



PRESS RELEASE

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Council gives cod and fishers a chance, but leaves fate of small scale sector in hands of Member States.

Wednesday 12 October, Brussels - Meeting in Luxembourg on Monday 10th October, the Council Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers agreed to cut the Western Baltic cod TAC by 56%. Although significantly less than the close to 90% cut proposed by the European Commission, taken on its own, this would signify the end for many small scale fishers from Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Poland. As noted by Max Christensen, the Chairman of the Danish inshore low impact fleet, FSK, a member organization of LIFE: "For inshore fishing this is nothing short of a disaster, and many coastal fishermen will no doubt leave fishing, **if action is not taken now with a plan on how they can continue in the fishery in 2017**" (<http://skaansomtkystfiskeri.dk/pressemeddelelse-nu-er-det-op-til-de-danske-politikere-at-redde-kystfiskeriet/>).

Back in July, the Low Impact Fishers had put forward such a plan (<http://lifeplatform.eu/lifes-baltic-member-launch-action-plan/>), and it is heartening to see several of the plan’s elements being taken on board by the Council and the Commission.

Above all the plan calls for Member States and the European Commission to take care of the most vulnerable fishers by putting small scale fishers first. This means targeting those fleets that contribute the most to the fishing pressure on Western Baltic stock and which are able, at least technically, to re-locate their effort to other areas and stocks.

As explained by Michael Andersen, adviser to the Danish Fish Producers Organization, in email correspondence with LIFE “The larger vessels will be able to survive by directing effort to other areas, and when the TAC comes back up they will return to the Western Baltic. By then however, the smaller vessels will be gone, the small harbours will no longer have the logistic to support a fishery and cultural capital has disappeared forever.”

But unless Member States take decisive action, and notably, as highlighted by Commissioner Vella, by “the redistribution of quotas at national level to those small fleet segments that are most affected,” small scale fleets will not be able to survive.

LIFE therefore calls on Baltic Member States to give **quota redistribution the serious attention it deserves**, to right historic injustices of unfair quota allocation and to ensure the survival of the most vulnerable fleets, by using the provisions Article 17 of the Basic Regulation ((EU) No 1380/2013) creatively to positively discriminate in favour of responsible small scale low impact fishing practices.

LIFE welcomes the attention given to small scale fisheries by Commissioner Vella in his speech (http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/vella/announcements/agrifish-council-press-conference-0_en)

announcing the Council decisions. In particular it is worth noting that acceptance by the Commission of the lower reduction in TAC was influenced by arguments of Member States, particularly concerning the impacts of quota cuts on the different fleets and in particular on artisanal fleet.

LIFE urges Member States to **follow Mr Vella's advice** for the smallest of our fishing businesses, who will be most vulnerable, **by adapting their EMFF operational programmes**, to support the small scale sector through this difficult period.

LIFE gives a cautious welcome to the Council decisions, noting that it is now up to Member States to intervene to allow small scale fleets to survive.