

12th Trilateral Governmental Conference on the Protection of the WaddenSea

Tønder, 5 February 2014

Ministerial Council Declaration, Annex 3

Framework for Sustainable Fisheries

Final

Framework for Sustainable Fisheries

Natural capital and ecosystem services cannot be replaced by other forms of services and capital (financial, economic, social). This does not mean that no biomass may be taken from the system.

Fishery activities should not significantly impact the integrity and function of the ecosystem, i.e. not deteriorate the natural habitats and species in the Wadden Sea and not impair the sustainability of fish stock.

Fishing activities in the Wadden Sea Conservation Area should be carried out in accordance with the Guiding Principle.

Principles of sustainable fisheries

The Wadden Sea Board has identified the following catalogue of principles, which require special attention for the implementation of sustainable fisheries:

Appropriate assessment or equivalent impact assessments

Within the framework of relevant EU legislation (e.g. the Habitats Directive, the Bird Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Water Framework Directive), assessments should be applied to all fisheries sectors in the Wadden Sea. This should be done as an exchange of knowledge and experiences trilaterally in relation to impact assessments, with the aim to secure comparable methods and standards between the trilateral countries. These assessments must be based upon nature conservation objectives, specified to the extent possible, scientifically robust, trilaterally comparative and transparent. The use of regular impact assessments by all Wadden Sea regions would also level the playing field and may facilitate the dialogue between the fishery managers, the industry and environmental NGOs at a trilateral level.

Fishing gear/best practice

The application of appropriate fishing gear and best practices is another essential element in operationalizing sustainable fisheries, in particular with the aim of reducing impacts on the bottom and reducing bycatch. Best practice is understood to be a combination of fishing techniques and fishing effort, minimising impacts. A detailed analysis of fishing gear (application, site specific impact) may be part of the dialogue with the stakeholders.

The fishing industry should be encouraged to develop more sustainable techniques and practices.

Closed areas

Closed areas are a management option for sustainable fisheries in the Wadden Sea Conservation Area, in particular to allow natural processes to proceed in an undisturbed way, to achieve the conservation objectives and biodiversity and in cases where there is insufficient knowledge about impacts. Sufficiently large closed areas can also serve as reference and recovery areas. The designation

of such areas is in the responsibility of the national state, taking into account the relevant EU regulations.

Monitoring/control/black box

This includes monitoring of fishing activities and the status of fished and closed areas. The fisheries sector is co-responsible for monitoring of fishing activities. Black boxes, or equivalent systems (e.g. VMS), are an important precondition for co-management, including nature protection.

Stock assessment

Regular stock assessments must be carried out to serve as a basis for stock management as clarified in the EU Common Fisheries Policy and other relevant EU legislation. This is an essential element for sustainable fisheries. Fishing impact should be such that stable food webs are restored and maintained, supporting natural populations of predators.

Appropriate knowledge<>responsibility of all parties involved

In the process of operationalizing sustainable fisheries, use must be made of best available knowledge. There is a responsibility of all parties involved in supporting knowledge about the status of the ecosystem.

Pilot studies (learning by doing)

Transition towards sustainable fisheries also implies that there must be ample possibilities for testing new methods and practices. Knowledge gained in pilots should be spread among all parties involved.