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This document is an **unofficial translation** of the summary (pages 9-21) of the report of the Danish Fisheries Commission 2022-2023, published 20th December 2023.

This translated summary contains a short introduction to the challenges as identified by the Fisheries Commission as well as short versions of all the recommendations from the Fisheries Commission. These are, however, not as detailed as the full versions of the recommendations, which can be found on pages 226-283 of the report. Some of the recommendations might, in addition, be difficult to fully comprehend without some (or even detailed) knowledge of the Danish context and/or possibility to consult the full report.

The full report of the Danish Fisheries Commission 2022-2023 exists only in Danish. The report can be downloaded here: <https://vbn.aau.dk/en/publications/fremtidens-fiskeri-rapport-fra-fiskerikommissionen-december-2023>.

The translation was done by means of ChatGPT with a subsequent quality-check and light editing by associate professor Troels Jacob Hegland, Aalborg University, one of the members of the Fisheries Commission.

Members of the Fisheries Commission were:

- Lars Barfoed: Chairman of the Fisheries Commission (resigned as chairman and member on September 26, 2023, due to his candidacy for the election to the European Parliament).
- Peder Andersen: Emeritus Professor in Resource Economics at the University of Copenhagen.
- Poul Degnbol: Former Head of Advice at the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).
- Grete Elisabeth Dinesen: Senior Consultant in Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management at the Technical University of Denmark.
- Peter Grønkjær: Professor in Marine Ecology at Aarhus University.
- Troels Jacob Hegland: Associate Professor in Fisheries Management at Aalborg University.
- Simon Jul: Food Entrepreneur.
- Niels Buus Kristensen: Senior Researcher at the Institute of Transport Economics, Oslo.
- Birthe Larsen: Associate Professor in Economics at Copenhagen Business School.
- Liselotte Hohwy Stockholm: CEO of the think tank "Ocean Institute" (Tænketanken Hav).

Summary

On December 16, 2021, the Danish Parliament decided to establish an expert committee for fisheries (Fisheries Commission) to develop proposals for addressing the structural, economic, and environmental challenges of fisheries post-Brexit.

Over the past 25 years, Danish fisheries have undergone significant structural changes. Both the number of vessels and fishers have decreased significantly, while average vessel size has increased, and fishing efficiency improved. However, the quantity of landed fish has also decreased considerably, only partially being offset by increasing prices. Notably, profitability increased significantly, especially for larger fishing vessels, in the years following 2009. However, profitability has been declining since 2016, and in addition to the loss of fishing opportunities due to Brexit, Danish fisheries face various challenges, including reduced fish stocks, competition for space, and growing environmental and climate demands.

In this report, the Fisheries Commission has identified and analysed these challenges in detail, pointing to several opportunities for Danish fisheries and society in general. In line with the Commission's interpretation of its mandate, the challenges and opportunities are not narrowly confined to fisheries but also relate to broader societal aims.

The purpose of the Fisheries Commission's work is to provide recommendations on how the Danish fishing industry can develop after Brexit based on the following objectives:

Maximize socio-economic benefits of fishing within environmental limits:

- Ensure an economically robust, resource-efficient, and competitive industry.
- An industry that contributes to the Danish economy and employment, especially in local areas where the fishing industry is dominant and culturally significant.

Minimize impact on ecosystems and climate:

- An industry that contributes to Denmark's climate goals.
- Ensure robust ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Ensure the protection and restoration of sustainable fish stocks.

Based on its mandate and objectives, the Fisheries Commission has defined four themes to structure its work:

- Maximize societal benefits of fishing.
- Local communities and development.
- Marine environment and nature protection.
- Climate transition.

Maximizing Societal Benefits

Excessive fishing pressure and changes in fish stocks

Several stocks are still being fished at levels that are too high to ensure the highest long-term economic yield. Currently, the common EU quotas are, at best, determined based on maximizing catch quantity, which is higher than what maximizes the economic yield of fishing. An important economic challenge in Danish fisheries is also the emerging disappearance of certain fish species, such as cod and herring, due to climate

change and changes in the marine environment. If these changes in the fishers' resource base continue, it can put the industry's earnings under pressure.

Pressure to utilize ocean areas for other purposes

Ocean space is increasingly becoming a limited resource due to a growing need to reserve areas for purposes such as for instance protecting the marine environment and biodiversity, establishing offshore wind farms, and other construction activities. In Denmark's Maritime Spatial Plan, no areas are designated specifically for fishing. This implies a risk that there will gradually be less space for fishing, making it more challenging to catch the quotas available to fishers. Therefore, there is a need for increased focus on the coexistence of various activities at sea.

Excessive and detailed regulations

The EU's Common Fisheries Policy is characterized by a high degree of detailed regulation, effectively acting as a constraint on the development of a more efficient fishery with lower environmental impacts. Fishers should have more significant responsibilities and opportunities to experiment with new gear and fishing methods that minimize environmental impact, reduce undesired bycatch, and improve the economic yield of fishing.

Regulations as a barrier to generational succession

Danish fishers are, on average, getting older, and more are leaving the profession than new ones entering. Rules for maintaining commercial fishing status (A-status) and the introduction of new quota ownership rules (B-quota system) have also made it more difficult to carry out generational successions in fishing, especially for certain vessel groups. The number of fishers will decrease in the coming years, making it harder to recruit new fishers, especially for smaller vessels with less comfortable conditions.

Declining resource rent in fisheries and potential payment for usage rights to the common fishery resource

The introduction of transferable quotas in Denmark and the subsequent structural adjustments and efficiency improvements have led to a significant increase in fisheries' contribution to the national economy (resource rent) compared to previous years. However, the resource rent has been declining since 2016, and ongoing decreases in fish stocks, the CO₂ tax, and reduced space for fishing could put the earnings of certain vessel groups under pressure. Additionally, society still does not receive direct payment for the usage rights to the collectively owned fishery resource, unlike other sectors that exploit shared natural resources such as oil, gas, and minerals. Regardless of the current situation, it is relevant to take a political stance on payment for the usage rights to the common fishery resource.

Need for greater innovation in Danish fisheries

Declining fish stocks and pressure to use sea areas for purposes other than fishing highlight the necessity for the evolution of the fishing industry. It would require more innovation in Danish fisheries than is currently present if greater value is to be derived from the available catch basis. This includes obtaining higher value from industrial fish, better utilization of new species or species currently not under quota, or the application of more efficient and selective fishing methods.

Local Communities and Development

Fewer fishers mean less activity in fishery-dependent local areas. The number of smaller fishing vessels has steadily declined, while a larger portion of the catch is concentrated around the major ports. A continued

decline in fishing around the smaller ports will have noticeable negative consequences for fishery-related industries such as ice factories, fish auctions, fishmongers, port operations, smaller shipyards, net makers, etc. This, in turn, will negatively impact economic activity and employment in local areas that have traditionally been and continue to be dependent on active fishing. With the current outlook for Danish fisheries, there is reason to believe that concentration trends will persist with associated negative consequences for fishery-related employment in communities connected to the smaller fishing ports. The presence of local commercial fishing can also play a role in branding local areas, attracting tourists, and activating a cultural heritage related to coastal fishing. Additionally, the earnings in coastal fishing typically remain at a low level, making it not uncommon for coastal fishers to need supplementary income from other sources. Existing regulations regarding the maintenance of A-status may, however, present a barrier to this.

Marine Environment and Nature Protection

Fishing impacts ecosystems and climate

Fishing affects both fish stocks and ecosystems by removing the landed fish and shellfish and causing unwanted bycatch or discards. Additionally, bottom trawling alters the physical structure of the seabed, affecting seabed habitats and the associated flora and fauna. Lost gear and waste can also have negative effects, including unintended bycatch of fish and other animals.

Genuine ecosystem-based fisheries management has not been implemented yet

Although it is an objective of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, there is currently no actual implementation of ecosystem-based fisheries management. This means that the management of fisheries does not take into account all the factors in the ecosystem that are relevant to different fish species, such as conditions affecting their habitats and the resilience and biodiversity of ecosystems. Another example is the protection of top predators for fish, which has led to a significant increase in populations, especially of cormorants and seals.

Other anthropogenic factors affect the resource base of fisheries

The marine environment is under pressure from various human activities. The primary factor in inland and coastal waters is nutrient discharge, primarily from agriculture, while pollutants and other waste also can have a significant impact. Increased shipping and changing climate conditions contribute to an increased occurrence of invasive species. Fixed structures along the coasts (e.g., ports, coastal protection) and in open waters (e.g., wind turbines) can negatively impact the resource base of fisheries if the natural conditions in fish habitats are altered.

Climate Transition

The fishing sector, like other industries, must contribute to achieving Denmark's climate goals

Fishing accounted for approximately 0.3 million tons of Denmark's total CO₂ emissions of 46 million tons in 2021. The contribution is mainly through the fuel consumption of vessels. Denmark's climate goals include a 70% reduction by 2030 compared to 1990, and Denmark becoming climate-neutral by 2050. The fishing sector, like other industries, must contribute to achieving these goals. The upcoming CO₂ tax is expected to contribute to significant reductions in fisheries by 2030, but more can be done to promote the energy efficiency of fishing, which is challenged by the fact that energy-efficient measures require substantial investment. Achieving a climate-neutral fishery by 2050 involves phasing out fossil fuels on vessels and

transitioning to zero-emission solutions. Implementation-ready solutions do not currently exist for fishing, and there is uncertainty about which alternative fuels will dominate for fishing vessels in the long term. This is a significant challenge as new vessels launched in the coming years are likely to be active in 2050.

Recommendations from the Fisheries Commission

The overarching vision of the Fisheries Commission is that Danish fisheries should operate under ordinary market conditions and, in that sense, be equal to other industries. This means, on the one hand, that regulatory restrictions specific to the fishing sector should, as far as possible, be removed or eased to ensure an economically efficient industry with the least possible impact on the ecosystem and climate. On the other hand, this implies that the fishing sector itself must increasingly take responsibility to ensure the existence of a fishing industry in the future and to comply with the societal framework set for the practice of fishing.

However, a part of Danish fisheries that it is still desirable to maintain will likely be at risk of disappearing over time as regulatory restrictions are eased. This fishery plays an important role in achieving other socially prioritized goals such as contributing to activity and employment in local areas. This justifies supporting this fishery.

In line with the above, the Fisheries Commission has formulated 17 specific recommendations:

Institutional Recommendations

Achieving the goals outlined in the Fisheries Commission's vision requires changes to some of the key regulatory and institutional frameworks for Danish fisheries, particularly the structure of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, which currently features a high degree of detailed regulation.

Recommendation 1: Comprehensive Reform of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy and Other EU Rules

The Fisheries Commission recommends that Denmark develops a negotiation proposal ahead of a future reform of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy. A reform of the EU's fisheries policy is necessary to grant fishers greater flexibility in organizing fishing activities, including gear selection, to ensure the best environmental and economic outcomes. Additionally, an EU reform is necessary to achieve fisheries management that is genuinely ecosystem-based.

Recommendation 2: Establishment of a Council of the Sea

The Fisheries Commission recommends the establishment of an independent Council of the Sea to advise on the sea as a resource and ecosystem across various interests. The interests related to the sea's resources cut across different administrative areas. The Fisheries Commission believes that there is a need for a coordinating effort in the form of a scientifically based Danish Council of the Sea, which should play a crucial role in managing and promoting the sustainable use of marine resources, ensuring economic efficiency, ecological resilience, and coexistence.

Recommendations to Achieve Maximum Societal Benefits

The ambition for fisheries to operate under ordinary market conditions presupposes that some regulatory requirements hindering a better utilization of the sector's economic potential be eased. Simultaneously, the fishing sector, like other industries, should make proportional contributions to financing fishery-specific services provided and fully paid for by society. This primarily includes biological advice - forming the basis for quota recommendations - and fisheries control. Better utilization of the fishing sector's potential also involves initiatives that strengthen the demand side and enhance the promotion of Danish fish.

Recommendation 3: Simplification of Ownership Rules in Fisheries

The Fisheries Commission recommends simplifying existing ownership rules to provide better opportunities for Danish fisheries to leverage technological advancements and economies of scale. Specifically, it is recommended to phase out the B-quota system, which entails that fishers' financial transactions such as loans and guarantees are included in the quota calculation, and to ease the rules regarding A-status by equating working in land-based fishing businesses with working on a fishing vessel. Furthermore, it is suggested to relax the so-called "cross-rule" in the quota concentration regulations.

Recommendation 4: Increased Self-Governance in Danish Fisheries

The Fisheries Commission recommends a detailed analysis of tasks currently managed by authorities to assess whether the industry can undertake them without compromising the authorities' ability to maintain effective control. Increased self-governance would grant Danish fisheries greater autonomy and flexibility in the daily management of fishing. Tasks that could potentially be handled by the industry include the transfer of annual catch entitlements/shares, administration of year-to-year flexibility, or international quota swaps.

Recommendation 5: User Fees for Biological Advice and Fisheries Control

The Fisheries Commission recommends introducing user fees for certain aspects of biological advice for fisheries as well as fisheries control. Other industries contribute to a significant extent to public expenses to ensure the industries' future as well as control with compliance.

Recommendation 6: Clarity on the Distribution of Resource Rents in Danish Fisheries and Possible Payment for the Right to Use the Common Fishery Resource

The Fisheries Commission recommends regular economic assessments of resource rents (fishery's contribution to the national economy) to gain a transparent overview of profitability in different parts of Danish fisheries. It suggests creating greater transparency on the distribution of resource rents. Additionally, after further analysis, it recommends taking an explicit political stance on the possibility of introducing a payment for the right to use the fishery resource in Denmark. While tradable quotas have led to significant adjustments in fishing capacity and fleet renewal in Danish fisheries, society, as the owner of the common fishery resource, still receives no direct payment from the fishing sector for the right to use it, unlike other industries based on the exploitation of common natural resources.

Recommendation 7: Strengthening the State-Organised 'Gentle-to-Nature' Label (NaturSkånsom)

The Fisheries Commission recommends expanding the state-organised 'Gentle-to-Nature' label to include commercially caught species using gentle gear in fully documented fisheries, even for vessels over 17 meters and trips over 48 hours. Furthermore, it suggests expanding the organic food label for restaurants and canteens etc. to encompass 'Gentle-to-Nature' caught fish, allowing them to be recognized similarly to

organic-labelled products. Experiences from labelling programs demonstrate their potential for adding value. Therefore, certification of more Danish fisheries can both meet the requirements of European retailers and serve as a tool to increase value-added in the Danish fisheries, aquaculture, and fish processing sectors.

Recommendation 8: Strengthening the Domestic Market and Enhancing the Profile of Danish Fish

The Fisheries Commission recommends increasing the availability and visibility of high-quality fish with a climate- and environmentally friendly profile. It suggests supporting product development for various species specifically targeting the Danish market, such as squid and industrial fish. Additionally, the Fisheries Commission recommends that Danish fisheries work diligently to position themselves as fisheries conducted as animal-ethically as possible, which could become a strong position in the export market. The Commission assesses that there - with an increased focus on climate change - is currently a unique situation where Danes seem more willing than before to change their eating habits.

Recommendations for Local Communities and Development

The number of smaller fishing vessels has been steadily declining over the years, which - combined with concentration of landings in larger ports and a decrease in crucial fish stock - has contributed to a general decline in activity and employment in several coastal communities dependent on fishing. Therefore, there is a need for initiatives to support continued activity and employment in these areas and to leverage the strengths of coastal fisheries.

Recommendation 9: Fishing as a Driving Force for Activity in Fishing-Dependent Local Areas

The Fisheries Commission recommends making it easier to be a part-time fisher by relaxing the requirement that 60% of the fisher's income must come from fishing to maintain A-status. It is also recommended to identify and, if necessary, remove possible barriers to combining fishing with other occupations.

The Commission further recommends allocating specific subsidies aimed at the development/updating of infrastructure in smaller ports (e.g., cold storage, ice machines, smoking facilities, etc.). The presence of active fishing along the Danish coasts is essential to support activity and employment in areas connected to smaller fishing ports, including fishing businesses and tourism.

The Commission also recommends offering additional catch quantities or 'earmarked' quotas with a local landing obligation, i.e., with a clause that these quotas can only be fished if landed in specifically defined smaller ports. The extra quantities can be obtained through state purchases. A sufficient volume of landings in smaller ports is crucial to ensuring activity in coastal communities.

Finally, it is recommended to collect data on the interaction between fishing and fishing-dependent coastal communities.

Recommendation 10: Handling Seals and Cormorants

The Fisheries Commission recommends utilizing the possibilities within current legislation - such as permitting local regulation of cormorants where there is evidence of damage to fishing or vulnerable fish stocks, or allowing regulation of seals near fishing equipment - to the extent possible. Seals and cormorants can pose a challenge, especially to coastal fishing.

The Commission also recommends gathering more knowledge within a short period about the population structures and movement patterns of seals and cormorants, as well as spatial and seasonal variations in their food choices. In the short term, Denmark should take the initiative to propose changes to EU legislation aimed at reducing the number of cormorants and seals in coastal areas. Furthermore, the Fisheries Commission suggests examining the economic impacts on gillnet fisheries.

Additionally, the Commission recommends conducting studies on the effect of limiting the extent and size of selected cormorant colonies. Finally, it is recommended to continue working on optimizing seal-safe gear and exploring the possibility of developing cormorant-safe gear.

Recommendations for Improved Marine Environment, Nature, and Fisheries Regulation

The recommendations regarding the marine environment, nature, and fisheries regulation aim to reduce the negative impact of fishing on the marine environment and the resource base. Additionally, they seek to ensure space for fishing in areas where it can occur with minimal negative impact on the marine environment and high economic returns. It is crucial to support the coexistence of different activities at sea, reduce external pressure factors on the marine environment, and promote innovation that enhances the profitability and selectivity, and minimizes the impact of fishing on the marine environment. Overall, these recommendations should contribute to the development of genuine ecosystem-based management of fisheries.

Recommendation 11: Implementation of an Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management Approach

The Fisheries Commission recommends, firstly, the implementation of fully documented fishing (real-time electronic monitoring of catches on vessels, as well as precise GPS registration of the fishing vessel's or gear's positions during fishing) in order to target and optimize the sustainable utilization of commercial species while minimizing negative effects on ecosystems. Fully documented fishing should include all vessels engaged in commercial fishing. In the short term, it is recommended to include larger vessels in the Danish fishing fleet, and in the long term, efforts should be made to encompass the entire Danish fishing fleet, including eventually vessels from both the EU and third countries.

The Commission also recommends transitioning from single-species-based to multi-species-based fisheries management. Denmark should work towards implementing this in fisheries management at the national, EU, and international levels. Furthermore, a revision of stock assessments for nationally regulated fisheries at risk of overexploitation is recommended, and the principles for regulating international stocks (stock assessments and quotas) should be applied to the regulation of nationally managed stocks.

Finally, the Commission recommends conducting a mapping of the Danish seabed to ensure that fishing areas are designated based on optimal knowledge. This ensures efficient utilization of fishery resources while considering the protection of seabed habitats, essential habitats, and biodiversity.

Recommendation 12: Area-Related Fisheries Regulation

The Fisheries Commission recommends introducing specific requirements for Danish fishing to ensure that it is based on fishing methods and gear applications with lower environmental impacts in the future. The evaluation of environmental impact should consider effects on catch efficiency to ensure that the overall impact associated with the catch is reduced. It is recommended to apply time- and area-specific individual

requirements for respectively passive gear (technologies that reduce bycatch of marine mammals and birds), bottom trawl gear (technologies that increase selectivity), and pelagic and industrial fishing (technologies that ensure targeted fishing and reduce bycatch of unwanted species). The impact of fishing on the marine environment is linked to the types of gear used, as well as the habitat types and time they are used. The direct impact of fishing is related to target species, desired and undesired bycatch, and physical disturbance of the seabed and associated organisms.

The Commission recommends fostering a more in-depth dialogue on coexistence between fishing and other activities at sea. It is also recommended to designate core areas for fishing activities and develop methods for multi-use of areas. Consideration should also be given to areas essential for the fishery's resource base (spawning and nursery areas). Furthermore, the Commission recommends implementing area management in selected areas within the Danish 12 nautical mile zone - going beyond current regulations - to accommodate smaller vessels engaged in fishing with low environmental impact. This should consider specific environmental impacts in time and space. The Commission emphasizes the importance of focusing on coexistence between different activities, especially regarding the expansion of wind energy, to prevent increased total area and marine environmental impacts and to ensure that fishing is not displaced to new and potentially marginal areas with increased environmental impact and climate burden.

Recommendation 13: Reduction of External Pressure Factors

The Fisheries Commission recommends a significant reduction in the discharge of nitrogen into fjord areas and the inner Danish waters. The marine environment is affected by numerous anthropogenic pressure factors, stemming partly from activities at sea and partly from activities on land, including nitrogen discharge from agriculture, which has derivative effects in the sea. Nitrogen discharge represents a highly significant challenge in these areas.

The Fisheries Commission assesses that a substantial reduction in nutrient loading, primarily originating from agriculture, is a crucial condition for restoring healthy and viable fish stocks of the key commercial species for fishing in the inner Danish waters. By reducing the nitrogen discharge into the inner Danish waters and fjord areas, improvements in the marine environment are expected over time. This will have a positive impact on marine ecosystems and biodiversity, thereby creating a larger and more resilient resource base.

The Fisheries Commission recommends initiating a comprehensive analysis of the occurrence and impact of environmental pollutants with potential effects on fish stocks. Danish waters are extensively affected by environmentally hazardous substances. The effects of these hazardous substances on marine organisms and fish stocks are not well-documented. In this situation, the precautionary principle suggests that emissions should be reduced as much as possible.

Recommendations for Climate Transition

The fisheries sector's contribution to Denmark's climate goals requires measures that promote both energy efficiency and ensure a transition to climate-neutral fuels in the long term. This necessitates timely consideration due to the long lifespan of new vessels. The from 2025 gradually increasing CO₂ tax is a central tool for both 2030 reductions and the transition towards 2050. However, additional measures are needed to facilitate the transition.

Recommendation 14: Support Fund for Energy Efficiency and Green Transition of Existing and New Vessels

The Fisheries Commission recommends establishing a 'green fishing' support fund for energy-efficient initiatives on existing and new vessels. Danish energy policy has a long tradition of support funds for energy efficiency, such as 'green transport' I and II for trucks and domestic ferries, respectively. Allocation is based on a given percentage of costs, and the prioritization among applicants is determined by the greatest efficiency per Danish krone (DKK) given in support. A similar structure would likely be appropriate here, considering significant variations in the cost-effectiveness of different initiatives, potentially higher for new vessels than for existing ones. It is recommended that support for energy infrastructure in ports, including power capacity for battery charging and shore power during unloading, can also be included in the applications. The support fund should be temporary, with a possible extension after evaluation.

Recommendation 15: Demonstration Project: Future Climate-Neutral Fishing Vessel

The Fisheries Commission recommends offering support for an ambitious new construction project for the 'Future Fishing Vessel'. Support will be provided for the additional costs of investing in a new energy-optimized large vessel powered by climate-neutral energy. The project can contribute valuable insights into how to best meet zero-emission requirements for an efficient fishing vessel and, consequently, ensure a commercially sustainable fishery. The recommendation focuses on transitioning the largest vessels, responsible for the majority of the fishing fleet's total CO₂ emissions, with anticipated ripple effects for medium-sized vessels.

Recommendation 16: New Vessels Prepared for Transition to Green Fuels

The Fisheries Commission recommends consolidating the experiences from the aforementioned demonstration project and similar initiatives in other countries, incorporating alternative fuels in maritime transport, into a concept for effectively future-proofing new fishing vessels for transition to climate-neutral fuels. The design can be adjusted and specified as more knowledge about the technological developments becomes available. Initially, the initiative should involve advice and guidelines, evolving into actual requirements as sufficiently consolidated knowledge becomes available.

Recommendation 17: Announcement of Continued Increase in CO₂ Tax After 2030

The Fisheries Commission recommends a political announcement that the adopted gradual increase in the CO₂ tax for the fishing industry is expected to continue beyond 2030. The tax should eventually reach a level that provides sufficient incentives for a complete transition to green fuels, aiming for a climate-neutral fishery no later than 2050. Clear expectations can contribute to incorporating the transition to green fuels into long-term investments in new fishing vessels already today, facilitating a faster and more cost-effective introduction of these vessels towards 2050. A uniform CO₂ tax across sectors contributes to cost-effective achievement of Denmark's climate goals.

Recommendations for the Coastal Fishing Scheme

Based on the expanded scope of the Commission's work outlined in the government's coalition agreement, the Fisheries Commission recommends several adjustments to the existing coastal fishing scheme to develop and strengthen coastal fishing with low environmental impact.

- Specifically, it is recommended to establish one unified coastal fishing scheme where the existing vessel limit of 17 meters is supplemented with an additional size restriction based on either gross tonnage (GT) or horsepower (HP).
- To ensure the development and establishment of a genuine coastal fishing segment in its own right, the Fisheries Commission recommends establishing the coastal fishing scheme as a 'closed' scheme, where vessels lock their quotas in the scheme after a trial period.
- All vessels in the scheme are allocated additional quota amounts, and vessels engaging in fishing with low environmental impact are granted an additional quota on top of that.
- However, there is a need for an expert review of the criteria for fishing with low environmental impact to ensure that it is the gear usage with the least impact on ecosystems that qualifies for the additional quota amounts.
- It is essential that the coastal fishing scheme is sufficiently attractive, therefore there should be an option to supplement the scheme with additional quota amounts obtained through state purchases of quotas.

Recommendations on Trawlfree Zone in the Belt Sea

The Fisheries Commission takes as point of departure that the poor environmental condition in the Belt Sea is primarily due to frequent, widespread oxygen depletion caused by nutrient runoff from agriculture. A trawlfree zone in the Belt Sea should therefore support the objectives of a) stock growth of cod and b) maintaining life in the coastal communities in the area while minimizing the impact on the marine environment.

The Fisheries Commission supports a trawlfree zone in the Belt Sea but recommends allowing bottom trawl fishing in some of the core fishing areas, not exceeding 10% of the area cumulatively over 6 years. The location of these core areas (where fishing is most efficient and profitable) should be identified in collaboration with fishers after advice on environmental impacts. By maintaining fishing in limited core areas, the goal of supporting life in the coastal communities around the Belt Sea can also be achieved while minimizing the impact on the marine environment in line with the objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive for the restoration and maintenance of good environmental status. The Commission is of the opinion that by maintaining fishing activities in core areas, the risk of fishing activities moving to less impacted areas, where increased fishing intensity may have a greater negative effect, can be avoided.

Furthermore, the Fisheries Commission recommends the following regarding the specific design of a trawlfree zone in the Belt Sea:

- All fishing in the Belt Sea must be fully documented.
- Specific requirements for the use of bottom trawl gear with minimal impact on the seabed and bycatch risk.
- Consideration of restricting fishing to vessels based in the area to support local communities.
- Supporting fisheries that wish to transition to fishing gear with low environmental impact when introducing these restrictions.
- Regulation of area impact from mussel fishing, always following the strictest regulation in Natura 2000 areas, and focusing on reducing area impact, especially where optimal growth conditions for eelgrass and macroalgae are present.

- Implementation of management measures to reduce negative impacts of oxygen depletion in the water column and on the seabed.

It should be noted that the Fisheries Commission, in its considerations of a trawlfree zone, has formulated two alternative models (a 100% closure and a 0% closure for trawl fishing) but has concluded that the above solution should be preferred. Finally, it should also be mentioned that the Fisheries Commission assesses that there are other Danish sea areas that would have a greater positive effect from the introduction of trawlfree zones, solely considering the improvement of the marine environment's ecosystems and commercial stocks.

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