

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

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30 June 1982

DOCUMENT 1-414/82

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture
on the recommendation from the Commission of the
European Communities to the Council (Doc. 1-25/82 -
COM(82) 76 final) for a decision concerning the
conclusion of the Convention for the Conservation of
Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean

Rapporteur: Mr James PROVAN

1.2.5
Or. EN

PE 77.992/fin.

By letter of 11 March 1982, the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver its opinion on the recommendation from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision concerning the conclusion of the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean.

On 19 March 1982, the President of the European Parliament referred this recommendation to the Committee on Agriculture as the committee responsible.

On 31 March 1982, the Committee on Agriculture appointed Mr PROVAN rapporteur.

The committee considered the Commission's recommendation and the draft report at its meetings of 27/28 April 1982 and 22/23 June 1982.

At the latter meeting the Committee on Agriculture decided by 19 votes with 2 abstentions to recommend that Parliament should adopt the Commission's recommendation without amendment.

The committee then adopted the motion for a resolution by 19 votes with two abstentions.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Curry, chairman; Mr Delatte, vice-chairman; Mr Provan, rapporteur; Mr Battersby, Miss Brookes (deputizing for Mr Howell), Mr Clinton, Mr Dalsass, Mrs Desouches (deputizing for Mr Sutra), Mr Eyraud, Mr Gatto, Mr Helms, Mr Hord, Mr Kaloyannis, Mr Kirk, Mr Marck, Mr B. Nielsen, Mrs Pauwelyn (deputizing for Mr Maher), Ms Quin, Mr Tolman, Mr Vgenopoulos and Mr Woltjer.

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A

The Committee on Agriculture hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

closing the procedure for consultation of the European Parliament on the recommendation from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision concerning the conclusion of the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the recommendation from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (COM(82) 76 fin.)¹,
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 1-25/82),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture (Doc. 1-414/82),
 - having regard to the result of the vote on the recommendation from the Commission,
1. Emphasizes the importance of the North Atlantic Salmon Convention to the conservation of salmon stocks;
 2. Stresses the importance of adequate policing of regulatory measures adopted,
 3. (a) Notes in this context the problems caused by recent sharp increases in wild catches by Faroese salmon fishermen;
(b) Notes that wild salmon has become too easy to catch, is a very commercial species and is becoming increasingly scarce in the spawning rivers;
 4. Points out that it will be necessary to revise the Convention should Greenland withdraw from the Community, and that the Commission has not reduced catch allocations following the allocation given to the Faroese;
 5. Requests the Commission to take urgent action to investigate the damage caused to and the endangering of the species due to the use of monofilament nets by coastal fishermen in unregulated waters;
 6. Requests that the Commission inform the European Parliament in time of regulatory measures before they become binding under Article 13 of the Convention;
 7. Calls on the Commission to examine and put forward a proposal to introduce a uniform size of mesh for salmon fishing designed to preserve the species;
 8. Exhorts the Commission to draw up plans concerning quotas for commercial salmon fishing not only for Greenland and the Faroes, but also for the European waters of the EEC;

¹OJC 70, 193.82, p. 8

9. Asks the Commission to allow the Community's salmon fishermen to continue their fishing for a transitional period (subject to total allowable catches) in international waters as long as they use lines;
10. Stresses that salmon is particularly endangered by sea pollution; requests the Commission and the signatories of the Convention to investigate this serious situation; and urges the Commission and the Member States immediately to increase their efforts to reduce and, as far as possible, eliminate dumping of waste and other forms of sea and river pollution;
11. Welcomes and approves the Commission's proposal, subject to the above observations;
12. Instructs the President to forward to the Commission and the Council the proposal from the Commission as voted by Parliament and the corresponding resolution as Parliament's opinion.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Salmon is beginning to disappear. Too many people are after it. In parts of Ireland it is close to extinction and very scarce in Scotland. Rod catches in some of the Icelandic rivers have dropped by up to 85% in two years. Something is going very wrong indeed. Salmon has become too easy to catch and is too commercial. A high proportion of fish caught have net marks on the body and fins.

Water abstraction and pollution, coupled with drift netting, Faroes long lining and river mouth netting, are all detrimental to Salmon returning to their rivers to spawn.

A shortage of wild salmon is very serious for some of the more sensitive rural areas of the Community.

Yet little is happening to reverse current trends. This is because the root cause of the vanishing salmon is outside everybody's control except at international level. Even national governments are almost powerless. For the bulk of the salmon are disappearing in the high seas before they reach our shores and our rivers. It is for these reasons that the proposals for a North Atlantic Salmon Convention are now before us.

Tragically the marine feeding grounds of the salmon have been discovered and they are being overfished. These grounds are off the Faroes for the young fish and off south western Greenland for the older fish that survive the Faroese fishery.

Some 1,200 tonnes of salmon are captured off Greenland each year as set by international agreement. In the early 1970s this figure exceeded 2,000 tonnes and almost certainly caused the disappearance of whole runs of larger and older salmon in Scottish rivers.

More recently a long-line fishery has grown up for younger salmon off the Faroes. This February the European Commission agreed with the Faroese that this new fishery should be restricted to 750 tonnes in 1981/82 and 625 tonnes in 1982/83.

The problem is that salmon are fished off the Faroes from October to June. All fish less than about 2 kg. in weight are thrown back into the sea either dead or mutilated by hooks. For most of the winter this will be the majority of fish caught. Even those large enough to be retained still have some growth in them. The bulk of salmon off the Faroes originate from and would have returned to Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, and Norway. The early maturing fish or grilse would have come straight home. The later maturing fish go on to feed off Greenland and risk capture there before returning home.

On their way home any survivors from these two high seas fisheries still have to contend with the illegal drift netter and the poacher.

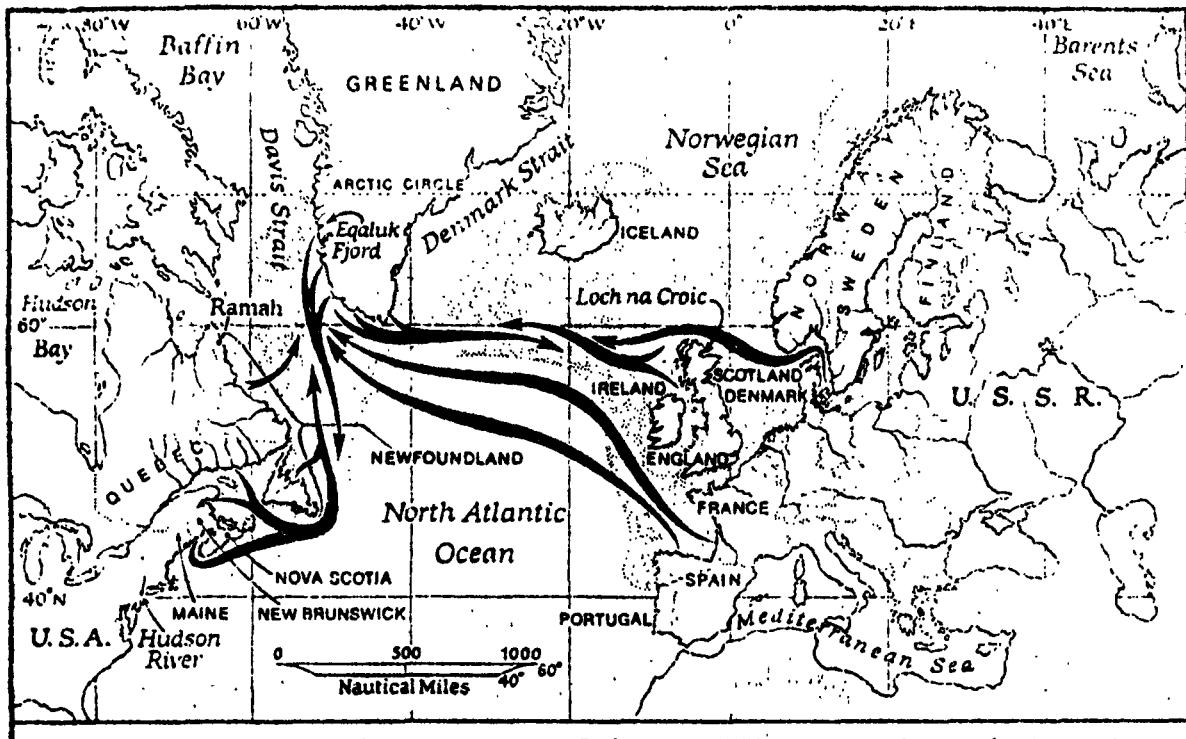
As everybody squabbles about their rights and waits for scientists to pronounce the salmon is fading away. Fishing effort everywhere must be eased. For the Atlantic salmon is now an endangered species. We must all make more strenuous efforts to protect the river nurseries and ensure that enough fish return from the sea and breed.

EEC MANAGEMENT OF ATLANTIC SALMON STOCKS

This paper seeks to emphasize the importance of the world's Atlantic salmon stocks and at the same time to highlight the problems and factors which at present are prejudicing the development of those stocks. We shall include below some recommendations on the part the Commission could play to help increase the stocks of Atlantic salmon for the benefit of local river communities.

Life cycle of salmon

The first important feature to be noted about Atlantic salmon is that the fish is anadromous - in other words it is born in freshwater but spends part of its life in the sea, where it feeds, before returning again to freshwater to spawn in the river where it has hatched. Thus the Atlantic salmon is an international fish traversing international sea boundaries. Salmon can spend up to four years in freshwater after hatching and up to four years in the Atlantic while feeding. In scientific terms a fish which spends only one winter at sea before returning to freshwater is called a grilse and fish which spend longer at sea are called salmon. Grilse, because they spend a shorter time at sea and are therefore smaller on arrival back at their home rivers - their average weight being 6 - 8 lbs, - have less economic value than salmon which can average from 10 - 40 lbs in weight. It is an important feature of the salmon's life cycle that the majority of the salmon die after spawning with the heaviest mortality occurring amongst the males. Again, although each female can deposit as many as 5,000 - 10,000 ova - or eggs - at spawning, the mortality among the young fish after hatching out, can be as high as 95% in their first year, and 90% in their second year. Young salmon reared in hatcheries generally have far better survival rates than would be the case if they had been reared naturally.



Oceanic Migrations of the Atlantic Salmon of Europe and North America.

The Atlantic salmon producing countries

The main salmon producing countries are as follows:

Canada
France
Iceland
Ireland
Norway
Russia
Spain
Sweden
United Kingdom
United States of America

Salmon catches

Salmon catches in home waters as published by The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, are as follows:

Salmon catches in metric tonnes

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>
France	13	25	9	19	20
England, Wales & N.Ireland	567	611	321	460	511
Scotland	1631	1561	1010	1131	1098
Ireland	2128	2216	1561	1372	1230
Norway	1633	1537	1530	1484	1083
Sweden	30	30	15	15	10
Iceland	225	266	225	230	291
Canada	2539	2484	2506	2545	1545
USA	0.9	1.7	0.8	2.4	4.1

Note: Catches by the USSR of Atlantic salmon are believed to be in the region of 700 tonnes per annum

Value of catches

The market price of salmon naturally varies from year to year and has different values in the various countries that produce the fish. In 1979 the average price paid for salmon during the month of July by the Billingsgate Fish Merchants of London was £2.50 per lb - this would be for an averaged size fish of 7 lbs. Processing salmon naturally increases its value; for instance in 1979 smoked salmon was retailed in London at over £10 per lb. Apart from the value of commercially-caught salmon, angling for this species has a high value and generates considerable expenditure in the area where the fishing occurs. Many studies - particularly in Canada and the Republic of Ireland - have been undertaken by fishery economists to measure the benefits arising to the local economy by fishing. An indication of the economic importance of salmon fishing can be derived from the following notes:

- (a) The Economic and Social Research Institute of Dublin estimated that the gross output of Irish salmon fishing in 1979 was £8.1m. of which 37% arises from angling and 63% from commercial fishing.
- (b) The current economic value of salmon fishing in Scotland was between £20 - £25m.
- (c) The University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology (1979) estimated that sport fishing on the Rivers Wye, Dee and Clwyd in Wales generated about £13.9m expenditure per annum.

The Greenland salmon fishery

The Greenland salmon fishery has a most significant bearing on the North Atlantic salmon stocks. As can be seen from the attached figure, salmon migrate from their 'home' countries to West Greenland for feeding purposes before returning to the rivers of their origin. The development of this fishery from 1968 has caused great concern to the salmon producing countries, which do not yet include Greenland.¹ Some of the reasons for this concern have been noted by the International Council for the Exploration of the sea - namely:

- (a) The stock of salmon exploited at Greenland is composed almost entirely (over 90%) of one-sea winter fish which if they had survived and returned to their home waters would have done so as two - or more - sea winter salmon. This age group of salmon comprises one-third of the total salmon catch in Scotland and 70% of the total Canadian salmon catch.
- (b) The Greenland catch of salmon consists principally of female fish in the ratio of 3 : 1.
- (c) It has been estimated that the mortality of salmon which have escaped the Greenland nets, but have been damaged by those nets, is extremely high, particularly as the fish are young and immature at the time they are captured.

Since 1974 the Greenland salmon catch has been restricted by International Agreement to 1190 metric tonnes per annum. This figure has been increased to 1270 metric tonnes for a larger net size and a later starting date to the season.

Salmon are also known to migrate from European rivers to the Faroes, and scientific studies have indicated that the exploited salmon stock in this area comprises salmon of mixed sea age, with destinations including Norway, Sweden, England, Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Iceland, Denmark, USSR. The scientific investigations suggest that some of the salmon are en route to more distant feeding grounds (e.g.: West Greenland) prior to their return to home waters while others return to home waters in the same year as one or two-winter salmon.

¹ Existing experiments are showing encouraging results

The basic principles of Atlantic salmon management

It is clear from the foregoing that the Atlantic salmon, because of its migratory habit, is an international species of fish which requires, therefore, an international form of management. In this respect the relevance of Article 66 of the draft United Nations Law of the Sea Convention to this issue is obvious. The article in question states, inter alia, that:

- (1) States in whose rivers anadromous (salmon) stocks originate shall have the primary interest in and responsibility for such stocks; and
- (2)The State of origin may, after consultations with other States (fishing the stocks of salmon) establish total allowable catches for stocks originating in its rivers; and
- (3) The State of origin shall cooperate in minimising economic dislocation in such other States fishing these stocks, taking into account the normal catch and the mode of operation of such States, and all the areas in which such fishing has occurred.

Nearer to home waters it is important for salmon fisheries to be managed in a regulated and effective manner, and it is believed that the following provides the important principles of management, namely:

- (1) The only certain basis from which to arrange that the run of fish is shared appropriately between breeding, angling and commercial fishing is to count it.
- (2) The commercial catch from the river (should be) taken at only one point. Where trapping is impracticable, all net fishing should be concentrated at a single point of each river. Such a fishery should be associated wherever possible with a count of the escapement of fish.

The significance of (2) above is that it was recommended that no salmon fishing should be carried on outside river estuaries. In pursuance of this policy, recommendations that drift netting for salmon should be prohibited off the Coasts of Scotland were accepted by the UK Government. There are two main reasons why drift netting, as a method of catching salmon, should be prohibited. Firstly, the nets operate off-shore in an area where salmon destined to return to the river of their origin intermingle before entering their 'home' estuary. Thus this form of netting is indiscriminate and provides considerable difficulty for the Fishery Authority which is required to know the exploitation of salmon in each discrete salmon river system so that the salmon stocks can be managed effectively. Secondly, drift netting marks and damages salmon which in turn adversely affects its market value.

Salmon management and the EEC's fisheries conservation policy

A number of issues in respect of salmon management which must be faced by the Community if we are to be allowed to continue to manage salmon fisheries in an economic and effective manner. In this respect the Republic of Ireland, and to a lesser extent, France, are in the same position as the United Kingdom. Some of these issues may be stated briefly as follows:

- (a) It is not clear whether the Community is to be a party to the United Nation's Law of the Sea Convention even though its Member States will be.
- (b) Article 66 of the draft convention would appear, at first sight to conflict with the Council of Ministers Regulation No 101/76 (January 1976) which ruled that:

'Member States shall ensure in particular equal conditions of access to and use of fishing grounds in the waters (coming within their jurisdiction').

According to the Commission, this particular question would be resolved if the Council of Ministers were to adopt Articles 19 and 20 of the Commission's proposals on technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources.
- (c) The present derogation to Regulation 101/76, which allows Member States to regulate and restrict fishing in their waters under certain conditions, ceases to be operative after December 1982 unless prior arrangements have been made to continue it, as it has been agreed that local by-laws stay in force up to three miles from the shore.
- (d) The fishery resource is a Community-shared one and if other Member States are to expect an allocation of the salmon stocks originating in the rivers of the United Kingdom, Ireland and France, the pressure put on those stocks will be too heavy and will therefore prejudice their future conservation and development.
- (e) The main Atlantic salmon 'harvesting' nations are Faroes and Greenland which is the responsibility of Denmark, a Member State of the European Community. Thus there will have to be an agreed European policy for the high seas management of the salmon stocks, bearing in mind the fact that only three Member States produce salmon stocks in their rivers, namely, the United Kingdom, Ireland and France. Negotiations over the international management of the salmon fisheries, including the role of the Greenland Salmon Fishery, will from now on be conducted by the Commission and not by individual salmon-producing states on a unilateral or combined basis.

The role of the EEC in the future development of the salmon resources

It seems clear that the role of Atlantic salmon must from now on be highlighted in any future discussions of a European Common Fisheries Policy. The responsibilities of the salmon-producing countries as outlined in Article 66 of the Law of the Sea Convention must be supported by future EEC policies and decisions. In addition the Commission should plan for the run-down of all off-shore salmon fishing so that the principles formulated above, may eventually be implemented. Since action of this sort will affect the economic welfare of the present salmon fishermen who fish at sea, the Commission should embark on an extensive investigation to promote salmon cage-rearing in salt water in those areas affected by any future ban on salmon fishing at sea. In this way the fishermen aided by EEC finance and expertise can produce Atlantic salmon for sale without affecting the runs of salmon to the natural salmon producing countries. Such a policy would also enable the natural salmon-producing countries to develop salmon ranching programmes to increase runs of salmon to their rivers in the knowledge that such salmon will have only natural, and not man-made, hazards to contend with on their journey to and from their feeding ground. If such a regime is established in European waters the onus will be on the natural salmon-producing countries to ensure that in managing their salmon stocks they do so by means designed to bring the greatest possible economic benefits to the community.