Finalizing existing actions

3.18 The Meeting considered document 3-5 on finalizing the rephrasing of existing HELCOM actions on incidental by-catch. The Meeting noted that HOD 58-2020 had agreed in principle on the rephrased and concretized existing HELCOM actions to be transferred to the updated BSAP and that the Meeting had instructed the Fish and State & Conservation groups to consider the overlapping actions related to incidental by-catch, and to submit a proposal for merging or further differentiation of these actions to HOD 59-2020 for agreement.

3.19 The Meeting considered the new proposal for reformulation submitted by STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020 and noted inter alia the following comments:

- the proposal was seen by a number of participants as a good effort to reach a compromise between the views of the Fish and State & Conservation groups, but a number of concerns were also expressed;
- the phrase “establish an enhanced monitoring system” could give rise to differing interpretations;
- “development and implementation” as proposed previously by the Fish Group was considered to be clearer, as the best ways to improve the monitoring are not yet known and development is therefore needed;
- the words “in line with” were seen as too ambiguous as compared to “taking into account”;

- the wording proposed by State & Conservation may be understood to expand the scope of the action to by-catch of fish, as well as mammals and birds which were part of the original scope of the actions that have been reformulated to the present action. It was also noted that the Roadmap on fisheries data, which the action refers to, only covers by-catch of mammals and birds;
- there is no need to refer to the status of populations and impact on benthic biotopes as such inclusions could limit the intended purposes of the action;
- there is no need to mention monitoring of fishing effort, as this is an obvious part of the data needed on by-catch; and
- discussions on by-catch monitoring are ongoing within BALTFISH and it may be useful to involve also authorities working with the EU Data Collection Framework, as well as the Regional Coordination Groups.

3.20 In conclusion, the Meeting did not support the formulation by STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020 and instead proposed the following compromise for consideration by HOD 59-2020;

Develop at the latest by [2023] and implement an effective data collection for more reliable data on by-caught birds and mammals and fishing effort taking into account data needs identified by ICES and data-gaps outlined in the HELCOM Roadmap on fisheries data, in order to assess incidental bycatches by [2025].

3.21 The Meeting agreed that the Annex of the BSAP should clearly describe what the action entails, including the fact that fishing effort is a key part of the data needed on by-catch.

3.22 The Meeting noted that the target years are in square brackets and still open for discussion at a later stage. The Meeting further expressed concern with the currently proposed years as enhancing or improving monitoring efforts by 2023 would give only two years for assessing by-catches by 2025.

Proposed new actions

3.23 The Meeting considered the outcomes of the three BSAP UP Workshops organized online in late August and early September (BSAP UP WS-HZ, BSAP UP WS-BIO and BSAP UP WS-SEA) and the proposed new actions for the updated BSAP as presented in document 3-7. The Meeting considered the actions one by one, commented, elaborated some of them and endorsed a number of actions for submission to HOD 59-2020. Further details, including the comments and proposals made, as well as the endorsement of actions are presented in the separate Excel attachment to this Outcome.

3.24 The Meeting noted a general reservation by Denmark on all proposed actions at this stage due to ongoing national consultation processes.

3.25 The Meeting invited the Secretariat, when sharing the Outcome of the Meeting with BALTFISH as part of the ongoing sharing of information, to highlight the discussion related to the proposed new action on Mandatory use of Acoustic Deterrent Devices as further specified in the Excel attachment of the Outcome. The Meeting did not endorse this action for submission to HOD 59-2020 as it was deemed important to discuss such measures within BALTFISH and other relevant fora.

3.26 The Meeting considered possible gaps in the set of measures for the updated BSAP and further considered document 3-10 by WWF regarding gaps on measures linked to disturbance of the seabed from mobile bottom contacting fishing gear. The Meeting noted inter alia the following comments:

- in Denmark specific protected areas are being designated based on scientific studies and not by general reduction of fishing areas;
- Article 8 of the CFP cannot be used for designating permanent protection from mobile bottom contacting fishing gear, as described in one of the measures proposed in document 3-10. Protected areas, that are not covered by the Natura 2000 directives could be designated through MSFD article 13, 4 and fisheries regulation implemented through CFP Articles 11 and 18;
- regardless of the relevant CFP Articles, the intention of the proposed measures is to coordinate the designation of such protected areas on the HELCOM level;

- EU Member States already have legal obligations along the lines of the proposals in document 3-10; and
- reference was made to [ICES work](#) on the impact of seabed habitats.

3.27 The Meeting agreed that there may be a gap in the proposed measures, as identified in document 3-10, but the Meeting could nevertheless not support the three measures as formulated in the document for inclusion in the updated BSAP.

HELCOM Explorer

3.28 The Meeting took note that the reporting on the implementation status of the national actions will take place via nominated national contact points in autumn 2020.

3.29 The Meeting took note of the reporting on the status of the joint actions of relevance for the Fish group (document 3-6), as presented by the Secretariat. Following consideration, the Meeting concluded that the status reported in the document is correct for all actions and no changes were therefore proposed.

HELCOM Science Agenda

3.30 The Meeting took note of the activities of the HELCOM Science Agenda Task Group and progress on developing the HELCOM Science Agenda. The Meeting noted that the Secretariat had circulated information to all HELCOM Working Groups on 30 October 2020 that the Science Agenda report and the comprehensive inventory of HELCOM knowledge and science needs have been made available through a dedicated [Workspace](#). One consolidated national response per Working Group has been requested **by 20 November 2020** through the workspace.

Agenda Item 4 Regional cooperation on Fisheries & Environment

Cooperation between HELCOM and BALTFISH

4.1 The Meeting took note of information on continued sharing of information and cooperation between HELCOM and BALTFISH, including that the HELCOM Secretariat attended the last BALTFISH Forum under the Finnish Presidency and shared information on the Roadmap on fisheries data and the update of the BSAP, as invited by FISH 11-2020.

4.2 The Meeting noted that the Estonian BALTFISH Presidency has requested input on the Roadmap from BALTFISH members and their DCF contact points, but that most countries have not yet responded. The Meeting noted that the Presidency will share the input with HELCOM once received.

4.3 The Meeting noted a proposal that the Secretariat should be invited to forward a request to the BALTFISH Presidency on input regarding also fishing effort and relevant data for small-scale fisheries, which is not expected to be provided by DCF contact points who focus on large-scale fisheries.

4.4 The Meeting noted that HOD 58-2020 welcomed the increased cooperation between HELCOM and BALTFISH, noted the engagement by BSAC in the update process of the BSAP and recognized that details of the further cooperation between HELCOM and BALTFISH are also addressed by existing as well as proposed new BSAP actions.

Cooperation with the BSAC sub-group on ecosystem-based fisheries management

4.5 The Meeting took note of the final report of the BSAC Working Group on Ecosystem Based Management (EBM WG) (document 4-1), which inter alia considered the update of the BSAP in great detail.

Cooperation with other organizations

4.6 No other information on regional, EU and international (FAO, CBD, other regions) developments for closer regional cooperation between organisations in the fields of fisheries and the marine environment was shared with the Meeting.

Agenda Item 5 BAT/BEP for sustainable aquaculture

5.1 The Meeting considered the outcome of CG AQUACULTURE 3-2020 and noted that while progress has been made on the development of BAT/BEP definitions, techniques and practices for sustainable aquaculture applicable in the Baltic Sea region, CG Aquaculture emphasised the need to continue the work beyond the current Terms of Reference and Work Plan of the group. The Meeting approved the updated Terms of Reference and Work Plan for CG Aquaculture, as included in **Annex 2** of this Outcome.

5.2 The Meeting noted that Denmark is not able to take on the lead on hazardous substances, as proposed in paragraph 6.13 of the Outcome of CG AQUACULTURE 3-2020 due to lack of resources. The Meeting further welcomed the offer by Poland to prepare a first draft for BAT/BEP on marine litter, but only based on currently available information as there are no possibilities to conduct new studies in that regard.

5.3 No further information was shared by participants on recent activities relevant to the development of sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea.

Agenda Item 6 HELCOM data interests

6.1 The Meeting recalled that the draft Roadmap on fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea was approved by HOD 57-2019 and adopted by HELCOM 41-2020. The Meeting further recalled that HOD 57-2019 had agreed that initial follow up on the implementation of the Roadmap should be reported to HOD 59-2020.

6.2 The Meeting considered the reporting template for the Roadmap on fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatches and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea as prepared by the Secretariat (document 6-1). The Meeting noted concerns with the workload associated with producing a very detailed reporting using the template. It was also noted that as the Roadmap was adopted only in March this year, it is still in the very early stages of implementation. The Meeting also noted that intention of the Roadmap was not to put in place certain actions for the Contracting Parties to undertake, but that they are possible actions to be discussed and decided upon in the relevant fora.

6.3 The Meeting agreed that a simple approach is sufficient for such a first initial reporting to HOD 59-2020. The Meeting consequently welcomed the offer by Poland to prepare a simplified draft report **by 18 November 2020**, to be circulate by the Secretariat for comments by contacts and observers of the Fish Group. The Meeting agreed on a tacit acceptance procedure and that any concerns or comments should be submitted to the Secretariat (petra.kaarja@helcom.fi) **by 24 November 2020** at the latest, upon which a CMNT document on the matter will be submitted by the Secretariat to HOD 59-2020 **by 30 November 2020**.

6.4 Although the Meeting agreed not to use the reporting template set out in document 6-1, the Meeting agreed on the usefulness of such template for future follow up on the Roadmap. The Meeting, however, agreed that the template could be simpler, and welcomed the offer to develop a simplified version for consideration by a future Meeting.

Agenda Item 7 Salmon and sea trout including HELCOM Recommendation 32-33/1

7.1 The Meeting took note of recent and upcoming activities of the RETROUT project (document 7-1), as presented by the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 8 Interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems

8.1 The Meeting took note of the [ICES special request advice](#) on an EU request on emergency measures to prevent bycatch of common dolphin and Baltic Proper harbour porpoise.

8.2 The Meeting noted a statement by EG MAMA 14-2020 on the ICES advice (c.f. document 2-2).

8.3 The Meeting further took note of the information on how the issue on harbour porpoise by-catch has progressed within BALTFISH and noted that it is handled as a matter of priority within BALTFISH and that a joint recommendation is being drafted and scheduled for completion by the end of 2020.

8.4 In this context, the Meeting considered the proposed conservation measures related to fisheries for critically endangered Baltic Proper harbour porpoises (document 8-2), as presented by CCB. The Meeting agreed on the importance of the issue and urged the Contracting Parties to coordinate national positions, in particular regarding harbour porpoise.

8.5 The Meeting took note of the draft report on HELCOM ACTION project Work Package 1 on by-catch (document 8-1), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting invited any comments on the draft report to be submitted to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi) by 3 December 2020.

Agenda Item 9 Work on indicator development

HELCOM indicators

9.1 The Meeting took note of the update related to HELCOM indicator and assessment work related to fish (document 9-1-Rev.1), as presented by the Secretariat and noted that possible comments on the Terms of Reference and plan for workshop on commercial fish can be sent to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi) **by 12.00 (EET) on Monday 16 November**. The Meeting further noted that nominations for the groups/workshops can be submitted to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi) **by Friday 27 November**.

9.2 The Meeting noted relevance of the proposed new action on concluding a more complete set of indicators, which was endorsed by the Meeting for inclusion in the HELCOM Science Agenda (c.f Excel attachment to this Outcome). The Meeting noted that the workshop may produce information that could be useful in the drafting of the Annex of the BSAP.

Agenda Item 10 Future work

10.1 The Meeting agreed to organize the next meeting of the Group on 18-19 May 2021 with location and format (online or physical) to be decided in due course.

10.2 The Meeting welcomed the offer by Germany to host FISH 14-2022 during the week 28 February-4 March 2022.

Agenda Item 11 Any other business

11.1 The Meeting updated the list of contacts and observers of the Fish Group (document 11-1), as included in **Annex 3**.

11.2 The Meeting noted that Poland had circulated a questionnaire on alternative fishing gear in October 2020. The Meeting encouraged the Contracting Parties and Observers to send updates on this matter to Poland (Katarzyna.Kaminska@minrol.gov.pl) **by 25 November 2020** so that the list on the related [HELCOM workspace](#) can be updated before the end of the year, as agreed by FISH 11-2020.

11.3 The Meeting took note of information on pontoon trap trials, as provided by Lithuania. The initial results are positive with low by-catch rates and also high acceptance by fishermen.

Agenda Item 12 Outcome of the Meeting

12.1 The Meeting adopted the Outcome of the Meeting. The Outcome of the Meeting, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting are available on the [FISH 12-2020 meeting site](#).

Annex 1. List of participants

Representing	Name	Organization	E-mail address
Chair	Marianne Goffeng Raakil	Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation	marianne.goffeng-raakil@gov.se
Contracting Parties			
Denmark	Janne Palomino Dalby	Ministry of Environment and Food	jpda@mfv.dk
Denmark	Kim Raegaard	Ministry of Environment and Food	kimrae@mfv.dk
Estonia	Ulvi Päädam	Ministry of the Environment	ulvi.paadam@envir.ee
EU	Antoine Kopp	European Commission	antoine.kopp@ec.europa.eu
Finland	Penina Blankett	Ministry of the Environment	penina.blankett@ym.fi
Finland	Heikki Lehtinen	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	heikki.lehtinen@mmm.fi
Germany	Sven Koschinski	on behalf of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, BfN	sk@meereszoologie.de
Germany	Miriam Mueller	German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation	miriam.mueller@bfm.de
Germany	Christian Pusch	Federal Agency for Nature Conservation	christian.pusch@bfm.de
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Lithuania	Jolanta Cesiulienė	The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania	Jolanta.Cesiuliene@zum.lt
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Lithuania	Robertas Staponkus	Klaipeda University	robertas.staponkus@apc.ku.lt
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Observers			
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Annex 2. Updated Terms of Reference and Work Plan for 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;
- 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.

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)

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, Estonia for monitoring of aquaculture operation) and Poland to prepare a first draft for 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 FISH 12-2020

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

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