

Our translation of our debate article "Vi riskerar en ekologisk och ekonomisk kollaps" published in *Aftonbladet* on January 18, 2026.

We risk ecological and economic collapse

Baltic Sea Call to Action (Östersjöuppropet): Save the Baltic herring, the herring, and the wild salmon

DEBATE. Sweden's climate and environmental policy has lost credibility. Despite promises to invest in biodiversity, living seas and long-term responsibility, the government continues to postpone crucial decisions. One of the most serious examples concerns pelagic trawling in [the Baltic Sea](#), where inaction risks leading to ecological collapse and economic collapse for small-scale coastal fishermen.

Environment Minister Romina Pourmokhtari has promised during her time as minister to stand up for the Nature Restoration Act, reduced carbon dioxide emissions, the protection of biodiversity and an extended trawling limit along Sweden's coast. In practice, these promises have repeatedly been abandoned when coalition partners in the government have opposed them. The result is a policy that lacks both decisiveness and consistency.

The situation in the Baltic Sea is critical. Herring and sprat – cornerstones of the ecosystem – have declined sharply. Even wild salmon are threatened as food sources disappear. Experience clearly shows that large-scale industrial trawling near the coast is a key cause. Despite this, industrial trawlers are still allowed to fish along large parts of the Baltic Sea coast, with devastating consequences for ecosystems and coastal communities.

[Government Bill 2023/24:156](#), signed by Romina Pourmokhtari, contained an important proposal: to develop permanent regulations for pelagic trawl fishing up to 12 nautical miles along the entire Baltic Sea coast. During the consultation process, almost all authorities were positive except for the industrial trawl fishermen's interest groups. Nevertheless, the government has chosen to introduce only a temporary two-year trawling ban, limited to the area between the Sea of Åland and northern Öland.

Local fishermen in the aforementioned protected area are already reporting that herring have begun to return ([Norrtelje tidning 2025-05-12](#) and [SvD 2025-07-29](#)), which may be due to the fact that large industrial trawlers have avoided certain areas due to a lack of herring and the new trawling limit. As the risk of herring collapse may be imminent, it is difficult to understand why the government is not taking urgent action to implement a permanent, national decision on restricting trawling.

An immediate ban on industrial trawling within 12 nautical miles along the entire Baltic Sea coast is necessary to save herring, sprat and wild salmon. At the same time, small-scale coastal fishing – with small vessels fishing for human consumption – must be given more support and long-term conditions. These fishermen contribute to local food supply, vibrant coastal communities and reduced environmental impact. They are also a strategic resource from a preparedness perspective in a time of increasing uncertainty.

Continuing to prioritise the short-term economic interests of a handful of west coast families over science, ecosystems and national self-sufficiency is not responsible politics. It is turning a blind eye to reality. If the government – and above all the Liberals – want to regain trust in climate and environmental issues, action is needed now.

A permanent ban on trawling within 12 nautical miles must be decided urgently along the entire Baltic Sea coast. The Baltic Sea cannot afford to wait.

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The Baltic Sea Appeal is a non-partisan grassroots movement representing more than 165,000 supporters, who constitute approximately 2.5 per cent of Sweden's electorate.