Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

Swedish efforts concerning sustainable fisheries

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

TARGET 14.4:

By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.

TARGET 14.6:

By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognising that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Fish is fundamental when it comes to feeding a growing population due to its high nutritional value; in addition, it generates livelihoods for millions of people around the globe. To ensure continued capture fisheries production it is essential that the fisheries sector becomes more sustainable.

- Fishing is the primary reason for the decline in fish stocks; even though negative environmental changes to the aquatic environment also contribute.

- Fisheries, as well as, trade falls under the exclusive competence of the European Union (EU). In practice, the Commission represents European interest on behalf of its member states at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

- The EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) contains tools and measures that could, if they are implemented appropriately, ensure that the fish stocks in EU move towards sustainability. A measure in the CFP that will be a challenge to implement is the landing obligation. As a result, the whole catch must be landed, but individuals smaller than the minimum conservation reference size shall not be sold to human consumption.

- After a hiatus in the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations since 2011, there now appears to be renewed momentum. The difficulty is, however, for the WTO members to agree on necessary definitions and concepts.

- The Baltic Sea is the first region to develop a multiannual plan for several species. The plan has been adopted within the CFP framework and already been applied in fish quota setting for 2017.

- The Swedish fishing fleet has declined during the past decade and is today, for most fleet segments, in balance with available resources.

- In 2011 EU introduced enhanced traceability requirements for fishery and aquaculture products. In Sweden a fully electronic system, which is user-friendly and gives traceability along the whole value chain, has been developed in cooperation with those concerned.

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Introduction

Fish is fundamental when it comes to feeding a growing population due to its high nutritional value; in addition, it generates livelihoods for millions of people around the globe. To ensure continued production from capture fisheries, it is essential that the fisheries sector as a whole, which includes commercial, subsistence and recreational fisheries, becomes more sustainable.

According to the FAO's State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2016, the state of the world's marine fish stocks has not improved overall, despite notable progress in some areas. Overfishing persists despite decades of efforts to manage fisheries in order to successfully conserve stocks at sustainable levels.

For the fisheries sector to be sustainable, it should deliver long-term benefits – ecological, social and economic – to society. There are many different views on what sustainable fishing is, or how fisheries should be managed to be sustainable.

In EU waters, progress has been made towards maintaining stocks above levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Since 2006, the numbers of stocks fished in line with MSY criteria and within safe biological limits have increased greatly. There are, however, indications that the positive trend is weakening. This is not necessarily due to overfishing; there are other possible explanations, such as climatic changes or other biological factors. In addition, there are strong regional differences in EU waters; most progress has been made in the North Sea and least in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

Fishing is the primary reason for the decline in fish stocks; even though negative environmental changes to the aquatic environment also contribute. A reduction of fishing pressure is therefore an important step to achieve healthier fish stocks. There is also a broad recognition that an ecosystem approach to fisheries management is needed to achieve sustainable fisheries. A fishery that accounts for interactions between fisheries and other impacts on fish stocks and that integrates fisheries management into broader governance frameworks.

Sweden's regulatory competence within the EU Common Fisheries and Trade Policies

Fisheries, along with trade, falls under the exclusive competence of the European Union. In practice, the Commission represents European interests on behalf of its member states at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. The possibility for Sweden to act on its own in international negotiations regarding fisheries, weather it concerns management or trade, is therefore limited.

The EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) applies to conservation of marine biological resources, the management of fisheries and fleets exploiting marine biological resources and – in relation to measures on markets and financial measures in support of the implementation of the CFP – fresh water biological resources, aquaculture, and the processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products. Member States may enact national control measures, which go beyond minimum requirements in Union legislation and may enact national measures on conservation and management.

A section on the external policy is included in the CFP, which is basis for EU activities in international fisheries organisations, most notably regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), and principles and objectives for EU fleets operating in waters of third-country coastal States, through the so-called "sustainable fisheries partnership agreements" (SFPAs). Through the EU external policy, Sweden has the possibility to influence EU actions within RFMOs and SFPA of relevance for developing states. This part of the CFP gives Sweden a clear opportunity to act in line with the intentions of Sweden's Policy for Global Development.

A VERY LARGE part of Sweden's fishing walers are protected from fishing with trawl. Trawling prohibition generally apply within a boundary of about 4 nautical miles of the coast.

National efforts

Close to the coast, often outside river mouths, there are about 400 areas where fishing is restricted to angling, which is only allowed during certain parts of the year. These restricted fishing areas have been designated as a measure to protect fish during the spawning season and are mainly directed at migrating fish such as salmon and trout. Lately they have also been designated to protect species such as pike and pikeperch. Sweden has also designated a number of areas where no fishing is allowed, equivalent of 2/3 of the total area of no-take zones in EU-waters, in order to allow recovery for specific stocks. A recent evaluation of Swedish experiences of no-take zones shows that this is an effective complement to other management measures that can be profitable for fisheries in the long run. The use of closed areas may also have positive effects on the ecosystem at large, and improve its abilities to deliver ecosystem services.

Within the national mandate of fisheries regulation, Sweden has introduced a ban on trawling in most areas within 3-4 nautical miles of the coast, a so-called "trawl limit" to protect important fish habitats and other vulnerable habitats that may otherwise be negatively impacted by trawling. The trawl limit was extended to its current extent in 2004 to protect mainly hard bottom habitats mapped out in seabed surveys and which are important to fish and other species.

In order to have fishing capacity in balance with available resources efforts have been made, in Sweden as well as in the EU at large, to reduce the size of the fishing fleet. As a result, the Swedish fleet has declined during the past decade with regard to both the number of vessels and tonnage and engine power. Today, economic indicators show that for most Swedish fishing fleet segments, no overcapacity exists. This decline is primarily a result of subsidies for scrapping fishing vessels, transferable fishing rights in the pelagic fishery, regulation of eel fishing, and poor profitability. The Swedish fishing fleet contributes economically to the fishing communities, although there are significant variations between different sub-sectors. While the Swedish catching sector does not employ a large number of people in relation to other industries, fishing is important for many coastal communities, including through its links to other activities.

Sweden has long running programme of development of selective fishing gears. In the programme fishing industry, researchers and authorities work together to develop new options for selective gears that avoid unnecessary by-catches and thereby help to fulfill demands of the landing obligation. As an example, more than half of Swedish landings of Norway lobster are now caught with pots or using trawls with a so-called "Swedish grid" that is designed to minimise by-catches of non-target species such as cod.

In Sweden, sixteen stocks of Baltic salmon are classified as wild by ICES as well as eight stocks in rivers with hydropower stations that are maintained through compensatory re-stocking of salmon smolt. Fisheries have mainly been within main basin and coastal areas in the Baltic Sea, which are feeding and spawning migration areas for salmon without the ability to differentiate between individual stocks.

Since 2013, Sweden has managed a successful salmon management programme of phasing out fishing on mixed salmon stocks. Nowadays commercial fishing for salmon can only take place with static gear in the estuary of salmon rivers.

In 2011 the EU introduced enhanced traceability requirements for fishery and aquaculture products. The main reason was the need for improved monitoring of catches by extending control to the entire marketing chain. EU traceability requirements imply that all operators in the food chain, such as fish receivers, wholesalers and retailers should have systems and procedures for traceability of fish products, where information (such as species, geographical origin, capture date etc.) shall follow the fish from the catch to the plate.

In Sweden, the demands of traceability will be met by introducing a central IT-system whereby fish receivers and wholesalers electronically exchange information on several fish species. The system is being developed in cooperation with a range of operators and it will also provide the information to other competent authorities. The production launch date of the system is January 1st 2019.

Regional efforts

To improve efficiency, and to avoid the overly detailed regulation at EU level that characterised the previous fisheries policy, the new CFP follows a bottom-up approach to governance and management, by means of so-called "regionalisation" that allows Member States and stakeholders at the regional level to develop measures based on the specific circumstances and requirements of their local environment. Sweden is an active part in the regionalisation processes, one for the North Sea and one for the Baltic Sea.

The Baltic Sea is the first region to develop a multiannual plan for several species, which has been adopted within the CFP framework and already been applied in quota setting for 2017. The multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks will contribute to long-term management of stocks based on scientific advice and strengthens the opportunities to achieve MSY targets. The plan sets out conservation reference points and intervals for fishing mortality based on International Council for the Explorations of the Seas (ICES) advice, and demands further remedial measures in case these

FISHING WITH seal-proof pushup traps to find alternative tools for the net fishing that are currently affected by seal damage.

are not achieved. The plan will also contribute to the implementation of ecosystem-based management and coherence with EU environmental legislation including achievement of good environmental status in line with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Concerning subsidies the CFP contains a few categories of subsides that could be considered capacity enhancing, such as support to infrastructure in ports and landing sites, and investments on fishing vessels to enhance the quality and added value of the catch. Nevertheless, the major part of grants given are there to help the fishery sector move towards a more sustainable use of the resource. Most of the subsidies that are a part of the CFP and could be considered capacity enhancing, Sweden have decided not to use.

To avoid lengthy discussions in the WTO concerning fisheries subsidies, in which an agreement may not be reached, Sweden, through the EU, have supported the more pragmatic approach where certain forms of subsides be prohibited. It will hopefully be easier to agree on the different forms of subsidies that are unsustainable, than to agree on a useful definition of sustainable fishing. Fuel subsidies might become an issue for discussion, as they constitute a large proportion, 22 percent, of total subsides. Fuel subsides are not part of the CFP, but regulated through the directive for taxation of energy products and electricity, which prohibits EU member states to impose a tax on fuel to be used in commercial shipping.

SWEDEN IS launching a production system based on traceability that is developed to imply all operations in the food chain. The launch is currently planned for the first of January 2019.

CHALLENGES AND GAPS

- In 2013, a new Common Fisheries Policy was agreed, effective from 1 January 2014. The CFP requires that fish stocks should be exploited at levels allowing them to be above levels consistent with Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015, where possible, and by 2020 at the latest. The CFP contains tools and measures that could, if they are implemented appropriately, ensure that the fish stocks in EU move towards sustainability.

- The gradual introduction through the CFP, from 2015–2019, of a landing obligation for all species regulated by quotas in EU waters, is expected to be a strong driver for a reduction in unwanted catch and discards, thus contributing to less waste and more efficient resource use. The landing obligation is a significant change as well as a challenge for large parts of the Swedish fishing industry. As a result, the whole catch must be landed, but individuals smaller than the minimum conservation reference size shall not be sold for human consumption. Instead, this catch shall be restricted to other than direct human consumption. The possibility of increasing the share above the reference size can be a driving force for fishermen to develop fishing techniques to maximise the value of fishing possibilities. It requires an adaptation of gears as well as rules for fishing areas and at what times fishing activities may take place.

- Within the framework of the EU's common efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) different measures for controlling fishing activities are used. In addition, there are trade related measures in place with the purpose to prevent illegally caught fish to enter the EU market.

- With the objective to improve compliance with the EU IUU Regulation, Sweden has introduced a risk-based control approach in which Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM) IT-system has proved to be an effective tool. Next challenge for SwAM in its efforts to control IUU-fishing is to establish a system for administrative sanctions in accordance with the legislative changes that entered into force on 1 August 2016.

- The international community is in agreement to eliminate subsidies that contribute to overcapacity, overfishing and IUU-fishing, and the main process for doing this is through the World Trade Organization (WTO). After a hiatus in the WTO negotiations since 2011, there now appears to be renewed momentum in the negotiations, and the aim is currently to conclude the negotiations on fisheries subsidies at the WTO ministerial conference in December 2017. The difficulty is, however, to agree on necessary definitions and concepts. Concepts such as sustainable fishing and overfishing as well as small-scale fisheries currently has no internationally accepted definitions, which are precise enough to use in an agreement. To agree on a goal in a UN declaration is generally easier than to agree on specific and binding regulations in the WTO, which will have consequences if breached.

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Compilations made by SwAM for SDG 14, Life below water

- This document represents one out of nine compilations made by the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM) to highlight Sweden's key efforts and initiatives for Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It has been developed as a part of Sweden's work in support of The Ocean Conference in New York, June 5–9, 2017.
- Several other Swedish agencies and institutions have contributed to the content in these compilations: the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI), the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, the Swedish Transport Agency, and the Swedish Institute for the Marine Environment (SIME).
- The documentation focuses on a situation assessment and does not constitute a complete picture of Sweden's initiatives being carried out in order to achieve the goal and targets. A starting point for the content is operational areas within national authorities, but the content has also been expanded to include other significant aspects based upon existing contacts and knowledge.
- Furthermore, the Swedish Environmental Research Institute (IVL) has been commissioned by SwAM to compile initiatives and examples from Sweden's industry and blue growth sector. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Northern Europe has also composed a complementary compilation of efforts from innovative blue growth initiatives. The result of this work is presented in separate reports.
- The Swedish Institute for the Marine Environment has been commissioned by SwAM to produce two syntheses in support of the conference. One concerns mitigating marine eutrophication in the presence of strong societal driving forces, with a focus on impacts and measures, and the other concerns impacts and measures regarding marine litter in small island developing states.

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