



MarinTrust Standard V2

By-product Fishery Assessment

FRA44 – Whiting

(Merlangius merlangus)

in ICES Divisions 7b,c,e-k

MarinTrust Programme

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Table 1 Application details and summary of the assessment outcome

Fishery Under Assessment	Species:	Whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>)
	Geographical area:	Southern Celtic Seas and western English Channel
	Country of origin of the product:	France
	Stock:	Whiting in ICES Divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k
Date	April 2024	
Report Code	FRA44	
Assessor	Sam Peacock	
Country of origin of the product - PASS	France	
Country of origin of the product - FAIL	N/A	

Application details and summary of the assessment outcome			
Company Name(s): Copalis Industrie			
Country: France			
Email address:		Applicant Code:	
Certification Body Details			
Name of Certification Body:		NSF / Global Trust Certification Ltd.	
Assessor	Peer Reviewer	Assessment Days	Initial/Surveillance/Re-approval
Sam Peacock	Léa Lebechnech	0.2	Surveillance 2
Assessment Period	April 2024 – April 2025		

Scope Details	
Main Species	Whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>)
Stock	Whiting in ICES Divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k
Fishery Location	Southern Celtic Seas and western English Channel
Management Authority (Country/ State)	France / EU
Gear Type(s)	Otter trawls, seine nets, beam trawls, gillnets, others
Outcome of Assessment	
Peer Review Evaluation	Agree with the assessor's determination
Recommendation	APPROVED

Table 2. Assessment Determination

Assessment Determination
<p>If any species is categorised as Endangered or Critically Endangered on IUCN’s Red List, or if it appears in the CITES appendices, it cannot be approved for use as Marin trust raw material. Whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>) does not appear as Endangered or Critically Endangered on IUCN’s Red List, and does not appear in CITES appendices; therefore, <i>Merlangius merlangus</i> is eligible for approval for use as Marin trust by-product raw material.</p> <p>A multiannual management plan is in place for this stock, and ICES considers it to be precautionary; however there is no shared management plan with the UK.</p> <p>An annual stock assessment is conducted by the ICES Working Group for the Celtic Seas Ecoregion, most recently in 2023. The stock assessment included all catches, discards and bycatch, and therefore meets C1.1. Stock biomass was estimated by the assessment to be below the limit reference point, and therefore the stock fails C1.2. As per the MarinTrust byproduct assessment guidance, the stock was subsequently assessed under Category D.</p> <p>Whiting was awarded a Productivity score of 1.29 and a Susceptibility score of 2.5, leading to an outcome of Pass on Table D3.</p> <p>Therefore, whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>) in ICES Divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k should remain APPROVED for the production of fishmeal and fish oil under the current MarinTrust v2.3 by-products.</p>
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Comments
<p>The assessor correctly assessed whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>) in ICES Divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k (Southern Celtic Seas and western English Channel) under Category C first, the stock being subject to a multiannual management plan with defined reference points.</p> <p>Clause C1.1 was met because fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process. However, clause C1.2 was not met, as the stock biomass is below the limit reference point.</p> <p>As per the MarinTrust byproduct assessment guidance, the stock was subsequently further assessed under Category D. It passed the PSA risk-rating with a productivity score of 1.29 and susceptibility score of 2.5.</p> <p>In conclusion, whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>) in ICES Divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k (Southern Celtic Seas and western English Channel) passes category D and therefore should be approved under the MarinTrust Standard v2.3.</p>
Notes for On-site Auditor

Species Categorisation

NB: If any species is categorised as Endangered or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, or if it appears in CITES Appendix 1, it **cannot** be approved for use as an MarinTrust raw material.

IUCN Red list Category

By-product material from a species listed by IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Nature) under the Red List for the following categories shall immediately fail the assessment;

- EXTINCT (E) AND EXTINCT IN THE WILD (EW)
- CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (CR) facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.
- ENDANGERED (EN) facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild.

By-product material may be used from the following categories provided that all clauses in the MarinTrust standard are passed.

- VULNERABLE (VU) facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.
- NEAR THREATENED (NT) does not qualify for above now, but is close or is likely to qualify for, a threatened category in the near future.
- LEAST CONCERN (LC) Widespread and abundant.
- DATA DEFICIENT (DD) and NOT EVALUATED (NE)

Table 3 Species Categorisation Table

Common name	Latin name	Stock	Management	Category	IUCN Red List Category ¹	CITES Appendix 1 ²
Whiting	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>	Whiting in ICES Divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k	Yes	(C) D	Least Concern ³	No

¹ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

² <https://cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php>

³ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/198585/45097610>

CATEGORY C SPECIES

In a by-product assessment, Category C species are those which are subject to a species-specific management regime and are usually targeted species in fisheries for human consumption.

Clause C1 should be completed for each Category C species. If there are no Category C species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted. Where a species fails this Clause, it should be assessed as a Category D species instead.

Species Name		Whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>)	
C1	Category C Stock Status - Minimum Requirements		
	C1.1	Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	Pass
	C1.2	The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	Fail
Clause outcome:			FAIL

C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Whiting in Divisions 7b, c and e-k is subject to annual stock assessment by the ICES Working Group for the Celtic Seas Ecoregion (WGCSE). The most recent assessment was conducted in 2023, using an analytical age-based assessment which incorporated catches, two survey indices, maturity data, and age-dependent natural mortalities. Discards and bycatch were included in the assessment for the full time series (ICES 2023).

The 2023 ICES catch advice states, “ICES advises that when the MSY approach and precautionary considerations are applied, there should be zero catch in 2024. ICES notes the existence of a precautionary management plan, developed and adopted by one of the relevant management authorities for this stock. Management should be implemented at the stock level” (ICES 2023).

Catches are presented in the figure below:

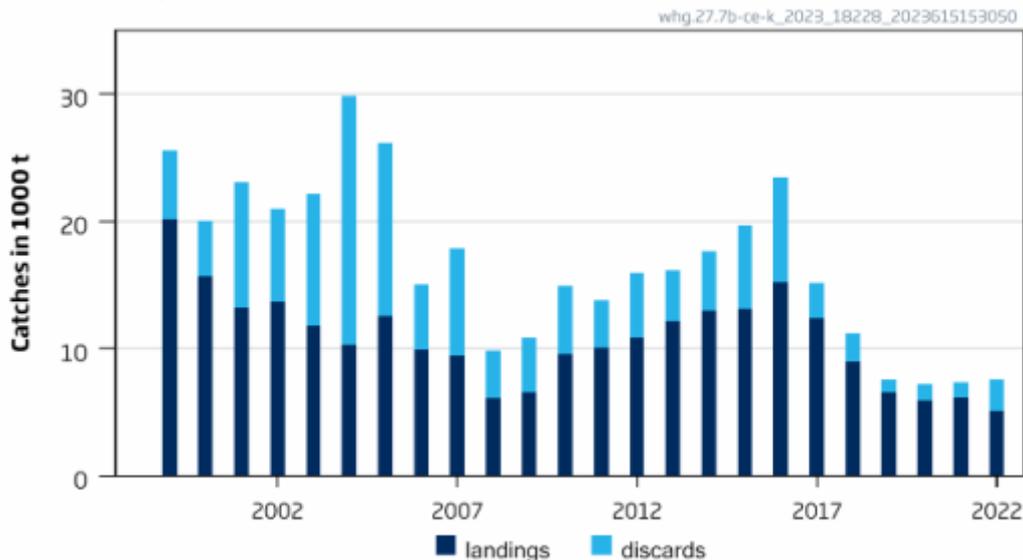


Figure 1. Whiting in Divisions 27.7b-c, e-k, catches including landings and discards (ICES 2023)

Therefore, fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process and therefore the stock PASSES clause C1.1.

C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Current stock status relative to reference points is provided by ICES in the annual catch advice. Target reference points MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} and MAP MSY $B_{trigger}$ have been set at 50,818t. Limit reference points B_{lim} and MAP B_{lim} have been set at 36,571t. The 2023 stock assessment produced a short-term forecast predicting that SSB in 2024 would be 26,361t (ICES 2023).

The most recent ICES catch advice states, “Fishing pressure on the stock is above F_{MSY} , F_{pa} and F_{lim} , and spawning-stock size is below MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} ” (ICES 2023). Estimated SSB relative to reference points is shown in Figure 2, below.

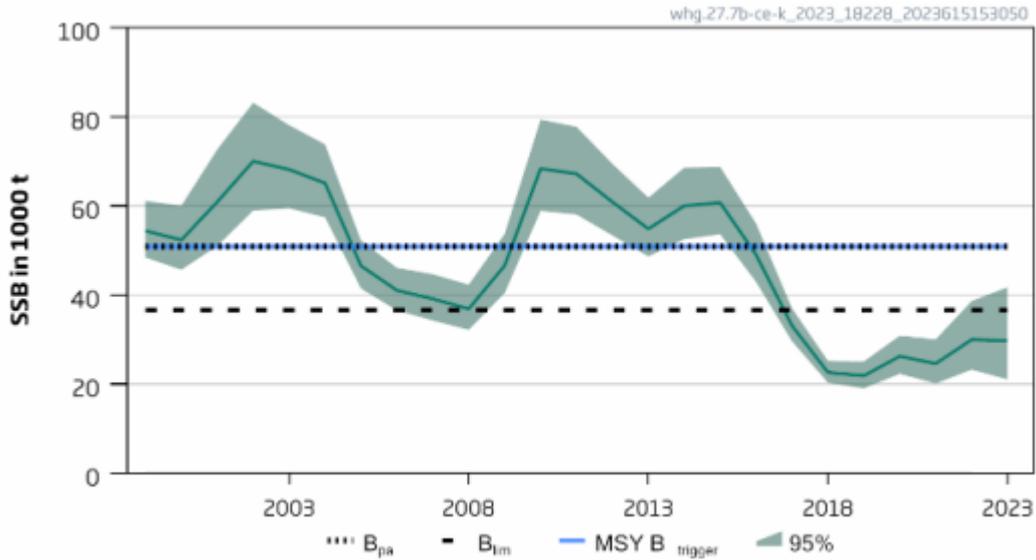


Figure 2. Whiting in Divisions 27.7b-c, e-k, estimated SSB relative to current reference points (ICES 2023).

Therefore, the species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass below the limit reference point (or proxy) and it FAILS clause C1.2. As per MT guidance, the stock will be assessed under Category D hereinafter.

References

ICES (2023). Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k (southern Celtic Seas and eastern English Channel). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2023. ICES Advice 2023, whg.27.7b-ce-k. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21864333>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2
FAO CCRF	7.5.3
GSSI	D.3.04, D5.01

CATEGORY D SPECIES

Category D species are those which are not subject to a species-specific management regime. In the case of mixed trawl fisheries, Category D species may make up the majority of landings. The comparative lack of scientific information on the status of the population of the species means that a risk-assessment style approach must be taken.

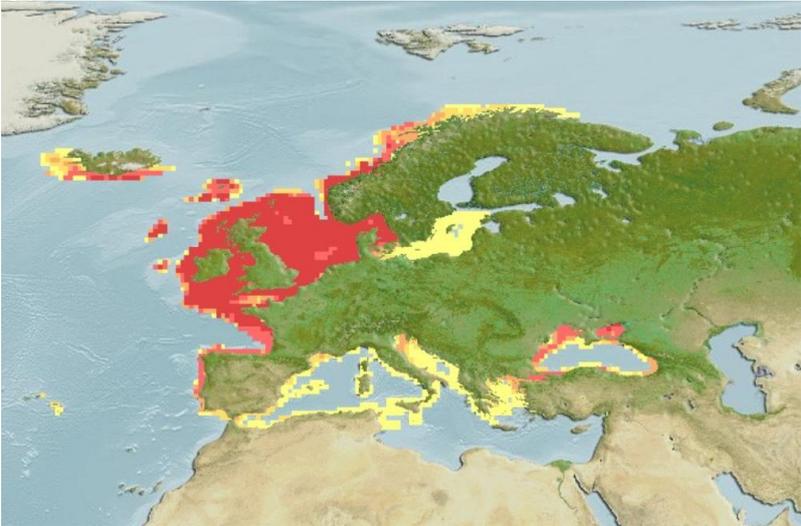
D1	Species Name	Whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>)	
	Productivity Attribute	Value	Score
	Average age at maturity (years)	2 years	1
	Average maximum age (years)	8.4 years	1
	Fecundity (eggs/spawning)	330,693	1
	Average maximum size (cm)	91.5cm	1
	Average size at maturity (cm)	24.3cm	1
	Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner	1
	Mean trophic level	4.4	3
	Average Productivity Score		1.29
	Susceptibility Attribute	Value	Score
	Availability (area overlap)	<10%	1
	Encounterability (the position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear)	Targeted	3
	Selectivity of gear type	Targeted	3
	Post-capture mortality	Retained	3
	Average Susceptibility Score		2.5
	PSA Risk Rating (From Table D3)		PASS
	Compliance rating		PASS
	Further justification for susceptibility scoring (where relevant)		
	<i>For susceptibility attributes, please provide a brief rationale for scoring of parameters where there may be uncertainty affecting your decision</i>		
			
Whiting, native range, from Fishbase (https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Merlangius-merlangus.html)			
References			
Fishbase, whiting: https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Merlangius-merlangus.html 2 years			
Standard clauses 1.3.2.2			

Table D2 - Productivity / Susceptibility attributes and scores.

Productivity attributes	High productivity (Low risk, score = 1)	Medium productivity (medium risk, score = 2)	Low productivity (high risk, score = 3)
Average age at maturity	<5 years	5-15 years	>15 years
Average maximum age	<10 years	10-25 years	>25 years
Fecundity	>20,000 eggs per year	100-20,000 eggs per year	<100 eggs per year
Average maximum size	<100 cm	100-300 cm	>300 cm
Average size at maturity	<40 cm	40-200 cm	>200 cm
Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner	Demersal egg layer	Live bearer
Mean Trophic Level	<2.75	2.75-3.25	>3.25

Susceptibility attributes	Low susceptibility (Low risk, score = 1)	Medium susceptibility (medium risk, score = 2)	High susceptibility (high risk, score = 3)
Areal overlap (availability) Overlap of the fishing effort with the species range	<10% overlap	10-30% overlap	>30% overlap
Encounterability The position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear, and the position of the stock/species within the habitat relative to the position of the gear	Low overlap with fishing gear (low encounterability).	Medium overlap with fishing gear.	High overlap with fishing gear (high encounterability). Default score for target species
Selectivity of gear type Potential of the gear to retain species	a Individuals < size at maturity are rarely caught	a Individuals < size at maturity are regularly caught.	a Individuals < size at maturity are frequently caught
	b Individuals < size at maturity can escape or avoid gear.	b Individuals < half the size at maturity can escape or avoid gear.	b Individuals < half the size at maturity are retained by gear.
Post-capture mortality (PCM) The chance that, if captured, a species would be released and that it would be in a condition permitting subsequent survival	Evidence of majority released post-capture and survival.	Evidence of some released post-capture and survival.	Retained species or majority dead when released.

D3		Average Susceptibility Score		
		1 - 1.75	1.76 - 2.24	2.25 - 3
Average Productivity Score	1 - 1.75	PASS	PASS	PASS
	1.76 - 2.24	PASS	PASS	TABLE D4
	2.25 - 3	PASS	TABLE D4	TABLE D4

D4 Species Name			
Impacts On Species Categorised as Vulnerable by D1-D3 - Minimum Requirements			
D4.1	The potential impacts of the fishery on this species are considered during the management process, and reasonable measures are taken to minimise these impacts.		
D4.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the species.		
Outcome:			
Evidence			
D4.1: The potential impacts of the fishery on this species are considered during the management process, and reasonable measures are taken to minimise these impacts.			
D4.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the species.			
References			
Links			
MarinTrust Standard clause		1.3.2.2, 4.1.4	
FAO CCRF		7.5.1	
GSSI		D.5.01	