

The Baltic Sea is one of the few places in the world where this unsustainable fishing method is still allowed

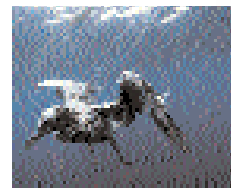
That drift-net fisheries are unsustainable has been realised in large parts of the world. In 1989 the United Nations decided that drift-net fisheries should be stopped. A resolution was adopted, that recommends all member states to implement a moratorium on all large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing on the high seas. In the South Pacific, large-scale drift-net fisheries was banned through the Wellington Convention (1989). In Europe, the EU Council of Ministers at first decided to impose a maximum limit of 2.5 km on drift-nets used by fishing vessels from EU member countries, and in 1998 they decided to ban the use of drift-nets from the 1st of January 2002.

However, due to the powerful lobby from Denmark, Sweden and Finland, an exception was made of the Baltic Sea from both these decisions.

In the Baltic Sea it is still allowed to use up to 600 nets à 35 meters. These regulations means that every fishing vessel catching salmon in the Baltic Sea can set drift-nets with a total length of 21 km. This is almost ten times longer than the maximum length allowed in other EU waters!



The wild Baltic salmon is threatened by drift-net fishing. This fishing method cannot distinguish between wild and reared salmon and causes substantial by-catches of other species, such as guillemots and harbour porpoise. The Baltic Sea is the only sea within the European Union where this devastating fishing method is still allowed.



The Dangers of the Drift-nets in the Baltic Sea

> Drift-net fisheries threaten wild Baltic salmon populations

90% of Baltic salmon stocks are reared and released salmon, and only 10% are naturally spawning salmon. Drift-net open-sea fisheries of mixed salmon stocks cannot differentiate between the threatened wild Baltic salmon and reared/released salmon. This can result in too few wild salmon returning to their spawning rivers, which increases the risk of extinction of many populations. Unpredictable incidents, such as the M74 disease, have also drastically reduced the reproduction over a period of many years. Therefore damaging fishing methods, such as drift-nets, must be banned to protect wild Baltic salmon populations.

> Drift-nets cause unsustainable by-catches

Drift-net fishing techniques cause substantial by-catches, mainly of sea-birds such as guillemots, but also of harbour porpoises. Long-term studies of ringed guillemots have shown that 33% of all ring recoveries are made in salmon drift-nets. This means that the impact of drift-nets is a bigger threat for these seabirds than oil pollution.

The Baltic population of harbour porpoise is endangered, which is estimated to be as low as approximately 1000 individuals. By-catch in fishing gear is today one of the biggest threats to the survival of these small whales. Since the population is so small and reproduction is slow, as few as 6 porpoises by-caught in salmon drift-nets could have serious effects on the small population, and threaten the long-term survival of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea.



The wild Baltic salmon faces extinction.



Guillemots and harbour porpoises get caught in the drift-nets.

