

Fishing capacity of Finland's fishing fleet

Foreword

This report uses data from 2017 and 2018 to assess the annual capacity of the national fleet and fleet segments and identify any possible structural overcapacity of the fleet and determine the fleet's long-term profitability. The report has been drawn up in accordance with Commission guidelines COM (2014) 545, 2.9.2014.

1. The Finnish fishing fleet and fisheries

Table 1.1 shows the development of the fishing fleet from its establishment on 1 January 1995 to 31 December 2017. Finland's fishing capacity has decreased in terms of all size indicators of the fleet: number of vessels (units) -21.5 %, tonnage (GT) -33.2 % and propulsion power (kW) -22.3 %.

Since 1 January 2014, the reduction has been equal to -0.4 % in terms of tonnage of vessels (GT). By contrast, the number of vessels (number of vessels) increased by 0.4 % and the engine power (in kW) by 1.2 %. However, it should be noted that the size of the Finnish fleet is well below the maximum capacity as defined in Article 22.7 (Annex II) of Regulation EU1380/2013 (Table 1.2).

Situation on 1.1995 — Initial level					
GT	kW				
24 618,37	224 875,54 4 107				
Situation 1.1.1997		Change compared to the previous situation			
GT	kW	GT	kW		
23 478,99	218 244,42 4 019	FROM 1 138,04 TO 6 631,12	TO TO 88 TO 2.1 %		
Situation 1.1.2003		Change compared to the previous situation		Change compared to the initial level	
GT	kW	GT	kW	GT	kW
19 861,84	190 161,30 3 573	FROM 3 618,49 TO 28 083,12	TO TO 446 TO 11.1 %	-4 756,53 TO 19.3 %	-34 714,24 TO — TO 534 — 13.0 %
Situation 31.12.2013		Change compared to the previous situation		Change compared to the initial level	
GT	kW	GT	kW	GT	kW
16 524,48	172 607,00 3 211	FROM 3 337,36 TO 17 554,30	TO TO 362 TO 10.1 %	-8 093,89 TO 32.9 %	-52 268,54 TO — TO 896 — 21.8 %
Situation 31.12.2017		Change compared to the previous situation		Change compared to the initial level	
GT	kW	GT	kW	GT	kW
16 454,16	174 735,30 3 224	-70,32 — 0.4 %	2 128,30 1,2 % 13 0.4 %	-8 164,21 TO 33.2 %	-50 140,24 TO — TO 883 — 21.5 %

Table 1.1. Evolution of the Finnish fishing fleet between 1 January 1995 and 31 December 2016 (calculated according to the state of the art as at 11 June 2018).

Regulation EU1380/2013, Article 22, paragraph 7 (Annex II) defines that the maximum fishing capacity limit for Finland may not exceed 18 066 GT and 181 717 kW, after 1.1.2014. These are imputed ceilings that take into account the supported decommissioning of fishing vessels. The capacity of the Finnish fleet has remained well below this threshold between 1.1.2014 and 31.12.2017.

	Non respect of Article 22 of EU1380/2013 for farmers with	Situation 31.12.2017		Difference with the fishing capacity ceiling			
		GT	kW	GT	%	kW	%
Total	18 066 181 717	16 454 174 735		FROM 1 612		TO TO 6 982	

Table 1.2. Fishing capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet on 31 December 2017 compared to the ceiling defined in Regulation (EU) EU1380/2013 (as calculated most recently on 11 June 2018).

According to the last snapshot, the Finnish fishing fleet was 31.12.2017-1 612 GT (-9 %) and -6 982 kW (-4 %) lower than the one authorised by the Regulation.

Table 1.3 below summarises the evolution of both groups as from 1 January 2003.

A new fleet management system was introduced in Finland in 2011 under the Act on the registration of sea-going vessels engaged in fishing and aquaculture (690/2010). The fleet is divided into offshore vessels and coastal vessels. The aim is also to ease ship registration processes and clarify responsibilities. The Act entered into force on 1 January 2011.

During 2017 the overall capacity of the fleet increased in terms of tonnage (266 GT; 1.6 %) and propulsion power (5 532 kW; 3.3 %). The capacity of the High Sea Shipping Group remained practically the same, i.e. the increase in fleet capacity took place within the category of coastal vessels.

Compared to the corrected baseline level, 1.1.2003 has been a significant reduction in capacity: for the fleet as a whole, a decrease of 17 % (GT) and 8 % for deep-sea vessels, where the number of vessels fell by 56 %, the tonnage by 8 % and its engine power is 27 %. The main cause for this was the drift net fishing ban that came into force on 1 January 2008.

	Situation 1.1.2003			Situation 31.12.2017			Change compared to the initial level					
	GT	kW	number	GT	kW	number	GT	%	kW	%	number	%
1. Offshore vessels	9 429	41 486	119	8 719	30 414	52	- 710	8 %	11 072	27 %	- 6756	67 %
2. Coastal vessels	10 433	148 675	3 454	7 735	144 321	3 172	- 2698	- 26 %	14 657	3 %	- 2828	- 8 %
Total	19 862	190 161	3 573	16 454	174 735	3 224	- 3308	- 17 %	25 729	8 %	- 34910	- 18 %

Table 1.3. Changes in the Finnish fishing fleet between groups of vessels between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2017 (calculated according to the most recent snapshot as at 11 June 2017).

A significant number of coastal vessels are used to fish mainly non-quota species: Coastal fish stocks, such as whitefish (*Coregonus lavaretus*), pike-perch (*Stizostedion lucioperca*), pike (*Esox lucius*) and perch (*Perca fluviatilis*). Coastal fishing of quota species targets herring (*Clupea harengus membras*) and salmon (*Salmo salar*). Offshore vessels are principally used to fish herring and sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*). Some offshore vessels also fish cod (*Gadus morhua*) and salmon (*Salmo salar*).

2. Fishing capacity

Table 2.1 presents the quota percentage take-ups for 2017. The rate was the highest in sprat fishing (SPR 3BCD-C), where 100 % of the quota was utilised. The take-up percentage of herring quotas (HER 3D-R30 and HER 30/31.) and salmon quotas (SAL 3BCD-F) was also high. On the other hand, the size of the Finnish fishing fleet has fallen significantly in the MAGP IV programming period since 1.1.2003, which is reflected in the rate of utilisation of the quotas.

Since 2017 the specific fishing quotas for herring, sprat and salmon have been in place. The new fishing quota system will enable fishing companies to decide when and where to fish for their own quota. This gives them a good chance of fishing for better planning and has, in 2017, achieved a significant degree of time for catches.

In 2017, due to the new fishing quota system, the herring and sprat quotas were not subject to fishing restrictions. The sprat stock has developed positively in the Baltic Sea in recent years. Its population is within safe biological limits and therefore, in line with Regulation (EU) No 1380/___ article- 15 (8), part of the catch could be deducted from the target species, i.e. herring at the very end of the year, December 2017.

Nationality	Species Region	Total quota	Landings		Catch/quota	
			In Finland	elsewhere	Total	(%)
FIN	HER3BC + 24	2.220	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 %
FIN	HER 30/31.	128 256.875	82 198.333	11 490.442	93 688.775	73.05 %
FIN	HER 3D-R30	45 980.260	31 421.088	9 142.899	40 563.987	88.22 %
FIN	COD 3DX32.	624.624	41.515	149.098	190.613	30.52 %
FIN	COD 3BC + 24	60.260	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.00 %
FIN	SAL 3BCD-F	27 606	21 866	0	21 866	79.21 %
FIN	SAL 3D32.	10 164	5 999	0	5 999	59.02 %
FIN	SPR 3BCD-C	15 891.780	10 369.320	5 522.460	15 891.780	100.00 %

Table 2.1. Quotas, catches and landings in Finland (tonnes, individualsalmon) in 2017

The take-up percentage for the sprat quota (100.0 %) reflects the high market demand for this species and, above all, its prevalence in Finnish waters. The above table reflects the flexibility mechanism provided for in Regulation 1380/___article- 15 (8).

As regards salmon fishing, in 1996 Finland introduced a decree that restricts fishing in order to protect wild salmon stocks from excessive fishing. Fishing is regulated in Finland's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone in the Gulf of Bothnia.

The small take-up percentage of cod quotas can be attributed mainly to the small fleet, weakened stocks and lower prices on the market.

Under Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002 on the Common Fisheries Policy, which was still in force in 2013, the first capacity reduction of the fishing fleet was in 2004. This reduction was to remove the excess capacity identified in the pelagic fleet and the driftnetter category.

Another capacity reduction took place in the fishing fleet in 2009. The decision was made to remove excess capacity that had accumulated in the driftnetter category as a result of the ban on drift netting.

From 2004 to 2009 public support was used to permanently remove a total of 1 675 GT and 7 815 kW of fleet capacity from the Finnish fishing fleet. Table 2.2 shows the number of vessels removed as well as the dates.

Removing fishing capacity using public aid (GT/kW)						
Code for the group of		2004	2005	2006	2009	Total
4L2	Pelagic trawlers	83 GT/279 kW	974 GT/4 451 kW	247 GT/699 kW	245	1 304
4L4	vessels using	60 GT/294 kW	49 GT/304 kW	17 GT/90 kW	GT/1 698 kW	GT/5 429 kW
Total		143 GT/573 kW	1 023 GT/4 755 kW	264 GT/789 kW	245 GT/1 698 kW	1 675 GT/7 815 kW

Table 2.2. Permanent reduction of the capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet in 2003-2017 using public support

Table 2.3 presents the number of active offshore vessels at least 12 metres long in three vessel categories in 2003-2010 and in one vessel category in 2011-2017. The trend in the pelagic vessels category has been towards fewer but larger vessels. The number of vessels was halved during the period under review. The decrease in the number of vessels using passive gear results from the ban on drift netting. Since 2011, all vessels at least 12 metres long have been grouped into one vessel category (offshore vessels).

Number of active vessels	Year														
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
4L2, pelagic trawlers	10795		80	58	55	51	53	52							
4L3, bottom trawlers	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1							
4L4, vessels using passive gear	2322		20	16	18	14	9	7							
Total (including deep-sea vessels 1.1.2011)	132119	101	75	74	66	6360	54	53	57	59	58	55	50		

Table 2.3. Number of active vessels in 2003-2017 in the Finnish fishing fleet, vessel categories 4L2-4L4 and offshore vessels as from 1 January 2011.

3. Entry/exit scheme and fishing capacity ceilings

3.1. Entry/Exit regime

In 2013, this was already repealed by Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002, which was amended by Regulation (EC) No 865/2007. This Regulation requires Member States to manage entries into and exits from the fleet in such a way that the entry of new capacity into the fleet without public support is compensated by the previous withdrawal without public support of at least the same amount of capacity.

By way of derogation from the previous point, the tonnage of fishing vessels may be increased in 'GT' in accordance with Article 11(5) of Regulation (EC) No 865/2007.

In 2009 the Finnish authorities allowed the tonnage of two (2) vessels of the fishing fleet to be increased by a total of 35 GT under the above-mentioned scheme. In 2011 the other vessel was removed from the register, thereby reducing the increase in tonnage to 23 GTs.

3.2. Fishing capacity ceilings

The following reference levels for the Finnish fishing fleet as from 1 January 2003 have been ratified in Annex 1 to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1013/2010. That text was still in force in 2013. R (GT) 03 = 23 203 GT

$$R \text{ (kW) } 03 = 216 \text{ 195 kW}$$

Finland had met all the requirements of the fourth Multiannual Guidance Programme IV (MAGP IV) by 31 December 2013.

As a result of the entry/exit scheme provided for in Article 13 of Council Regulation (EC) No 865/2007, the actual maximum authorised target levels of the fleet were smaller. New target levels for 2013 were calculated on the basis of the Regulation. New Finnish fishing capacity ceilings are established by Article 22 (7) of Regulation (EC) No 1380/2013 and Annex II. As from 1 January 2014, they are:

$$R \text{ (GT) } 14 = 18 \text{ 066 GT}$$

$$R \text{ (kW) } 14 = 181 \text{ 717 kW}$$

In 2017 no events were recorded in the fishing vessel register that would have affected these ceilings. The re-measuring of certain vessels of the fleet and the corrections (COR) made to some of the registered data have also affected the actual target levels (capacity ceiling).

According to the last snapshot, the Finnish fishing fleet was 31.12.2017-1 612 GT (-9 %) and -6 982 kW (-4 %) lower than the one authorised by the Regulation.

Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 show that Finland complied with all the target levels set and the rules of the entry/exit scheme in 2017 as well as in the previous years of the 2003-2016 monitoring period.

4. Observations on the fishing fleet

The development of the fishing fleet and its impact on fishing opportunities have been analysed above. This paragraph contains more details as well as background information.

The fleet is divided into two operational units (vessel categories). This division entered into force on 1 January 2011. Vessel category 1 includes offshore vessels: pelagic trawlers, bottom trawlers and vessels using passive gear. Vessel category 2 includes coastal vessels. The predecessors of these vessel categories were determined in the fourth Multiannual Guidance Programme (MAGP IV). The vessel group rules and restrictions were mandatory until 31 December 2012. However, back then vessels were not able to adapt flexibly to new market conditions and quota quantities that fluctuated yearly. From 1 January 2013, these restrictive provisions were no longer in force, leaving the management of the fleet segments to the Member States.

The new vessel categories established at national level do not restrict either the right to use certain types of fishing gear or target species. This in turn means that the shipowner can choose to switch to another type on a voluntary basis. The vessel owner only needs to inform the authorities of changes to the registered data. This makes it possible for the authorities to regularly supervise and manage the situation.

At the end of 2017, there were 52 vessels in the offshore vessels category. As stated in the definition, all the vessels in this category are at least 12 metres long in total; the perpendicular length of the largest vessel is 41,09 metres. The overall capacity of the vessel category accounted for 53.0 % (GT) and 17.4 % (kW) of the entire fleet.

As stated in the definition, the vessels in the coastal vessels category are under 12 metres long in total. The majority of Finnish fishing vessels belongs to this category of vessels, a total of 3 029. The overall capacity of the vessels is 47.0 % (GT) and 82.6 % (kW) of the total fleet.

The registered capacity ceiling of both vessel groups has been limited separately by a decision of the Finnish Government.

Generally speaking, the capacity and fishing effort of the Finnish fishing fleet can be considered acceptable in relation to the available fishing opportunities.

In 2017, Finland's sprat quota SPR 3BCD-C was reached 30.12.2017, after which sprat by-catches were reported in respect of herring quotas in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1380/___ article- 15 (8):

'8. By way of derogation from the obligation to include catches under the quotas concerned in accordance with paragraph 1, catches of species subject to the landing obligation higher than quotas allocated for the stocks concerned or catches in respect of which a Member State has no quota may be deducted from the quota of the target species, but not exceeding 9 % of the quota for the target species. This provision shall only apply where the stock of the non-target species is within safe biological limits.'

In this way it was possible to use the herring quotas to the fullest extent possible. The system worked well and enabled optimal utilisation of the herring and sprat quotas.

Finland's cod fleet is rather small, so annual fluctuations in fishing effort and catches can be expected. Unlike in previous years, it was not necessary to limit cod fishing in 2017, because the small size and low price of cod did not encourage fishermen to exploit Finland's cod quotas. Most of the fishing vessels that had previously caught cod switched to exploiting fishing opportunities for herring and sprat.

At the beginning of 2017, Finland introduced a system of transferable fishing concessions (TFC) and operator-specific fishing quotas for herring, sprat and salmon. This has facilitated the management of quotas since the beginning of 2017, inter alia in a way that the fisheries for herring and sprat have not been specifically regulated. The fishing companies have themselves decided when and in which region they fish under the quota. The new quota system will likely reduce fishing capacity in Finland, as has happened in other countries after the introduction of a similar system.

In point 5 below, we examine the balance between the fleet and resources using indicators set out in the Commission's guidelines.

5. Analysis of the balance between the fishing fleet and the fishery resources it exploits, using biological, financial and technical parameters

5.1. Biological indicators

Biological indicators are used to assess whether the fleet's operations are based on over-exploited stocks or whether they may pose a serious biological risk to endangered fish stocks.

The Finnish fishing fleet uses the following fishing quotas in the Baltic Sea:

- Bothnian Bay herring (subdivisions 30-31)
- Herring in the main basin of the Baltic sea and in the Gulf of Finland (subdivisions 25-27, 28.2, 29 and 32)
- Sprat (subdivisions 22-32)
- Eastern cod (subdivisions 25-32)
- Western cod (subdivisions 22-24)
- Salmon in the main basin of the Baltic sea and in the Gulf of Bothnia (subdivisions 22-31)
- Gulf of Finland salmon (subdivision 32)

These quotas have been ratified by the European Council, on the basis, among others, of the scientific advice given by ICES and STECF.

Based on the scientific recommendations made by ICES 31.5.2018, the state of the stocks concerned is as follows:

The spawning stock (SSB) of the Gulf of Bothnia (SSB) in the Gulf of Bothnia (SSB 2017 is significantly higher than MSY Btrigger) and the fishing mortality is higher than the target mode (Fmsy 0,21, in 2017 F was 0,25). ICES recommends a slight reduction of the TAC for the herring in the Gulf of Bothnia. The Gulf of Bothnia herring quota (ICES subdivisions 30-31) is economically the most important quota for the Finnish fleet.

The spawning stock (SSB) of the main basin of the Baltic Sea and of the Gulf of Finland (Subdivisions 25-27, 28.2, 29 and 32) is in its size at a target level (SSB 2017 significantly higher than MSY Btrigger) and a fishing mortality is higher than the target holding (Fmsy 0,22, in 2017 F was 0,28).

The spawning stock of sprat (Subdivisions 22-32) (SSB) is at the target level (SSB 2017 is significantly higher than MSY Btrigger) and the fishing mortality is higher than the target mode (Fmsy 0,26, in 2017 F was 0,28).

As regards eastern cod (subdivisions 25-32), ICES has stated that its status cannot be analysed reliably owing to changes in the stock. The index showing the size of the stock indicates that the stock has continued to weaken. The western cod stock (subdivisions 22-24) is over-exploited according to ICES both as far as fishing mortality and spawning stock is concerned, even if one year of the stock is increasing the size of the stock. Finland's shares of the cod quotas are small, and cod quotas do not form a significant part of the Finnish fishing fleet's fishing opportunities. In 2017, Finland's cod quota was only used for less than 10 % in the east and not to the west. Cod is found mainly in the southern Baltic Sea, so only marginal amounts of cod are caught in Finnish territorial waters and within Finland's exclusive economic zone.

There are a number of salmon stocks in the Baltic Sea. ICES has analysed the status of 29 wild salmon stocks on the basis of their parr production capacity (MSY = 75 % of the capacity). There are two wild salmon stocks in Finland, the Simojoki and the Tornionjoki stocks. The Tornionjoki salmon stock is the biggest salmon stock in the Baltic Sea, and it has developed well. On the basis of its model, ICES estimates that the Tornionjoki River (70 to 90 %) was able to reach 75 % of the parr production capacity in 2017. The probability for Finland's other wild salmon stock, the Simojoki stock, was 3070 %. Both wild salmon stocks have developed positively since 2000.

In the Gulf of Bothnia and the Archipelago Sea, salmon fishing targets the strong salmon stocks of the Bothnian Bay and stocked salmon intended for fishing. Coastal fishing in the Gulf of Finland mainly targets stocked salmon. However, salmon catches in Finland's coastal areas also include individual fish from weak salmon stocks. Salmon fishing in Finland is carried out as coastal fishing, where the fishing capacity is based on the gear used, not on the tonnage or propulsion power of the fishing vessels. Salmon fishing in the Gulf of Bothnia is restricted to certain periods and catch amounts are limited. The locations of the fishing nets used to catch salmon are managed partly by the fishing authorities, which also limits the fishing effort. In addition, private fishing rights in coastal waters limit commercial salmon fishing.

Important non-quota fish stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet include perch, pike-perch, whitefish and pike. ICES has not provided analysed data for these fish stocks. However, the Natural Resources Institute's research report 57/2017 on the status of fish stocks in 2017 and forecasts for 2018 and 2019 contains information on the status of those fish stocks. The need for data on these fish stocks has been identified, and measures are being taken to provide more data and comply with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Finland's whitefish stocks are based to a large extent on stocking, but there are many rivers where there is a natural increase in the sea. Research results show that it is necessary to regulate net fishing in order to reduce the fishing pressure on migratory whitefish feeding in the waters. Consequently a decree has been issued on limiting the smaller mesh sizes of nets used to catch whitefish. Whitefish fishing, too, is coastal fishing, where the fishing capacity is based on the gear used, not on the tonnage or propulsion power of the fishing vessels.

Finnish coastal waters are home to numerous local perch, pike-perch and pike stocks. Commercial fishing plays a greater role than recreational fishing in exploiting perch and pike stocks. The pike-perch catch is bigger in commercial than in recreational fishing. These species are targeted by coastal fishing, where the fishing capacity is based on the gear used, not on the tonnage or propulsion power of the fishing vessels.

When quotas are exceeded, this usually indicates overcapacity of a fleet segment. The Finnish fishing fleet's catch of fish species subject to a quota is based on quotas set by the European Union. Finland has not exceeded any of the quotas set for it by the EU since 1996. This has been ensured by regulating fishing and allocating resources to the supervision of fishing.

5.2. Financial indicators

Financial indicators show that the Finnish fishing fleet's profitability was poor in 2016. This is due to the decrease in the market price of herring and sprat and the ban on fish imports imposed by Russia. In coastal fishing, the profitability is negative on the damage caused by seals and cormorant to fishing gear and to catches.

However, any financial review of the Finnish fishing fleet should take into account the special characteristics of coastal fishing in Finland. In most of this fleet segment, fishing accounts for only part of the total income and is a source of secondary income. The formation of ice in the winter in Finland means that it is not possible for fishing vessels to operate all year round. Fishing in the winter can be carried out only with large trawlers, and even that is not possible in certain periods and areas. In this light, the profitability of coastal vessels, too, can be considered acceptable. It should be kept in mind, in particular, that the main catch of this fleet segment comes from non-quota fish stocks whose biological status is sustainable.

5.3. Technical indicators

Technical indicators can be used to assess the efficiency, activity and inactivity of a fleet segment. The information concerning leakage rates 2016 shall be used as the basis for the assessment of the technical indicators of this report.

For the coastal vessels of the Finnish fishing fleet (less than 12 m), activity on an annual basis has been relatively low, as measured by the number of vessels used during the period considered. This can be explained by Finland's special circumstances. The icy winter conditions in Finland do not allow year-round fishing, and therefore it is not possible to be at sea 180 days a year. As mentioned above, this form of fishing is not usually the principal economic activity of owners of coastal vessels, but rather a source of secondary income. The utilisation rate of larger vessels (including trawlers 24 to 40 meters) is significantly higher.

The report shows that in the Finnish fishing fleet, the inactivity rate is rather high especially in the fleet segment of small coastal vessels. This is partly due to statistical bias. In inshore fisheries (vessels under 10 m), commercial fishing is usually owned by a large number of vessels but not all of them are actively used. In Finland, the ownership of one or two spare parts is part of the sector.

In contrast, there are but few if any inactive vessels in the fleet segment consisting of average-size (trawlers 18-24 m) and, in particular, large (trawlers 24-40 m) vessels. The minor periods of inactivity of certain vessels can be explained by several factors: generation transitions, careers, illnesses, etc. On the other hand, it should also be noted that the commercial profitability of some of the services, vessels are allowed to be passive, as well as waiting for an improved time.

In that case, other sources of livelihood are naturally used.

6. Information on the management of the fishing fleet register

Finland's central fisheries register (KAKE) was established in 2003 and taken into administrative use at the beginning of 2004. Since then, the supervisory authorities have had a reliable way of managing a variety of fisheries registers, including the fishing fleet register.

The fleet register system was renewed in 2004. Since then, the authorities have been able to take screenshots of the register and send them to the Commission in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 26/2004. The content of the fleet register was inspected in the first screenshot (1 September 2004). Subsequent screenshots have passed the inspections with hardly any errors. The errors found have been corrected, and some of them have been discussed with Commission officials.

At present, the fleet register is being properly maintained and functions adequately. The register data is pertinent and accurate. The authorities have developed a national programme to verify the accuracy of register data. This will ensure even better data quality. The programme includes a confirmation function, which also facilitates management of the fleet.

7. Final conclusions

The capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet has decreased continuously since Finland joined the European Union, also after the new base level was set on 1 January 2014. The number of pelagic trawlers, in particular, has been reduced in Finland. This has been done to lessen the herring fishing effort. Similarly, the fleet using passive gear has been reduced following the driftnet ban. Finland has complied well with the fishing fleet provisions.

The present report has shown the following:

- The overall capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet has decreased continuously since Finland joined the European Union;
- The low activity of Finland's fishing fleet composed of coastal vessels can be explained by the ice conditions, the nature of coastal fishing and the secondary nature of fishing activities; the inactivity is also related to the fact that commercial fishing operators often own several coastal vessels, some of which act as reserve vessels;
- The profitability of the Finnish fishing fleet is reasonable, considering the special characteristics of Finnish fisheries.
- Finland has not exceeded the quotas set for it since 1996;
- The herring and sprat stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet are at the target level in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1380/2013 (MSY Btrigger) although the fishing mortality is slightly above the target level according to the most recent scientific advice from ICES;
- The cod stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet have not yet reached their target level, but their importance to the fishing fleet is marginal;
- All of the salmon stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet are not at or near target level; their fishing is being regulated through technical regulations, because the fishing pressure is based on the use of gear and the fleet capacity does not have much effect on the fishing pressure; and
- The non-quota stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet are principally local stocks and there is no precise scientific assessment of their status; their fishing is being regulated through technical regulations, because the fishing pressure is based on the use of gear and the fleet capacity does not have much effect on the fishing pressure;

On the basis of the information provided in this report, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry considers that the fishing capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet is in equilibrium with fishing opportunities in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1380/___ article- 22 and that there is no overcapacity in the fleet.