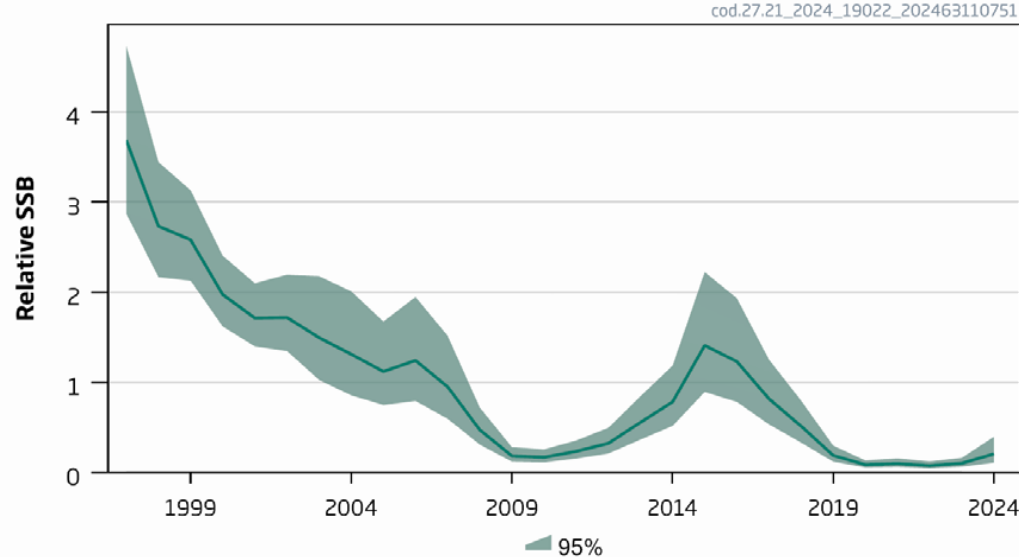


Recovery – to reduce the risk for collapse

Policy Analyst Charles Berkow

Cod in the Kattegatt 1994-2024

Relative Spawning Stock Biomass

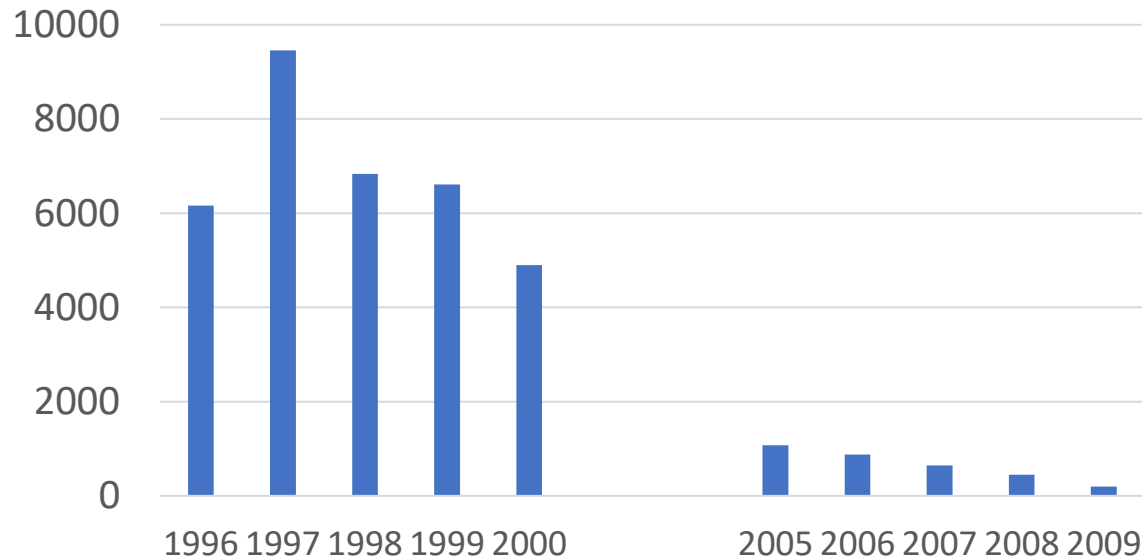


Cod in the Kattegat

ICES first year 0 catch

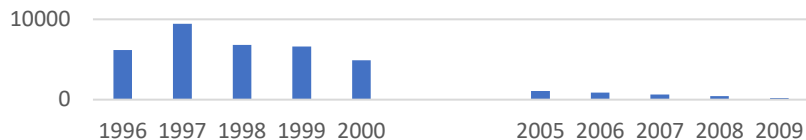
2002

landings in tonnes

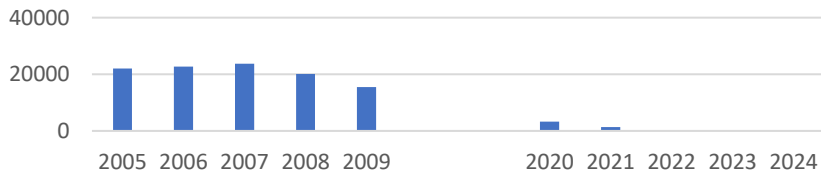


Collapsed stocks – some examples

Kattegat, cod
landings in tonnes



Western Baltic cod,
commercial landings in tonnes



Western Baltic Herring,
catches in tonnes



ICES first year 0 catch

2002

2026

(<1 000 tonnes since
2022)

2019

Baltic Sea Centre



Rebuilding – to reduce the risk of stock collapse

- Collapse
 - What we want to avoid
- Reduce the risk
 - Implies uncertainty
- Rebuilding
 - Means getting a bigger safety margin

Bursting the bubble

- Two lenses
 - Driving a car
 - Speed limits
 - Red lights
 - Yellow lights
 - Economics
 - Stocks – goods on the shelf
 - Forecast
 - Profits – how to allocate
 - Inflation target?
 - Attitude to risk
 - Horizontal and vertical integration – overcapacity in processing
 - "Socio-economic" , trade-offs

Some options to consider - Scientists

- Be much more open about uncertainties, assumptions
- Clarify forecasts vs. advice
- Highlight probabilities of achieving goals
- Clarity about what is not included
- Headline advice consistent with rules in the MAP
- If the Commission asks the wrong questions, help them ask the right questions

Some options to consider – Council

- Simplify
 - MSFD “Good environmental status” binding for decision-making
 - Population target
 - Improve age and size structure
 - Offset to
 - Protect biodiversity
 - Maintain food-webs
 - Maintain habitat integrity
- Acknowledge forecasts and uncertainty
- Address (and reduce) risk explicitly
- Clarify trade-offs
- Stop subsidizing overcapacity – fuel, vessels, processing

Some options to consider - Commission

- Resist interpretational drift, eg. prioritize objectives, not means, "flexibility", "by-catch"
- Ask the right questions of the scientists
 - What needs to be done to reach rebuilding target?
 - What should we do to move in the right direction on environmental targets?
 - Executive summary (e.g. including uncertainties) instead of headline advice
 - Headline advice not in conflict with rules in MAP
- React when rules are broken

Some options to consider – Parliament

- Simplify
- React when rules are broken
- Encourage the Commission to do what it is supposed to do
- Do a study of
 - horizontal and vertical integration in the fishing and seafood industry,
 - overcapacity in the processing industry (especially fish meal)
 - their implications for management

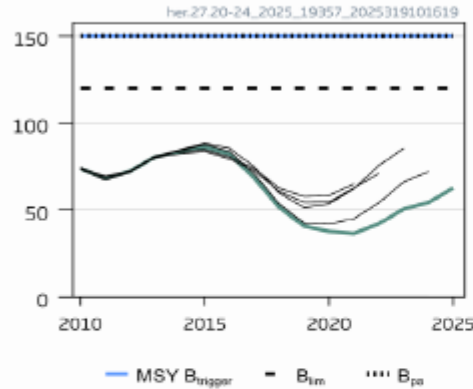
Some options to consider – Fishers' organisations

- Give your lobbyists an annual bonus
 - Based on the development of your key stocks during the past 5 years
 - (instead of based on the difference between the Commission proposal and the Council decision)
- Encourage investment in rebuilding to reduce the risk of collapse

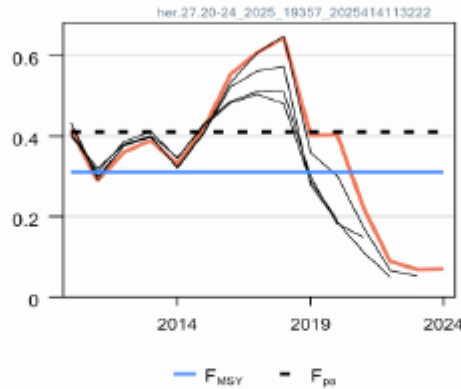
Supporting documentation and discussion

Uncertainties — excerpt from ICES WBSSH 2026

SSB (1000 t)



F (ages 3-6)



Rec (age 0; Billions)

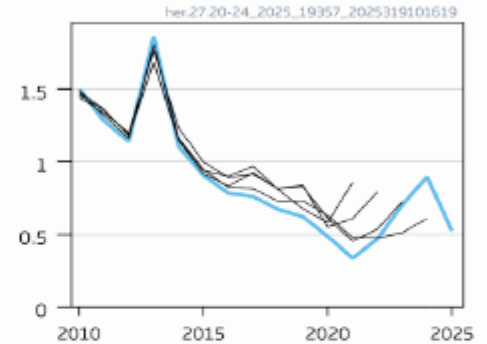


Figure 2

Herring in subdivisions 20–24, spring spawners. Historical assessment results (final-year recruitment included for each line, corresponding to the recruitment assumption in the intermediate year. Final-year SSB prediction is included for each line).

Uncertainties — excerpt from ICES WBSSH 2026

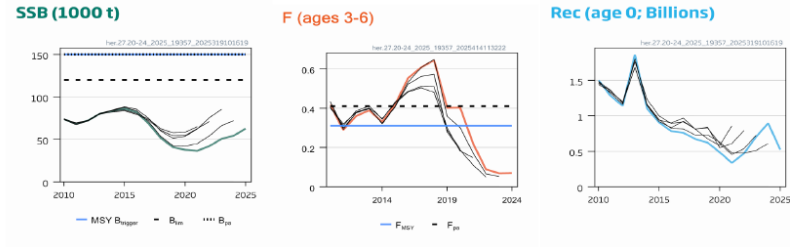


Figure 2 Herring in subdivisions 20–24, spring spawners. Historical assessment results (final-year recruitment included for each line, corresponding to the recruitment assumption in the intermediate year. Final-year SSB prediction is included for each line).

ICES presents these diagrams in advice sheets for many stocks, but gives no explanation.

Each line shows the estimates made a different year. The longest are the latest. The vertical distance between the lines illustrates how far, in what directions, previous estimates were off. Much more over- than underoptimistic.

Model uncertainty – ICES GoB Herring reference points – What is Fmsy, Blim?

	Pre 2017	2017 - 2021	2021-2024	2024 -
Fmsy	0.15	0.21	0.271	0.218
Blim	not defined	202 272	376 571	389 938
Bpa	not defined	283 180	533 515	516 727
Btrigger	316 000	283 180	533 515	613 355

Source: ICES, WGBFAS 2024

Assumptions in calculations of "advice"

- Models are robust
- Data are reliable
- Environmental conditions are stable

See more at Baltic Breakfast "Shortcomings of Baltic Fisheries Management" at

<https://www.su.se/english/divisions/stockholm-university-baltic-sea-centre>

”Socio-economic” claims by Council

- Catch-all excuse for BUSINESS as usual
- Disguises trade-offs

"Socio-economic" in Council "bible" 2018

Species:	Herring	Zone:	Subdivisions 22-24
	<i>Clupea harengus</i>		(HER/3BC+24)
Denmark	898	2426	<u>DE:</u> considers a reduction of 40-45% sufficient to allow the stock to recover and respect provisions of BMAP, need to consider socio-economic impact.
Germany	3533	9551	
Finland	0	1	
Poland	833	2252	<u>DK:</u> asks for a higher TAC. BMAP ranges and trigger values should be used, instead of the new ICES point references.
Sweden	1139	3079	
			<u>SE:</u> can accept COM proposal.
			<u>EE:</u> the TAC should lead to an SSB increase.
Union	6404	17309	

Some trade-offs in fisheries management

Economy

Environment

Short-term

Long-term

Industrial fishers

Artisanal fishers

Low consideration of uncertainty

High consideration of uncertainty

Low stock risk aversion

High stock risk aversion

Catch maximisation

Catch stability

An ICES recommendation implies a position on trade-offs.

Lack of political transparency on trade-offs.

Baltic Sea Centre



Interpretational drift vs MAP or CFP

- "Fmsy is the objective" (contradicts 3.1, 4.4, 4.6. 5 MAP)
- "Cod and herring in the western Baltic are by-catch stocks" (contradicts 1.1 MAP)
- Landing obligation
 - "Stock exchange" (15(8) CFP), interspecies flexibility
Now used for *intentional* misreporting
 - "Quota laundering" (15(9) CFP), inter-annual flexibility
Opens for creation of "paper fish" that can water down future TAC reductions.

From ICES contract with DG Mare (earlier versions, including 2024)

“Limitations on fisheries may be required to achieve environmental objectives, especially regarding biodiversity, habitat integrity, and foodwebs. This will not affect the catch that can be taken from a stock in accordance with the objectives of MSY and the precautionary approach and will therefore not affect ICES advice on fishing possibilities. However, the limitations may affect the possibilities for the fisheries to fully utilize the advised fishing possibilities. ICES may, if requested, advise on the likely impact of such limitations on the catch but will, as explained, not include such considerations in the advice on fishing opportunities....”

Thanks for listening!

charles.berkow@su.se

<https://www.su.se/english/divisions/stockholm-university-baltic-sea-centre>