



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
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Document title	Proposed approach for assessing food webs in HOLAS III and beyond
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Background

This document contains the proposal prepared by the Third Meeting of the Correspondence Group on Food webs (CG FOODWEB 3-2021) to STATE&CONSERVATION 15-2021 for assessing food webs withing HOLAS III and beyond.

The proposal contained in this document is one of the main outputs of CG FOODWEB (cf. document 3J-7 submitted to this Meeting). It is also presented in the Annex 3 of the [Outcome](#) of CG FOODWEB 3-2021.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider and endorse the proposed approach for assessing food webs in the HOLAS III assessment as indicated in the corresponding document.

Proposed approach for assessing food webs in HOLAS III and beyond

This document contains the proposal of CG FOODWEB to STATE&CONSERVATION 15-2021 for food webs assessment.

CG FOODWEB 3-2021 (referred as “the meeting” in this document) agreed that for HOLAS III the evaluation of food webs should be addressed via a designated section within the thematic assessment of biodiversity, compiling relevant test cases and information, though no full indicator will itself be available that directly addresses food webs. The following components would be used to compile the relevant information needed (details on these components are provided below):

- Apply a coherent approach (analysis of trends) to the largest possible spatial area of the Baltic Sea.
- Add sub-regional test cases based on other specific models or statistical approaches.
- Add additional test cases on components (e.g. productivity, diet, stable isotopes, energy fluxes, etc.) of relevance and where they can be suitably established.
- Establish information to ensure that food web interactions and linkages (i.e. topology) are clearly outlined (including food web matrix approaches).
- Add supporting contextual and reference material to the descriptive text in the thematic assessment section to provide a broad description of the test cases in light of other relevant material.
- As a final resort, should the above processes leave gaps or areas requiring an assessment, a variant of the expert-based evaluation outlined in [document 2-2 of CG FOODWEB 3-2021](#) could be applied.

The meeting agreed that building on the tables (cf. [Attachment 1 of the Outcome of CG FOODWEB 3-2021](#)) proposed by Sweden and the summary of biodiversity indicators should be taken further.

The meeting agreed that the most feasible current approach to provide a broad spatial overview would be the ITA approach (strongest current potential).

The meeting noted that Sweden offered to carry out a test case of the ITA for the Bothnian Sea sub-basin.

The meeting agreed that establishing an approach to address if other experts in the region can also partake in the ITA approach, i.e. to expand the spatial coverage to be as large as possible for HOLAS III. The following steps were considered:

- Highlight this to State and Conservation and request endorsement/support for the approach set out.
- Make a direct formal request to members of ICES WGIAB to address if there is interest and what other areas could be considered for HOLAS III.
- Request support from STATE&CONSERVATION to identify relevant experts to also support this process, e.g. add national experts to carry out test cases.
- Discuss with HELCOM BLUES the possibilities to support this process via data preparation or additional test cases (pending resources).

Identify other test cases (e.g. the EwE western Baltic Sea) listed in Annex 2 (cf. page 7) of CG FOODWEB 3-2021 Outcome, and determine via contact with experts developing those tools if test cases can be available for HOLAS III.

The meeting noted that broad spatial coverage and completion of the proposed tasks would be reliant on securing the appropriate expert input and time.