

Our translation of our article ”*Rädda kustfisket innan det är för sent*”, published in various local papers in Sweden, November 2025.

Save the coastal fishing before it is too late

For hundreds of years coastal fishing and local fishing industri have been important along our coasts, but are now on their way disappearing. Large-scale trawling, environmental pollution and, above all, poor management, and lack of political will are the reasons for this. Fishermen along the Norrland coast struggles to obtain sufficient of large and fat herring necessary to make a perfect fermented herring. A local culture is at risk of disappearing.

The herring, that have a central part in the Baltic Sea ecosystem, have declined by 70 % since 1966. This is serious because in this ecosystem, salmon depend on herring for food, and herring in turn feed on sticklebacks, and other small species, which have free rein to eat zooplankton that normally feed on phytoplankton, which in turn now causing catastrophic suffocating growth on the bottom vegetation.

The total cod and herring populations in the western Baltic Sea have collapsed, which clearly shows how urgent the situation is. This collaps, is not caused by the coastal fishing. As shown by scientific research, instead it is the industrial trawlers, who catches 85-90 % of the swedish quotas of herring, and their overfishing and by-catches that are the completely dominating reason for the collaps. This must stop!

The fishing quota system introduced in 2009 has proven to be counterproductive. The intention was good, as it intended to support local fishermen on the east coast. But has instead benefited a few companies on the west coast. This is also confirmed by the man behind the quota system, Axel Wenblad, former Director General of the Swedish Board of Fisheries (*Fiskeriverket*): ”It did not turn out well. And I must admit that I am partly to blame for that.” The situation for the coastal fishing must be improved while there still exist knowledge, equipments and boats. Those who wants to take over the fishing from older fishermen are met by expensive permits, difficult rules, long processing times and an uncertain future. It is about culture, employment, food security, emergency preparedness and biological diversity.

- Stop the industrial fishing in all of the Baltic Sea
- Support new establishment both economically and in the administrative process
- Fundamentally reform the quota system (the Individual Transferable quotas, ITQ)
- Move from Maximal Sustainable Yield (MSY) to Ecological Sustainable Yield (ESY)
- Ensure favorable size and age distribution
- Take a holistic approach to the health of the Baltic Sea

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About The Baltic Sea Call to Action

"The Baltic Sea Call to Action is a grassroots movement that wants to protect sustainable fishing.

The goal: Sweden's fishing of herring/Baltic herring must be limited to only that which goes to direct human consumption, and the catch must be landed and prepared in Sweden."