



Subject: Upcoming Agrifish Council discussions on the Commission’s evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy

18 June 2026

Dear Minister,

The undersigned environmental NGOs welcome the publication of the European Commission's evaluation¹ of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Ahead of the AGRIFISH Council discussion on 22 June, we would like to share our reflections on the implications of the evaluation for the Baltic Sea.

The European Commission's evaluation concludes that "*the CFP Regulation remains a very important and relevant tool to manage a common natural resource and related economic activities in a changing world*" and that its "*broad and comprehensive objectives allow it to cater to many emerging issues*"². Importantly, the evaluation finds that while implementation gaps remain, "*the fundamental pillars of environmental, economic and social sustainability are however not put into question*". It acknowledges that while there has been progress in reducing overfishing and strengthening fisheries management, the recovery of fish populations remains too slow and the predicted economic gains have not entirely materialised. At the same time, it identifies shortcomings in control, enforcement and

¹European Commission (2026), *Commission Staff Working Document: Evaluation of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy*, SWD(2026) 120 final, 30 April 2026.

² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

compliance. The consequences appear to be especially serious in the Baltic Sea, where significant misreporting of the actual quantities landed and unreported discarding of quota species contribute to overfishing and the decline of fish populations³. In addition, the evaluation points out that progress in applying ecosystem-based management to minimise negative impacts of fishing on marine biodiversity and ecosystems has been slow. For the Baltic Sea, a sea basin in a poor ecological state⁴, these findings are particularly relevant.

The collapse of the iconic Baltic cod populations, the vulnerable herring populations, depleted salmon populations and the deteriorating condition of Baltic plaice illustrate the scale of the challenge facing Baltic Sea ecosystems and fisheries.

Taken together, these findings point to a clear priority for the Baltic Sea: restoring depleted fish populations and their habitats and implementing ecosystem-based fisheries management. At the October 2025 AGRIFISH Council, fisheries ministers recognised the urgent need to rebuild Baltic Sea fish populations and committed to seeking scientific advice to support this objective⁵. This important commitment must now be backed by concrete action, and we encourage prioritising the development of recovery trajectories for depleted Baltic Sea fish populations. The discussion at next week's AGRIFISH meeting should therefore focus on how both the existing CFP and Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan (MAP)⁶ tools can be used to accelerate recovery, strengthen ecosystem resilience and deliver on commitments already made.

Against this backdrop, we urge you to defend and fully implement the existing CFP framework. Reopening the regulation and associated secondary legislation, such as the Fisheries Control Regulation, would risk triggering years of complex negotiations and regulatory uncertainty, as well as diverting resources at a time when urgent action is needed to restore fish populations, strengthen marine ecosystems and support coastal communities.

As fisheries ministers prepare to discuss the evaluation, we therefore call on you to:

- ✓ Heed recent calls, including by the European Parliament⁷ to **strengthen implementation of the CFP**, including the **landing obligation** and the revised **Fisheries Control Regulation**.

³ European Commission (2026), Commission Staff Working Document: *Communication on Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2027* {COM(2026) 271 final}. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52026SC0145>

⁴ HELCOM HOLAS assessment (HELCOM (2023): State of the Baltic Sea. Third HELCOM holistic assessment 2016-2021. Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings n°194).

⁵ European Commission (2025), *Agreement reached on 2026 fishing opportunities for the Baltic Sea*, DG MARE, 28 October 2025. The Commission noted that "the dire environmental state of the Baltic Sea leads to the pressing need to fully implement the EU legislation at all levels in an effective manner and to allow a rebuilding trajectory." Available at: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/agreement-reached-2026-fishing-opportunities-baltic-sea-2025-10-28_en

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007

⁷ European Parliament (2026), *resolution of 21 May 2026 on the multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea and ways forward* (2024/2127(INI)). Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2026-0189_EN.html

- ✓ Deliver on the October 2025 AGRIFISH commitment by **establishing credible recovery trajectories** for depleted Baltic Sea fish populations and making full use of Baltic Sea MAP spawning stock biomass **safeguards**.
- ✓ Ensure that fisheries management decisions are based on robust and reliable catch data, and fully aligned with scientific advice, the precautionary approach and the CFP's requirement to implement an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management.

The Baltic Sea does not need another legislative reform. It needs decisive action to rebuild fish populations, restore ecosystem functioning and strengthen its resilience. We therefore urge you to use the AGRIFISH discussion to turn existing commitments into concrete recovery measures.

Yours sincerely,

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