

**POLISH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM --  
BALTIC FISHERY**

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## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Two main sectors can be distinguished in the Polish Baltic fishery, they are, the inshore and offshore fisheries.

The inshore (artisanal) fishery is characterised by a great diversity of both the species fished and the fishing techniques used (e.g. trawling, gill-netting, longlining, traps), as well as a large number of motor and rowing boats of length less than 12.5 metres -- the number of such fishing boats registered within the last ten years is around 800-900.

The offshore fishery is directed towards three main commercial Baltic species -- cod, herring and sprat. This fishery is conducted by the fishing cutters -- generally vessels longer than 12.5 metres and not exceeding 30 metres. In the period 1980-1989 the number of cutters was reduced from 515 to 384, their total tonnage has been reduced from 33 300 grt to 28 800 grt and the total engine power has been reduced from 125 000 hp to 116 000 hp, respectively. Thus, despite the reduction in vessel numbers (-14 per cent), total power and fishing capacity remained the same as 10 years ago.

For many years, pelagic and bottom trawling were the main fishing techniques, with only a small number of cutters using drift netting (for short periods in the year) in the salmon fishery.

Gill netting in the cod fishery was introduced on a large scale beginning from 1988/89 -- providing about 15 per cent of the total catch of cod in 1990.

Polish catches in the Baltic Sea diminished by more than half in the period 1980-91. In 1980 and 1982, they exceeded 200 000 tons. Since 1984 a steady catch reduction is being observed. In 1990, the catches were about 110 000 tons and in 1991 about 100 000 tons. In contrast to many previous years the national quotas for the three main Baltic species had not been utilised in full from 1989-91. In 1991, the quota for cod was exploited to 74 per cent, for herring 51 per cent and for sprat 54 per cent.

The reasons for the reduction in the catch of cod should be analysed separately from those of herring and sprat. Cod, being the most economically attractive species in the Baltic, has been heavily fished with uncontrolled high levels of fishing effort. This was accompanied by the worsening of hydrological factors in the Baltic (very unfavourable conditions for spawning) resulting in a severe decline of cod stock biomass. The decline in cod catches was caused first by natural factors (hydrological conditions) and then by very high fishing efforts.

The reduction in catches of herring and sprat was caused by economic factors -- the profitability of herring and sprat catches were very low due to low prices on the domestic and international markets. Therefore, a considerably large part of fishing effort was shifted from

herring/sprat to the cod fishery. The herring and sprat stocks are in a healthy state -- the biomasses having increased during the last few years.

However, the biological and economic factors are only one side of the problem of the Baltic fishery, the other is the national fishery policy in general and fisheries management system in particular.

The main task in which the Government was involved in began in May 1990 with the privatisation of state-owned companies. Up to 1987 these companies (supplying 75 per cent of total landings) were heavily subsidised by the central Government budget. In 1990, no subsidies were provided to the fishing industry, except for some assistance aimed at the maintenance of fishing harbours, training of sea-going personnel and scientific research (stock assessment, processing technology, etc.). The years 1990-92 should be treated as a transitional period. The entire process of radical restructuring is still pending and should be completed in 1993-94.

Liberal foreign trade regulations were introduced in 1990. No quotas or licences for import of fish products were applied and the uniform custom charge of 5 per cent per value of imported fish products was levied.

## THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN FORCE

The fishing regulation in the Baltic is being elaborated by the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission. The basic tool of fishery management with regard to the four main Baltic species (cod, herring, sprat and salmon) is TAC, which is set each year by the IBSFC.

Based mainly on historical records (and to some extent on biological productivity of particular national zones) IBSFC splits the TACs into national quotas. Apart from this, after reaching a consensus of all contracting parties, the IBSFC recommends appropriate technical conservation measures to be enforced by national regulations of each Member State. The technical measures in force in Poland are similar to those used in the fisheries management systems in other countries and include:

- minimum landing size;
- mesh size regulations;
- closed areas;
- closed seasons.

The open access policy conducted by the Government within the overall national quota accorded to the Polish fishing zone was abandoned and at the end of 1990 the Government announced the prospective ban for registration of new vessels. This rule was brought into force in July 1991 and a new vessel can be registered provided the old one is taken out of the fishery. This, of course, does not reduce the fleet but is a first step towards direct fishing effort regulation. The Polish national quotas set by IBSFC is apportioned to the fishing vessel operators (free of charge) corresponding to the size or type of vessel and historical rights based on the catches over the last ten years -- for setting the vessels' quotas in 1990 and 1991, the historical reference period was 1980-89.

In the case of national quota for cod, about 6 per cent of the total quota was assigned to the artisanal (coastal) fishery without setting the individual quotas for each fishing boat.

## CONCLUSION

Taking into account the great changes in the level and composition of the Polish catches in the Baltic Sea during last years, the high level of fishing effort and over-capitalisation of fishing fleet it has to be said that the Polish fisheries management system seems to be very ineffective. To some extent this fact can be explained by the overall dramatic political and economic changes which have taken place in Poland in recent years. However, the main reason seems to be the weakness of the national management system which does not take into account the present biological and economic conditions of the Baltic fishery. A new approach to resource management has to be established and enforced. Despite the legal issues, one of the main problems is the organisation and effectiveness of the Polish Fishery Inspection; the weak points of the inspection/control system, are:

- lack of an effective system for collecting, processing and publishing catch data (catch statistics);
- inefficient technical operations;
- scarcity of funds.

Some attempts to adjust the Polish management system have already been made. The improvement of regulatory measures are being worked out by a special legislation body set up by the Government and fishermen's organisations. The plans for short and long-term reorganisation of the fishing industry have already been drafted. In general, however, the problem is still far from being solved.

Many different and difficult aspects (biological, socio-economic, administrative) are involved regarding the problem of radical re-orientation of a fisheries management system. Among other tools in achieving the better conservation of living resources and their more economic and rational exploitation, the implementation of an individual transferable quota system (ITQ) is considered to be the best. However, regarding ITQ a number of basic questions still have to be cleared, for example:

- inspection methods;
- cost;
- criteria and methods of allocation,
- types of fisheries applicable;
- fleet restructuring;
- enforcement;
- socio-economic aspects, etc.

The Polish fisheries authorities are paying great attention to the experience of countries where ITQ systems have already been introduced in the hope of being able to implement at least some of those experiences into the Polish system.