

Our translation of our letter to the editor "Bråttom för Kullgren att flytta ut trålgränsen", published in *Dagens Nyheter* in Sweden, November 1, 2025.

Urgent matter for Kullgren to extend the trawling boundary

Letter to the editor: Before the new fishing quotas will come into force in the Baltic Sea the government must introduce a ban against trawlers close to Sweden. It would provide a certain degree of protection for the spawning herring and Baltic herring, writes Anders Nolin, Anders Lönneborg, Kicki Seeman, Hans Ljungberg and Britt-Marie Kihlberg from the grassroots movement the Baltic Sea Call to Action (Östersjöuppropet).

The fishing quotas for the Baltic Sea for 2026 [have now been decided](#). As usual the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) assess the maximum catch of fish, but this with an obvious risk for overfishing. Thereafter, the EU commission make their assessment, where they take into account uncertainties, risks and not the least how the fish population can be rebuilt to long-term sustainable levels. Then, there are negotiations between the different EU countries surrounding the Baltic Sea, and finally the fishing ministers from these Baltic Sea countries meet to take the decision about the fishing quotas for the coming year.

For 2026, the EU commission proposal of quotas where on levels which in the long run would rebuild the fish population to sustainable levels.

The view from the Swedish government ahead of the quota negotiations were for example: "The government consider that Sweden can accept an extensive restriction on fishing, and that the proposal from the commission could have been further extended".

	Commission Advice	Ministes decision	Difference in ton	Difference in %
Baltic herring in the Gulf of Bothnia	25 560	39 108*	+13 548	+53
Baltic herring in the Central Baltic Sea	83 881	96 463	+12 582	+15
Baltic herring in the Riga bay	34 367	34 367	0	0
Baltic herring in the western Baltic Sea	394**	788**	+394	+100
Cod in eastern Baltic Sea	159**	430**	+271	+170
Cod in the western Baltic Sea	42**	266**	+224	+533
Sprat in the Baltic Sea	139 500	201 975	+62 475	+45

*) Until october 1, 2026, with options to increase it to 56 000 tonnes

*) Only allowed as bycatch as the population has already collapsed

But instead of the EU commission restrained quota proposal, "where Sweden could have extended further", the fishing ministers of the Baltic Sea countries decided to increase the quotas for Baltic herring, cod and sprat as is shown in the table above.

The negotiation is held behind closed doors. The general public and the media never gets to know how our democratically elected representatives have argued or acted, often they say they have succeeded well under the circumstances.

Sweden failed again this year to persuade the other Baltic Sea countries to adopt a more restrictive stance on fishing quotas, and chose to not support the proposal. So, what can Sweden do now to limit the overfishing in the Baltic Sea? If all other options for reducing fishing quotas have been exhausted, at least there remains the possibility of introducing a Swedish ban on industrial trawling within the Swedish twelve-mile limit.

On 4 June last year, the government presented a bill on the marine environment ([Prop 2023/24:156](#)), which includes a proposal to move the trawling limit to twelve nautical miles along Sweden's east coast. The area covers the coast from Skanör to Haparanda, including Öland and Gotland. The measure will contribute to Sweden's work to achieve the environmental quality objective "A Balanced Sea and Living Coast and Archipelago".

In accordance with EU law, it is possible to move the trawling limit along the Swedish coast. EU law takes precedence over bilateral agreements between EU Member States. When Sweden concluded agreements with Finland and Denmark on fishing opportunities, neither of these countries were members of the EU. Today, they are all members. This means that EU law now takes precedence.

Consequently, Sweden has the option of independently moving the trawling boundary for Swedish and foreign vessels, regardless of bilateral agreements or EU law. In other words, there is nothing to prevent the government and Minister for Rural Affairs Peter Kullgren (KD) from taking swift action and implementing measures. The rules should be made with size restrictions on vessels so that small-scale coastal fishing in Sweden can continue. All that is needed is political will!

The issue has been investigated many times. Allowing the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management to investigate trawling limits along the Swedish coast once again would probably only lead to slow action with uncertain results. This agency has already demonstrated this on numerous occasions.

Introducing national restrictions within the twelve-mile zone would not save all Baltic herring, but it would stop the worst competition for fish in favour of the environment, ecosystems and coastal and recreational fishing. It would also provide some protection for spawning herring and sprat, which is also the conclusion of the [Stockholm University Baltic Sea Centre](#).

The 12-mile zone has already been introduced on a trial basis from the Stockholm archipelago to northern Öland. Early reports indicate an increased presence of herring around both Stockholm and Västervik.

Now it is up to Peter Kullgren and his colleagues in government to take decisive action. The 12-mile zone could well be introduced before the end of the year if it is pushed through by the relevant ministers with the support of the government. We hope the government will take decisive action!

Text

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