



MarinTrust Standard V2

Whole fish Fishery Assessment

WF10

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) and

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)

in FAO 27 – ICES Subdivisions 25-29,

and 32 (excluding Gulf of Riga)

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Table 1 Application details and summary of the assessment outcome

Application details and summary of the assessment outcome			
Name(s): Sia Venta FM			
Country: Latvia			
Email address:		Applicant Code	
Certification Body Details			
Name of Certification Body:		NSF / Global Trust Certification Ltd	
Assessor Name	CB Peer Reviewer	Assessment Days	Initial/Surveillance/ Re-approval
Ana Elisa Almeida Ayres	Matthew Jew	3	Initial
Assessment Period	September 2024 – September 2025		
Scope Details			
Management Authority (Country/State)		European Commission (EC), Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia	
Main Species		Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) Flounder (<i>Platichthys flesus</i>) Three-spined stickleback (<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>)	
Fishery Location		FAO 27, ICES 3.d.25-29, 32 (excluding Gulf of Riga)	
Gear Type(s)		Mainly pelagic trawls. Minor part taken by trapnets, gillnets, and purse-seines	
Outcome of Assessment			
Overall Outcome		Approved	
Clauses Failed		[Herring] A3 re-assessed under Category B, where the stock Passed	
CB Peer Review Evaluation		APPROVED – Agree with the assessor’s determination	
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Group Evaluation		APPROVED – See full comments in Appendix B	
Recommendation		APPROVED	

Table 2. Assessment Determination

Assessment Determination
<p>The pelagic trawl sprat fishery in Latvia was Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified since May 2017, however the certificate expired in November 2022 and the client opted to self-suspend.</p> <p>The fishery is highly selective, with catches of herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) and sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) accounting for about 99% of the catches in Latvian Sprat and a few catches of flounder (<i>Platichthys flesus</i>) [~0.7%] and three-spined stickleback (<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>) [~0.3%].</p> <p>In relation to management of the central Baltic herring and Baltic sprat fisheries, both the management framework and the surveillance, control and enforcement system meet minimum requirements set by the MarinTrust Standard v2.2.</p> <p>The herring stock assessment was benchmarked by International Council for the Exploration of the Sea - ICES in 2023, leading to the reference points for the stock being updated. Currently, the spawning-stock size is considered to be below MSY Btrigger and between Bpa and Blim. Ministers of the European Commission agreed on spawning closures for herring fishing in the Baltic Sea in various sea areas during April and May 2024. However, the stock still failed clause A.2.3 as there are disagreements regarding the recommended catches and timing of closure seasons, which are raising suspicions against the current MAP, and the recommended catches are no predicted to rebuild the stock in the long-term. Catches from 2021-2023 were very close to the upper limit established by ICES despite SSB being below MSY Btrigger during this period. According to the MAP, this should only be done if the stock is in a good state (above MSY Btrigger) or if the MSY exploitation rate is to be achieved in any event by 2020. Neither of the cases is applied. Thus, as catches have been consistently above the mid-point, by about 10%, and the spawning biomass is below the limit reference point, A.3.2 was not met. As the stock failed on Category A, it was assessed under Category B. The biomass in 2024 was found above Blim and fishing mortality was below Fmsy, leading to a “Pass” outcome on Table Ba.</p> <p>The sprat stock remains healthy, according to the most recent stock assessment, which concluded that sprat SSB is nearly double the level of the target reference point. The total international TAC remains within the range recommended by ICES, and catches have not substantially exceeded the quota. Although catch is in excess of the recommendation is concerning, the sprat stock meets the Category A of MarinTrust requirements because (i) catch has only exceeded the advice by more than 10% in one of the last 6 years; (ii) SSB is well above the limit reference point; and (iii) quotas and catches have been increasingly close to the ICES advice in recent years.</p> <p>Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) pointed that the flounder stock has an average productivity score of 1.43 and an average susceptibility score of 3.00. The PSA risk rating results (Table D3) recommended a “Pass”.</p> <p>Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) pointed that the three-spined stickleback stock has an average productivity score of 1.57 and an average susceptibility score of 2.50. The PSA risk rating results (Table D3) recommended a “Pass”.</p> <p>In conclusion, the assessor recommends the approval of the herring and sprat fishery in FAO 27 – ICES Subdivisions 25-29 and 32 (excluding Gulf of Riga) for the production of fishmeal and/or fish oil under the current MarinTrust wholefish Standard v2.2.</p>

Fishery Assessment Peer Review Comments

It is a bit concerning the fail of the clause A.2.3 in the case of sprat, it is now unusual that ICES recommendations are not followed. This should be taken into account in the next assessment of the fishery. The clause is approved under Category B, next time the fishery would not pass the assessment.

This is a good and complete report under the Marin Trust standard. Except of the comment in the section above, everything else looks right in the fishery, including the case of ETP species.

Notes for On-site Auditor

N/A

Table 3 General Results

General Clause	Outcome (Pass/Fail)
M1 - Management Framework	Pass
M2 - Surveillance, Control and Enforcement	Pass
F1 - Impacts on ETP Species	Pass
F2 - Impacts on Habitats	Pass
F3 - Ecosystem Impacts	Pass

Table 4 Species- Specific Results

List all Category A and B species. List approximate total percentage (%) of landings which are Category C and D species; these do not need to be individually named here

Category	Species	% landings	Outcome (Pass/Fail)
Category A	Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	88.6	Pass
Category B	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)	10.4	Pass
Category D	Flounder (<i>Platichthys flesus</i>)	0.7	Pass
Category D	Three-spined stickleback (<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>)	0.3	Pass

Table 5 Species Categorisation Table

Common name	Latin name	Stock	IUCN Redlist Category ¹	% of landings	Management	Category
Sprat	<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>	Sprat in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea)	LC	88.6	European Commission (EC), Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia	A
Herring	<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Herring in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea)	LC	10.4	European Commission (EC), Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia	B (failed in A)
Flounder	<i>Platichthys flesus</i>	Baltic flounder in subdivisions 27 and 29–32 (northern central and northern Baltic Sea)	LC	0.7	European Commission (EC), Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia	D
Three-spined stickleback	<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>	Three-spined stickleback in FAO 27	LC	0.3	European Commission (EC), Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia	D

Species categorisation rationale

Information on the Latvian fishery for this initial assessment was sourced from STECF Fishery Dependant Information - FDI (year: 2022, the latest year available; gear type: OTM; target assemblage: SPF; sub-divisions: 25, 26, 28.2 which were all the areas fished by Latvian midwater trawl vessels within 25-29 & 32 excluding 28.1 – Gulf of Riga).

The fishery is highly selective, with catches of herring (*Clupea harengus*) and sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) accounting for about 99% of the catches. Thus, these species were assessed under Type 1 category of Marin Trust standard. The remaining species composing up to 0.1% of the catches were of flounder (*Platichthys flesus*) [~0.7%] and three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) [~0.3%], thus they were assessed under Type 2 category.

Species-specific management regimes are available for sprat and herring (ICES, 2024a, b), thus they were initially assessed under Category A. Herring failed on Category A, thus it was assessed under Category B.

No reference points for stock size have been defined for Baltic flounder (*Platichthys solemdali*) in subdivisions 27 and 29–32 (northern central and northern Baltic Sea). ICES has not been requested to provide advice on fishing opportunities for this stock in 2024 and 2025, but fishing pressure on the stock is below the FMSY proxy (ICES, 2024c). Due lack of reference points for biomass, the stock was analysed under Category D. No species-specific management regime was found for three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*); thus, this species was assessed under Category D as well.

References:

ICES. 2024a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, spr.27.22–32. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687>

ICES. 2024b. Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25-29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.25-2932. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276>

ICES. 2024c. Baltic flounder (*Platichthys solemdali*) in subdivisions 27 and 29–32 (northern central and northern Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, bwp.27.2729–32. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019189>

STECF. 2024. STECF Fishery Dependant Information. Downloads->Catches. Filters on the spreadsheet: FDI (year: 2022, the latest year available; gear type: OTM; target assemblage: SPF; sub-divisions: 25, 26, 28.2 which were all the areas fished by Latvian midwater trawl vessels within 25-29 & 32 excluding 28.1 – Gulf of Riga). https://stecf.ec.europa.eu/data-dissemination/fdi_en

¹ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

MANAGEMENT

The two clauses in this section (M1, M2) relate to the general management regime applied to the fishery under assessment. The clauses should be completed by providing sufficient evidence to justify awarding each of the requirements a pass or fail rating. A fishery must meet all the minimum requirements in every clause before it can be recommended for approval.

M1	Management Framework – Minimum Requirements		
	M1.1	There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.	Pass
	M1.2	There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.	Pass
	M1.3	Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability.	Pass
	M1.4	Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.	Pass
	M1.5	There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making.	Pass
	M1.6	The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available.	Pass
Clause outcome:			Pass
<p>M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.</p> <p>The fishery is managed within the context of the European Union (EU) Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the Latvian national system for fisheries management. At regional level, management of the fishery is based on input from the Regional Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum (BALTFISH) and the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC). Scientific advice is provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the European Commission’s Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). In 2016, the EU adopted a multiannual management plan for cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea which was updated in 2019. The plan specifies targets and harvest control rules (HCRs) for these stocks and includes management measures to ensure that the stocks of plaice, flounder, turbot, and brill caught as a bycatch in the cod, herring, and sprat fisheries are managed in accordance with CFP objectives.</p> <p>At EU level, the main management body is the EU Commission’s Director-General (DG) for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG Mare) and the main regulatory basis the 2013 CFP Basic Regulation.</p> <p>In Latvia, fisheries legislation and management is through the Fisheries Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and the State Environmental Service (SES), part of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, carries out licensing, control and inspection.</p> <p>At the international level, a binding agreement has been in place since 2009 between the EU and Russia regarding fisheries management in the Baltic Sea.</p> <p>There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery. Sub-clause M1.1 is met.</p> <p>M1.2 There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.</p> <p>In Latvia, the Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment (BIOR) is responsible for scientific assessment and advice relating to fisheries. BIOR’s mission is, “to take care of public and animal health, food and environmental quality, sustainable use of fish and other aquatic biological resources by ensuring research activities in accordance with international standards, carrying out high-quality scientific expertise and laboratory examinations, providing services internationally”. Science-based fishery management advice is provided by ICES. ICES is a network of nearly 6,000 scientists from over 700 marine institutes (including BIOR) in 20 member countries and beyond, linked by an intergovernmental agreement (the ICES Convention) to add value to national research efforts. Scientists working through ICES gather information about the marine ecosystem. Besides filling gaps in existing knowledge, this information is developed into unbiased, non-political fishery management advice.</p>			

ICES provides annual stock assessment and management advice in relation to the central Baltic herring and Baltic sprat fisheries via its Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Stock Annex Reports provide a great deal of integrated advice at ecosystem level, in support of their shift towards a more holistic approach to managing Europe's seas.

There are organizations responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery. Sub-clause M1.2 is met.

M1.3 Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability.

The CFP is the primary instrument for sustainable fisheries management. As such it looks to address impacts of fishing on target stocks as well as impacts on other ecosystem components. Implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries management has been set as one of the objectives of the CFP: "...to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimized and that aquaculture and fisheries activities avoid degradation of the marine environment." (Article 2.3 CFP Reform).

The CFP contributes to the protection of the marine environment, to the sustainable management of all commercially exploited species. Objectives of the CFP are, inter alia, to ensure that fishing and aquaculture are environmentally sustainable in the long term and to apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management.

Similarly, the objectives of the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan (MAP) as set out in Article 3, refers to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP, "in particular by applying the precautionary approach to fisheries management and shall aim to ensure that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce MSY". It further notes that, "the plan shall implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimized".

Latvia is a Member State of the European Union, and therefore in Community waters implements the CFP and the central Baltic herring and Baltic sprat fishery is operated under the Baltic Sea MAP.

Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability. Sub-clause M1.3 is met.

M1.4 Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.

Latvia is a Member State of the European Union, and therefore in Community waters is subject to and implements the CFP. Total allowable catches (TACs) are set for most commercial fish stocks by the EU for member states following consultation with Council and Parliament. The EU prepares regulations, based on scientific advice from the advisory bodies ICES and Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries - STECF. TACs are then set annually by the European Council. Some multi-annual plans (as in the case of the Baltic MAP for central Baltic herring and Baltic sprat) contain rules for the setting of TACs which are then shared between EU countries in the form of national quotas. For each stock, a different allocation percentage per EU country is applied for the sharing out of the quotas. This fixed percentage is known as the relative stability key.

EU countries have to use transparent and objective criteria when distributing the national quota among their fishermen. They are responsible for ensuring that the quotas are not overfished. When all the available quota of a species is fished, by national law, the EU country has to close the fishery.

In Latvia, "Fishing Law" (12.04.1995 as amended) sets the basis for fisheries legislation and institutions responsible for fisheries management and control, as well as rules on fish resources management.

Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions. Sub-clause M1.4 is met.

M1.5 There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making.

The EU receives scientific advice on EU fisheries from its Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). STECF is composed of independent scientists and experts representing a broad range of opinion and is systematically

consulted before any proposals are drafted. On biological issues, STECF depends to a great extent on advice from ICES for areas including the Baltic.

Advice provided by ICES includes stock assessments and deeper analysis on which the Commission bases both its annual recommendations for setting TACs and quotas, and more long-term proposals on how fisheries in European waters can be managed sustainably. Increasingly ICES also provides a great deal of integrated advice at ecosystem level, in support of the shift towards a more holistic approach to managing Europe's seas.

The BSAC is a stakeholder-led organization, established in 2006, which provides advice on the management of Baltic fisheries to the European Commission and member states and consists of organisations representing fisheries and other interest groups affected by the CFP (e.g., environmental, organisations, and sports and recreational fisheries organisations). Following CFP reform, a new regulation was adopted at the end of 2013 in which the role and function of Advisory Councils has been included - Advisory Councils are consulted in the context of regionalisation and should also contribute to data for fisheries management and conservation measures. There is evidence of this, in the form of consultation responses and advice provided to the European Commission and others, on the BSAC website.

There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making. Sub-clause M1.5 is met.

M1.6 The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available.

ICES provide annual stock assessment and management advice in relation to central Baltic herring and Baltic sprat via its Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). The advice is published annually on the ICES website. Quotas for the EU fleet in the assessment area are published annually in the Baltic Sea Fishing Opportunities Regulation.

The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available. Sub-clause M1.6 is met.

References

Advisory Councils

<https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/partners/advisory-councils/>

Baltic Sea Advisory Council

<http://www.bsac.dk/>

BIOR Institute

<https://www.bior.lv/lv/par-bior/par-mums>

BSAC statements and recommendations

<http://www.bsac.dk/BSAC-Resources/BSAC-Statements-and-recommendations>

Baltic Sea Multi-annual Plan (MAP)

https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/multi_annual_plans_en

Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/1575 of 23 June 2017 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242 laying down detailed rules on the functioning of the Advisory Councils under the common fisheries policy https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2017/1575/oj

EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) overview

<https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/>

Latvian Ministry of Agriculture

<https://www.zm.gov.lv/zivsaimnieciba/statiskas-lapas/zvejnieciba?nid=699#jump>

Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

<https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/>

Fisheries control authorities in the Baltic Sea area

https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/control/who_does_what/baltic_sea_authorities_en

Fishing Opportunities Regulations

https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/tacs_en

ICES – who we are

<https://www.ices.dk/about-ICES/who-we-are/Pages/Who-we-are.aspx>

ICES latest advice on Baltic sprat:

ICES. 2024a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024.

ICES Advice 2024, spr.27.22–32. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687>

ICES latest advice on Baltic herring:
 ICES. 2024b. Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25-29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.25-2932. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276>
 STECF home page
<https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>
 The State Environmental Service (SES), Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Republic of Latvia
<https://www.vvd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.1.1, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	7.2, 7.3.1, 7.4.4, 12.3
GSSI	D.1.01, D.4.01, D2.01, D1.07, D1.04,

M2	Surveillance, Control and Enforcement - Minimum Requirements		
	M2.1	There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations.	Pass
	M2.2	There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when laws and regulations are discovered to have been broken.	Pass
	M2.3	There is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing.	Pass
	M2.4	Compliance with laws and regulations is actively monitored, through a regime which may include at-sea and portside inspections, observer programmes, and VMS.	Pass

Clause outcome: Pass

M2.1 There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations.

Each Member State maintains an official website on fishery related control and reporting issues, which are of benefit to the Commission, other Member States and the masters of fishing vessels.

National websites contain inter alia information on:

- Description of control services and the resources available;
- National control action programmes;
- Fishing effort limitation schemes;
- Contact details for the submission of logbooks and landing declarations when landing in that Member State;
- Lists of designated ports for landing of certain species and addresses for fulfilling notification requirements.

Member States must apply effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions against natural or legal persons engaged in IUU or other illegal activities.

The State Environmental Service (SES), part of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, carries out fishing controls in marine waters under Latvian jurisdiction.

The European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) mission is to promote the highest common standards for control, inspection and surveillance under the CFP. Its primary role is to organise coordination and cooperation between national control and inspection activities so that the rules of the CFP are respected and applied effectively.

Joint Deployment Plans (JDP's) are established for fisheries/areas considered a priority by the Commission and the Member States concerned. They can refer either to European Union waters for which a Specific Control and Inspection Programme (SCIP) has been adopted or to international waters under the competence of a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO), where EFCA is requested to coordinate the implementation of the European obligations under an International Control and Inspection Scheme.

There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations. Sub-clause 2.1 is met.

M2.2 There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when laws and regulations are discovered to have been broken.

To ensure that fishing rules are applied in the same way in all member countries, and to harmonise the way infringements are sanctioned, the EU has established a list of serious infringements of the rules of the common fisheries policy. EU countries must include in their legislation effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions, and ensure that the rules are respected. A maximum sanction of at least five times the value of fishery products obtained is provided for with regard to the committing of the said infringement.

Since 2012, EU countries have been required to have a point system for serious infringements. Under the scheme, National Authorities are obliged to:

- Assess alleged infringements involving vessels registered under its flag, using standard EU definitions;
- Impose a pre-set number of penalty points on vessels involved in serious infringements (points are recorded in the national registry of fisheries offences);
- Suspend the vessel’s license for 2, 4, 8 or 12 months when a pre-set number of points have been accumulated in a 3- year period.

The State Environmental Service (SES), part of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, carries out fishing controls in marine waters under Latvian jurisdiction. A Latvian Administrative Penalty Code exists and is applied for violations of fishing rules. Where repeated violation of fishing regulations occurs or fishing occurs without authorization fines range from 700€ up to 14,000€, gear can be confiscated and fishing licenses suspended for up to three years.

There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when laws and regulations are discovered to have been broken. Sub-clause M2.2 is met.

M2.3 There is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing.

The Joint Deployment Plans (JDP’s) undertaken in 2020 in the Baltic involved competent authorities for fisheries control and protection vessels from Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden (Member States). The last publications of the JDP’s were a full annual report covering data from 2022 plus two quarterly reports for 2023. The most recent of these, covering Q2 2023, indicates that from January to June 2023 there were 1,612 inspections carried out ashore and 559 inspections at sea of the Members States in the Baltic Sea. During the reporting period there were 390 sightings at sea and 250 sightings from aircrafts reported including 70 sightings that were performed by the EFCA fixed wing aircraft. As a result of these activities a total of 64 infringements were detected, of which the majority were related to “Noncompliance with the recording and reporting obligations”. Thus, infringements were detected in about 2,6% of the inspections only.

Therefore, there is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing. Sub-clause M2.3 is met.

M2.4 Compliance with laws and regulations is actively monitored, through a regime which may include at-sea and portside inspections, observer programmes, and VMS.

In practice, CFP control as carried out by the Member States' control authorities in the Baltic Sea can be broken down into three broad areas: conservation, structures, and markets:

- Conservation measures cover issues such as quota management or the implementation of technical measures (e.g., mesh sizes). Inspections are used to ensure that the fishing gear on board vessels meets official norms and that the information entered in logbooks;

- Structural policy plays a key role in the search for a balance between the fishing capacity of Member States, the fishing effort actually deployed, and the available fish resources. Checks are therefore necessary to establish that allocated days-at-sea have not been exceeded;
- Finally, national inspections are not limited to the catching sector, but also include all operations from landing and marketing to storage and transportation. Operators must, at all times, be in possession of proper documentation detailing the origin, nature, quantity and quality of fish involved in transactions, so that it can be cross-checked with data in logbooks and from other sources, such as fish auctions.

As with the application of sanctions, bodies responsible for control and enforcement are set up by individual EU states.

The State Environmental Service (SES), part of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, carries out fishing controls in marine waters under Latvian jurisdiction. These organisations work with colleagues from other EU Member States to implement the Baltic Sea Joint Deployment Plan. According to MSC (2018), monitoring and inspections in the sprat/herring fishery focus on controlling that the quota allocated to each company is not exceeded, and in verifying total landings estimates. Inspections are decided based on a three-level risk assignment system where risks are updated monthly. Risk levels are determined using the following criteria: (1) gear type; (2) is the fisherman also a first buyer; (3) is the fisherman also a producer of fish products; (4) penalty points. MSC (2021) stated the Latvian Administrative Penalty Code is applied rigorously and that SES work closely with the EFCA.

Compliance with laws and regulations is actively monitored, through a regime which may include at-sea and portside inspections, observer programmes, and VMS. Sub-clause M2.4 is met.

References

European Fisheries Control Agency
<https://www.efca.europa.eu/en/content/objectives-and-strategy>
 EFCA Joint Deployment Plan Baltic Sea January-December 2020.
<https://www.efca.europa.eu/en/content/reports-2020>
 EU's Fisheries Control System
<https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/control/>
 Fisheries control authorities in the Baltic Sea area
https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/control/who_does_what/baltic_sea_authorities/
 The State Environmental Service (SES), Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Republic of Latvia
<https://www.vvd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums>
 EFCA Baltic Sea JDF report, Q2 2023. https://www.efca.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-10/6M-report_BS_Q2_WEB_0.pdf
 MSC. 2019. LFPO Pelagic Trawl Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*). 2nd Surveillance Report. <https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/lfpo-pelagic-trawl-sprat-sprattus-sprattus/@@assessments>
 MSC. 2021. LFPO Pelagic Trawl Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*). 4th Surveillance Report. <https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/lfpo-pelagic-trawl-sprat-sprattus-sprattus/@@assessments>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.1.3
FAO CCRF	7.7.2
GSSI	D1.09

CATEGORY A SPECIES

The four clauses in this section apply to Category A species. Clauses A1 - A4 should be completed for **each** Category A species. If there are no Category A species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted. A Category A species must meet the minimum requirements of all four clauses before it can be recommended for approval. The clauses should be completed by providing sufficient evidence to justify awarding each of the requirements a pass or fail rating. The species must achieve a pass rating against all requirements to be awarded a pass overall. **If the species fails any of these clauses it should be re-assessed as a Category B species.**

Species Name		Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	
A1	Data Collection - Minimum Requirements		
	A1.1	Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.	Pass
	A1.2	Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.	Pass
Clause outcome:			Pass

A1.1 Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.

The EU Fisheries Control System, through the Fisheries Control Regulation (EC Regulation No 1224/2009) requires that data on catches (target species and bycatch) are recorded in logbooks by vessel captains and transmitted to the competent authority of each member state who then provide it to the Commission. These landings data are used in the stock assessment undertaken by ICES and published in their advice. According to ICES (2024a), catches in 2025 that correspond to the F ranges in the plan are between 130,195 tonnes and 169,131 tonnes.

Catches

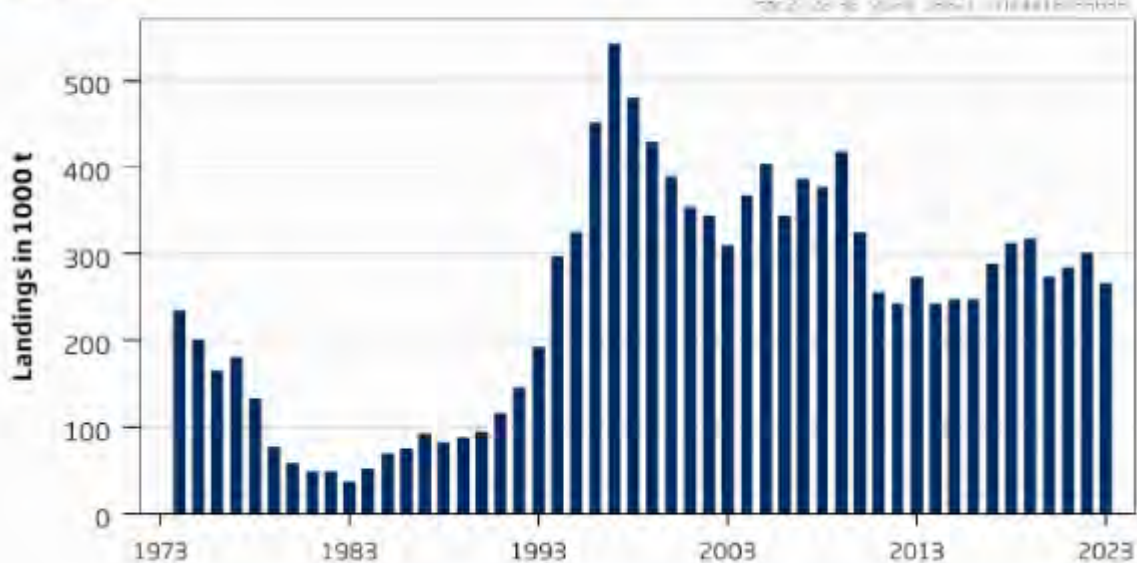


Figure 1. Landings of sprat in subdivisions 22–32 (ICES, 2024a).

Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known. Sub-clause A1.1 is met.

A1.2 Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.

In addition to commercial catch data, the stock assessment carried out annually by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS) uses two acoustic survey indices (the Baltic Acoustic Spring Survey (BASS) and the Baltic International Acoustic Survey (BIAS)) and natural mortalities from multispecies model (SMS) until 2021. Mortality (M) in 2022 and 2023 was assumed

equal to SMS estimate of M for 2021, fixed maturity ogive. Catches for Russian Federation since 2022 are taken from AtlantNIRO (2023) and the Russian Federation (ICES, 2024a). The model assumes discards and bycatch are negligible. The 2025 catch advice includes a section covering the quality of the assessment, which notes that misreporting of herring and sprat is an ongoing problem which is challenging to quantify, and which introduces an unquantifiable level of uncertainty into the assessment. However, efforts are underway to estimate the levels of misreporting (ICES 2024a).

Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated. Sub-clause A1.2 is met.

References

ICES. 2024a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, spr.27.22–32. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.1, 1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	7.3.1, 12.3
GSSI	D.4.01, D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A2 Stock Assessment - Minimum Requirements		
A2.1	A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.	Pass
A2.2	The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.	Pass
A2.3	The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.	Pass
A2.4	The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.	Pass
A2.5	The assessment is made publicly available.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Pass

A2.1 A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.

Sprat in the Baltic Sea is subjected to an annual stock assessment carried out by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). The most recent assessment was conducted in 2024 using the data sources listed in A1.2, above. This included all international landings including removals by the Russian fleet (ICES 2024a).

An annual stock assessment is conducted. Sub-clause A2.1 is met.

A2.2 The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.

The WGBFAS stock assessment provides an indication of the status of the stock relative to target and limit reference points. These reference points were updated in 2023 as a result of a full benchmarking of the stock (ICES 2023a). The new reference points are listed in the table below; key amongst these for the purpose of this MarinTrust assessment are the management plan target reference point (MAP MSY Btrigger = 541,000t) and limit reference point (MAP Blim = 459,000t) (ICES 2024a).

Table 1. Sprat in Subdivisions 22-32, reference points, values, and their technical basis. Weights in tonnes (ICES 2024a).

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
MSY approach	MSY $B_{trigger}$	541 000	B_{pa}	ICES (2023a)
	F_{MSY}	0.34	Stochastic simulations with Beverton–Holt and segmented regression stock-recruitment model	ICES (2023a)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	459 000	Biomass that produces half of the maximal recruitment in the Beverton–Holt stock-recruitment relationship	ICES (2023a)
	B_{pa}	541 000	$B_{lim} \times \exp(1.645 \times \sigma)$, where $\sigma = 0.1$	ICES (2023a)
	F_{lim}	0.58	Consistent with B_{lim}	ICES (2023a)
	F_{pa}	0.35	F_{p05} ; the F that leads to $SSB \geq B_{lim}$ with 95% probability	ICES (2023a)
Management plan	MAP MSY $B_{trigger}$	541 000	MSY $B_{trigger}$	ICES (2023a)
	MAP B_{lim}	459 000	B_{lim}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP F_{MSY}	0.34	F_{MSY}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F_{lower}	0.26–0.34	Consistent with the ranges that result in a $\leq 5\%$ reduction in long-term yield compared with MSY	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F_{upper}	0.34–0.35	Consistent with the ranges that result in a $\leq 5\%$ reduction in long-term yield compared with MSY, constrained by F_{p05}	ICES (2023a)

The 2025 catch advice stated that fishing pressure on the stock is above F_{MSY} and between F_{pa} and F_{lim} and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} (ICES 2024a).

Table 2. Sprat in subdivisions 22–32. Values in the forecast and for the interim year.

Variable	Value	Notes
$F_{ages\ 3-5}$ (2024)	0.42	Based on a catch of 245 200 tonnes
SSB (2024)	692126	Short-term forecast; SSB is predicted at spawning time; tonnes
$R_{age\ 1}$ (2024)	13566	SAM assessment; millions
$R_{age\ 1}$ (2025–2026)	84897	Median recruitment, resampled from the years 1991–2023; millions
Total catch (2024)	245200	Catch constraint (245 200 t = EU quota of 201 000 t + Russian Federation quota of 44 200 t); tonnes

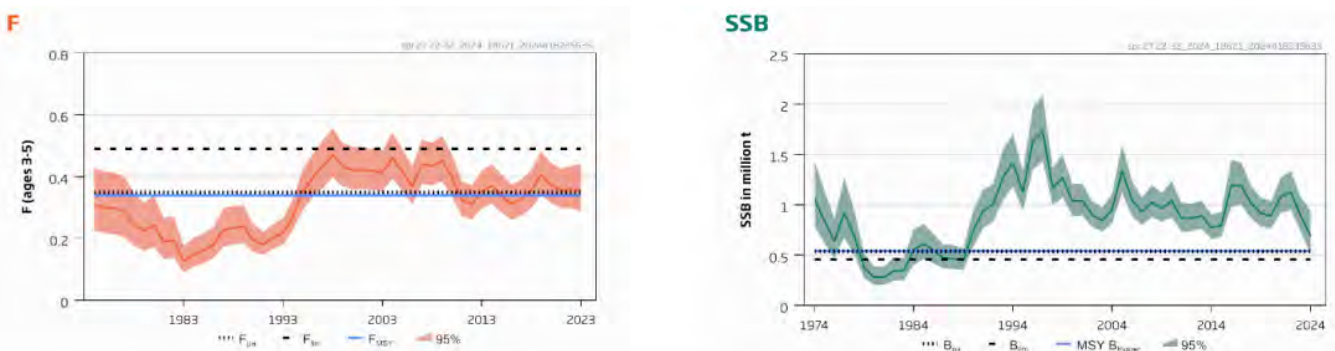


Figure 2. Reference points and estimated fishing pressure and spawning biomass relative to current reference points of sprat in Subdivisions 22-32 (ICES 2024a).

The assessment provides an indication of stock status relative to reference points. Sub-clause A2.2 is met.

A2.3 The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.

As noted above commercial catches are used in the assessment of stock status. ICES have raised a number of issues relevant to the assessment of fishery removals:

ICES has been stating for several years that pelagic fisheries take a mixture of herring and sprat and this causes uncertainties in catch levels. The extent to which species misreporting has occurred is however not well known. Analysis of a questionnaire answered by all Baltic countries during 2012 revealed that misreporting is mainly an issue of the industrial trawl fishery targeting sprat-herring mix in nearshore waters. Countries with major proportions of sprat catches used for industrial purposes are Sweden, Poland, and Denmark. Countries with major proportions of herring catches used for industrial purposes are Finland and Sweden. The official catch figures of both sprat and herring are modified by Poland and Denmark, but not currently in Sweden. A worst-case scenario using the permitted margin of tolerance of 10% in the logbooks of the quantities by species on board (EU 1224/2009) revealed that sprat catches may be underestimated by 5% and that herring catches may be underestimated by 4%. It was, therefore, concluded at the time after the questionnaire that that species misreporting could be regarded as minor importance. However, there is not currently any correction for the misreporting and preliminary analyses by Sweden which suggests that the misreporting of sprat and herring is significantly more than 5% and 4%, respectively. This issue needs to be investigated as soon as possible and when data available addressed in a benchmark. Significant misreporting can potentially be a large problem with regards to the perception of these stocks (ICES 2020a).

Catches

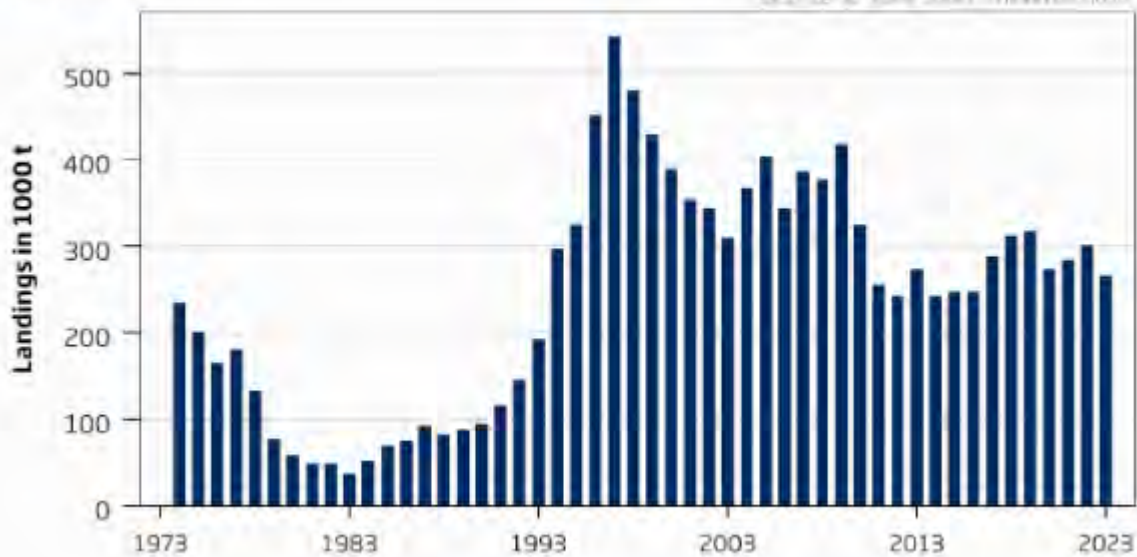


Figure 3. Catches of sprat in Subdivisions 22-32 (ICES 2024a).

Nonetheless, the assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status. Sub-clause A2.3 is met.

A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.

The assessment of Baltic sprat is conducted annually at the ICES WGBFAS (ICES 2023b), where fisheries scientists from about nine European fisheries laboratories participate. The assessment is presented and reviewed at the meeting and must meet ICES standards to be accepted. If the assessment is agreed, it is subsequently reviewed by the ICES Advice Drafting Group which consists of National Experts and, finally, by the Advisory Committee (ACOM) which delivers the ICES advice.

A group of external experts participate every few years in the benchmark process to provide a review of the assessment. The most recent meeting was for a benchmark in April 2023 (ICES 2023a).

The assessment is subject to internal and external peer-review. Sub-clause A2.4 is met.

A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.

ICES operates a transparent assessment framework (TAF), an online open resource of annual ICES stock assessments. All data input and output are fully traceable and versioned. The open framework enables anyone to easily find, reference, download, and run the assessment from any stage in the process leading to published ICES advice for a given stock.

The assessment is made publicly available. Sub-clause A2.5 is met.

References

ICES, 2020a. Inter-Benchmark Process on Baltic Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) and Herring (*Clupea harengus*) (IBPBash). ICES Scientific Reports, 2:34. 44 pp. <http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5971>
 ICES. 2024a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, spr.27.22–32. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687>
 ICES. 2023a. Benchmark Workshop on Baltic Pelagic stocks (WKBBALTPEL). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:47. 350 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23216492>
 ICES. 2023b. Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:58. 607 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23123768>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	12.3
GSSI	D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A3	Harvest Strategy - Minimum Requirements		
	A3.1	There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.	Pass
	A3.2	Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.	Pass
	A3.3	Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).	Pass

Clause outcome: Pass

A3.1 There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.

Total fishing mortality is restricted through the implementation of catch quotas. In EU waters a TAC is set and is generally based on the ICES advice which, in turn, is guided by the EU Baltic Sea MAP (Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 as amended). Total removals by the Russian fleet are restricted by a Russian autonomous quota.

There is a mechanism in place to restrict total fishing mortality. Sub-clause A3.1 is met.

A3.2 Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.

Since 2018, ICES has provided a range of potential catch recommendations to reflect the specifics of the Baltic Sea MAP. The total international quota – i.e., the sum of the EU TAC and the Russian autonomous quota – is generally within the boundaries of the ICES advice, although it exceeded the upper boundary of the advice by a small amount in 2018 and 2019, and by a larger amount in 2020. Total catch estimates also exceeded the upper boundary of the advice in these three years, by around 3% (2018), 2% (2019), and 17% (2020).

There is an issue in this fishery with total international quota being set above the ICES advice. However, the assessor considers A3.2 to be met for the following key reasons:

- Catch has only exceeded the advice by more than 10% in one of the past 6 years, since advice has been based on the MAP;
- In years when catch has exceeded the advice by less than 10%, and in all other recent years, SSB has been estimated to be well above the limit reference point;
- Quotas and total catches have been trending towards the centre of the ICES catch advice range and have been relatively close to the centre of the range since 2021.

Table 3. Sprat in Subdivisions 22-32, ICES advice, agreed TAC and ICES estimates of total catch (ICES 2024a).

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Agreed TAC	ICES catch
2006	Agreed management plan	439 000	468 000	344 500
2007	$< F_{pa}$	$< 477\ 000$	454 000*	386 900
2008	$< F_{pa}$	$< 432\ 000$	454 000*	376 600
2009	$< F_{pa}$	$< 291\ 000$	399 000*	404 400
2010	$< F_{pa}$	$< 306\ 000$	380 000*	340 900
2011	$< F_{pa}$	$< 242\ 000$	322 700**	267 600
2012	MSY transition scheme	$< 242\ 000$	255 100**	243 000
2013	$F < F_{MSY}$	$< 278\ 000$	278 000**	273 100
2014	MSY approach	$< 247\ 000$	267 900**	242 100
2015	MSY approach	$< 222\ 000$	240 200**	247 300
2016	MSY approach ($F = 0.26$)	$\leq 205\ 000$	243 000**	247 200
2017	MSY approach ($F = 0.26$)	$\leq 314\ 000$	303 593**	288 500
2018	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.19–0.27), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.26$ only under conditions specified in MAP	219 152–301 722, but catch higher than 291 715 only under conditions specified in MAP	304 900**	312 188
2019	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.19–0.27), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.26$ only under conditions specified in MAP	225 752–311 523, but catch higher than 301 125 only under conditions specified in MAP	313 100**	317 650
2020	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.19–0.27), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.26$ only under conditions specified in MAP	169 965–233 704, but catch higher than 225 786 only under conditions specified in MAP	256 700**	274 060
2021	Management plan	247 952 (range 181 567–316 833)	268 458**	284 890
2022	Management plan	291 745 (range 214 000–373 210)	295 300**	300 788 ^{^, §}
2023	Management plan	249 237 (range 183 749–317 905)	269 200**	265 900 [^]
2024	Management plan	241 604 (range 191 075–247 704)	245 200**	
2025	Management plan	164 947 (range 130 195 – 169 131)		

* EU autonomous quota and does not include Russian Federation catches.

** TAC is calculated as EU + Russian Federation autonomous quotas.

[^] Russian Federation landings were not officially reported to ICES, but an estimate is included.

[§] Russian Federation landings were updated in 2024 by the Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS).

Total fishery removals do not regularly exceed the range of catch recommendations provided by ICES. Sub-clause A3.2 is met.

A3.3 Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).

The MAP requires that fishing opportunities are fixed in such a way that there is a less than 5% probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below Blim. According to Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, when scientific advice indicates that the spawning stock biomass of the stock is below Blim, further remedial measures shall be taken to ensure rapid return of the stock to levels above the level capable of producing MSY. Those remedial measures may include suspending the targeted fishery for the stock and the adequate reduction of fishing opportunities. According to the MAP, catches higher than those corresponding to FMSY can only be taken under conditions specified in the plan, whilst the entire range is considered precautionary when applying ICES advice rule (ICES, 2024a).

Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy. Sub-clause A.3.3 is met.

References

ICES. 2024a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, spr.27.22–32. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687>
 Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R1139>

Standard clause 1.3.2.1.3

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.3, 1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.22 (e), 7.5.3
GSSI	D3.04, D6.01

A4	Stock Status - Minimum Requirements	
	A4.1	The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT: The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT: The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.
		Clause outcome: Pass
<p>A4.1 The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT:</p> <p>The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT:</p> <p>The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.</p> <p>The most recent ICES catch advice states that “Spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger, Bpa, and Blim” (ICES 2024a).</p>		

Therefore, the stock is at or above the target reference point. Sub-clause A4.1 is met.

References

ICES. 2024a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, spr.27.22–32. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.2.2 (e)
GSSI	D6 01

CATEGORY A SPECIES

The four clauses in this section apply to Category A species. Clauses A1 - A4 should be completed for **each** Category A species. If there are no Category A species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted. A Category A species must meet the minimum requirements of all four clauses before it can be recommended for approval. The clauses should be completed by providing sufficient evidence to justify awarding each of the requirements a pass or fail rating. The species must achieve a pass rating against all requirements to be awarded a pass overall. **If the species fails any of these clauses it should be re-assessed as a Category B species.**

Species Name		Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)	
A1	Data Collection - Minimum Requirements		
	A1.1	Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.	Pass
	A1.2	Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.	Pass
Clause outcome:			Pass

A1.1 Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.

The EU Fisheries Control System, through the Fisheries Control Regulation (EC Regulation No 1224/2009) requires that data on catches (target species and bycatch) are recorded in logbooks by vessel captains and transmitted to the competent authority of each member state who then provide it to the Commission. These landings data are used in the stock assessment undertaken by ICES and published in their advice. ICES advises that when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for the Baltic Sea is applied, catches in 2025 that correspond to the F ranges in the plan are between 95,340 (corresponding to FMSY lower × SSB2025 /MSY Btrigger) and 125,344 tonnes (corresponding to FMSY × SSB 2025/MSY Btrigger) [ICES,2024b].

Catches

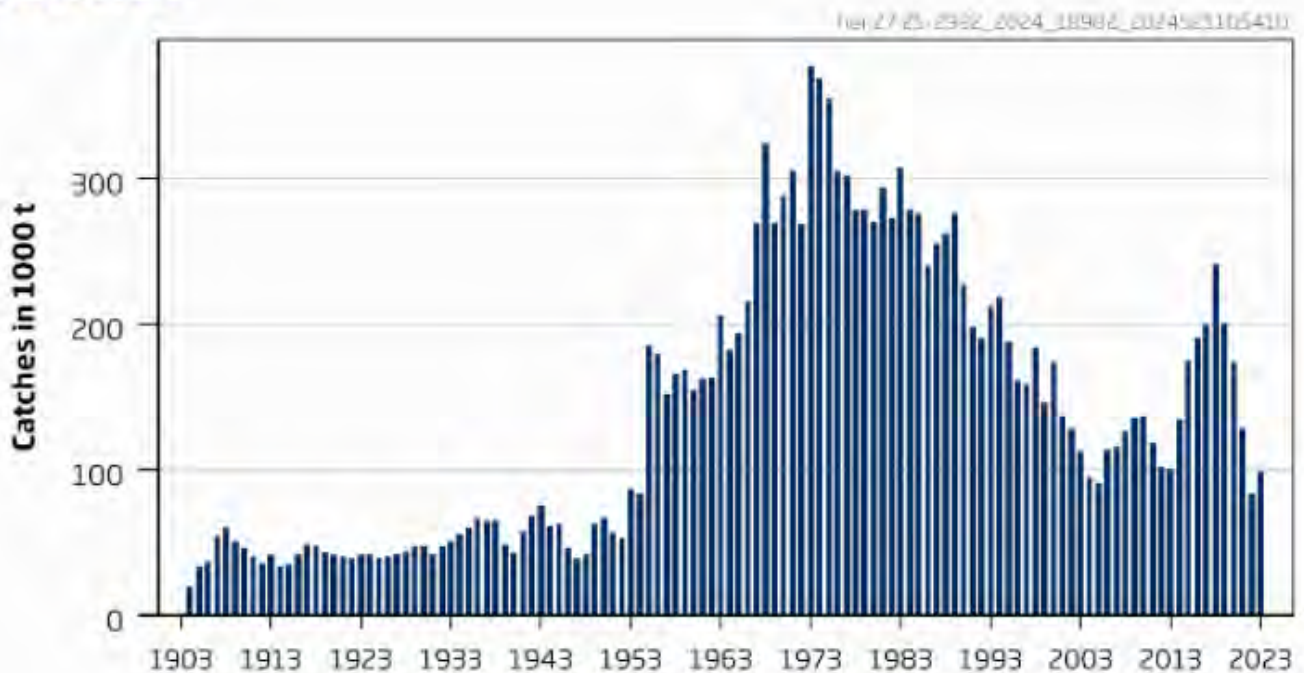


Figure 4. Catches of herring in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (ICES, 2024b).

Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known. Sub-clause A1.1 is met.

A1.2 Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.

In addition to commercial catch data, the stock assessment carried out annually by the ICES WGBFAS uses one acoustic survey indices (BIAS); and natural mortalities from the ICES multispecies model (SMS) until 2021, 2022 and 2023 = 2021. Catches for the Russian Federation in 2022 and 2023 are taken from Russian Federation (2024) [ICES, 2024b]. The model assumes discards and bycatch are negligible. The 2024 catch advice includes a section covering the quality of the assessment, which notes that misreporting of herring and sprat is an ongoing problem which is challenging to quantify, and which introduces an unquantifiable level of uncertainty into the assessment. However, efforts are underway to estimate the levels of misreporting (ICES 2024b).

Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated. Sub-clause A1.2 is met.

References

ICES. 2024b. Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25-29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.25-2932. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.1, 1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	7.3.1, 12.3
GSSI	D.4.01, D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A2 Stock Assessment - Minimum Requirements		
A2.1	A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.	Pass
A2.2	The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.	Pass
A2.3	The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.	Fail
A2.4	The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.	Pass
A2.5	The assessment is made publicly available.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Fail

A2.1 A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.

Herring in the Central Baltic Sea is subjected to an annual stock assessment carried out by the ICES WGBFAS. The most recent assessment was conducted in 2024 using the data sources listed in A1.2, above. This included all international landings including removals by the Russian fleet (ICES 2024b).

An annual stock assessment is conducted. Sub-clause A2.1 is met.

A2.2 The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.

The WGBFAS stock assessment provides an indication of the status of the stock relative to target and limit reference points. Prior to 2023, reference points were expressed as absolute values (MAP MSY Btrigger= 460,000 and MAP Blim= 330,000) [ICES, 2022a]. MAP MSY Btrigger used to be calculated considering 1.4 Blim, while MAP Blim was calculated using the lowest SSB that has resulted in above-average recruitment, i.e. year 2002 (the SSB in 2002 happens to correspond to B loss). However, these reference points were updated in 2023, as a result of a full benchmarking of the stock. Management strategy evaluations (MSE), a method previously used for one of the Northern shrimp's stocks in ICES (pra.27.3a4a) is used now and there was and there was a change of the assessment model, from XSA to stock synthesis (SS3) [ICES 2023a]. The new reference points are listed in the

Table 6 below. MAP MSY B_{trigger} is set at B_{30%} (i.e. 30% of the estimated unexploited biomass) and MAP Blim is set at 0.15*B₀ (i.e. 15% of the estimated unexploited biomass) now.

Table 6. Herring in Subdivisions 25-29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga. Reference points, values, and their technical basis (ICES 2024b).

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
MSY approach	MSY B _{trigger}	B _{30%}	Relative value. Set at 30% of B ₀ *. Determined through management strategy evaluation with the objective to achieve high sustainable yields without exceeding a 5% probability of SSB falling below B _{lim} in any single year.	ICES (2023a)
	F _{MSY}	F _{B30%}	Relative value. Set as the F which will achieve 30% of B ₀ . Determined through management strategy evaluation with the objective to achieve high sustainable yields without exceeding a 5% probability of SSB falling below B _{lim} in any single year.	ICES (2023a)
Precautionary approach	B _{lim}	0.15 × B ₀	Relative value. Set at 15% of B ₀ .	ICES (2023b)
	B _{pa} =MSY B _{trigger}	B _{30%}	Relative value. Set at 30% of B ₀ . Determined through management strategy evaluation with the objective to achieve high sustainable yields without exceeding a 5% probability of SSB falling below B _{lim} in any single year.	ICES (2023a)
	F _{pa}	F _{B25%**} = F _{MSY} *1.21	F _{P05} . Relative value. Determined through management strategy evaluation. The F that leads to SSB ≥ B _{lim} with 95% probability.	ICES (2023a)
Management plan	MAP MSY B _{trigger}	B _{30%}	MSY B _{trigger}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP B _{lim}	0.15 × B ₀	B _{lim}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP F _{MSY}	F _{B30%}	F _{MSY}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F _{lower}	F _{B40%} = F _{MSY} *0.75	Relative value. Determined through management strategy evaluation, consistent with the ranges that result in no more than a 5% reduction in long-term yield compared to MSY.	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F _{upper}	F _{B25%**} = F _{MSY} *1.21	Relative value. Determined through management strategy evaluation, consistent with the ranges that result in no more than a 5% reduction in long-term yield compared to MSY. Capped to F _{P05} .	ICES (2023a)

* B₀ is the estimated unexploited spawning biomass at current conditions (average biological parameters for the last 10 years).

** Determined from the management strategy evaluation. To be precautionary, this reference point can only be used with the MSY B_{trigger}.

The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy. Sub-clause A.2.2 is met.

A2.3. The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.

The MAP agreed in 2016 was based on scientific, technical, and economic advice and contains objectives, quantifiable targets with clear time frames, conservation reference points and safeguards which work together towards achieving stock management objectives. However, since its adoption in 2016, three of the seven stocks managed by the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan have crashed (western Baltic spring spawning herring, eastern Baltic cod, and western Baltic cod) in the sense that ICES has in essentially advised that the targeted fishery be closed (Baltic Sea Centre 2023a). With the new benchmark established in 2023, it was possible to observe that the herring stock is also in a poor situation, and its biomass has been fluctuating around Blim since 1994 (Figure 5).

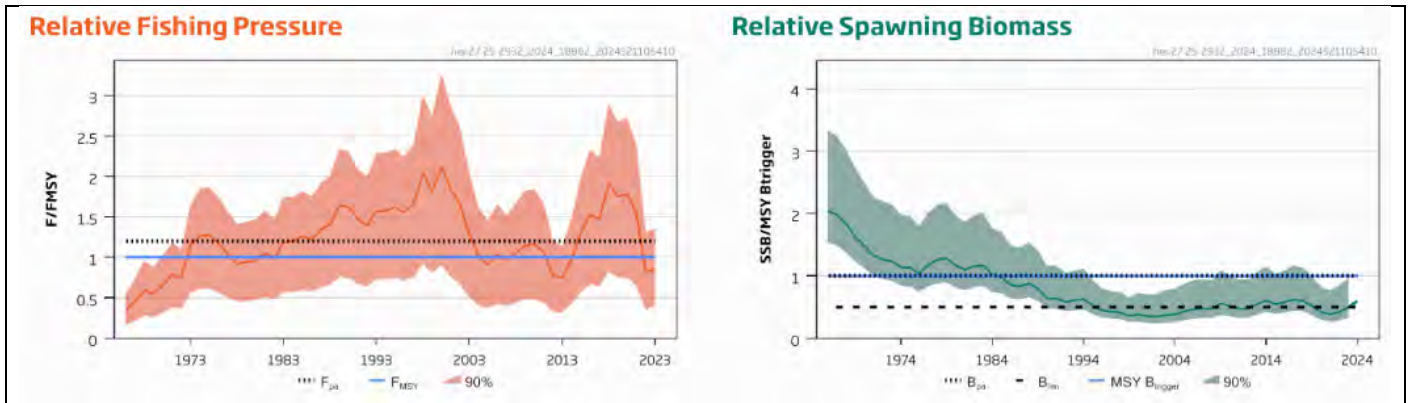


Figure 5. Reference points and estimated relative fishing pressure and spawning biomass relative to current reference points of herring stock in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (ICES 2024b).

According to the advice on fishing opportunities published in March 2023 (ICES 2023c):

“The advice rule leads to catch advice corresponding to a fishing mortality of:

- 1) $F = F_{MSY}$ when SSB is at or above $MSY\ B_{trigger}$
- 2) $F = F_{MSY} \times SSB/MSY\ B_{trigger}$ when the stock is below $MSY\ B_{trigger}$ and above B_{lim}
- 3) If the F following from applying rule 2 is insufficient to bring the stock above B_{lim} in the short term, ICES advice will be based on bringing the stock above B_{lim} at the end of the projection year with a 50% probability. If there is no F that will bring the stock above B_{lim} at the end of the projection year or when the forecast is highly sensitive to assumptions (e.g. incoming recruitment), ICES will advise zero catch based on precautionary considerations until the SSB is above B_{lim} with high probability.

Conceptually, SSB in the advice rule is the estimated spawning-stock size at the beginning of the year to which the advice applies (advice year), or at spawning time in the year before the advice year. For example, for an assessment performed in 2020 using data through 2019, the reference spawning-stock size for most stocks will be the projected size at the beginning of 2021.”

In the ICES report of this stock published in June 2023, the advice rule 2 was used even with the biomass of the herring being found below B_{lim} . There was a 69-71% probability of bringing the stock above B_{lim} by 2025 considering the F range catch advice given in the report of 41,706 - and 52,549t (ICES 2023d). The report explained that this probability related to the short-term probability of $SSB < B_{lim}$ and $MSY\ B_{trigger}$ and was not comparable to the long-term probability of $SSB < B_{lim}$ and $MSY\ B_{trigger}$ tested in simulations when estimating fishing mortality reference points. However, the same report stated that even a zero catch in 2024 would not bring the stock above B_{lim} in 2025 with 95% probability.

In 2024, ICES released a report and claimed that: “In last year’s assessment, the 2022 year class was underestimated. This, in addition to an increase in weight-at-age in 2023, has led to an upward revision of the SSB ” (ICES 2024b). However, the same report stated that “ B_{pa} and $MSY\ B_{trigger}$ cannot be achieved in 2026, even with zero catch in 2025” and even so, it calculates a 95.1-96.6% probability of bringing the stock above B_{lim} by 2026 considering the F range catch advice given in the report of 95,340 – 125,344, which is more than double of the recommendation from the previous year. The rule 2 was used again, but this time the biomass was considered above B_{lim} , thus it was in line with the expected for applying this rule.

There were debates regarding the closure of this fishery in 2023 considering potential socio-economic implications of such measure and the interpretation of the article 4.7 – the so-called 5% rule of the MAP, which says: “Fishing opportunities shall in any event be fixed in such a way as to ensure that there is less than a 5% probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below B_{lim} .” In early 2023, European Commission proposed that herring fishing in the central Baltic Sea should be stopped in the following year considering this article of MAP. However, European Union fisheries ministers decided otherwise and voted to continue fishing for herring following year (Baltic Sea Centre 2023b). In early December 2023, the European Commission proposed to modify the MAP and explained that MAP refers to the possibility, and not the obligation, to suspend the targeted fishery and that remedial measures could be taken instead (European Commission 2023). The European Parliament rejected a

request for an emergency procedure on this matter (EAA 2024). The measure in place in 2023 was to cut TAC recommendation by nearly half, even though it was concluded that a zero catch in 2024 would not rebuild the stock in the long-term. The European Commission proposed to stop all directed herring fishing in the central Baltic Sea, however the proposal was rejected by the Council of Ministers, which decided to apply a 43% cut in the TAC regarding the last year (Consilium 2023).

Ministers agreed on new spawning closures in 2024, which included stopping herring fishing in the Baltic Sea proper in various sea areas during April and May. However, this makes them ineffective, according to Stockholm University's Baltic Sea Centre's analysis of commercial fishing logbook data from the last decade (2011-2022). In the last decade, 58% of the catches have been usually taken during January-March, while 23% is taken during October-December (Su 2024a). Baltic Sea Centre's fisheries scientists, Sara Söderström and Henrik Svedäng, criticized the guidelines from ICES (Su 2024b). Henrik Svedäng claimed that: "ICES' reasoning is not only incomprehensible but also irresponsible. They have introduced a new model to estimate the stock and according to it, there is a chance that the stock has grown just above the minimum biological sustainable limit. But the uncertainties are still large. And even if the forecast is correct, the spawning stock biomass is still very low. On this basis ICES is building hope that the stock can withstand a TAC increase of as much as 139 percent – and that the stock will still increase in size".

Therefore, as the biomass of the stock has been fluctuating around Blim for decades, there are disagreements regarding the recommended catches and timing of closure seasons, which are raising suspicions against the current MAP, and the recommended catches are not predicted to rebuild the stock in the long-term, the assessment team concluded that the stock failed in this sub-clause.

The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is not appropriate for the current stock status. Sub-clause A.2.3 is not met. The stock will be assessed under Category B as per MT guidance.

A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.

The assessment of central Baltic herring is conducted annually at the ICES WGBFAS (ICES 2023b), where fisheries scientists from about nine European fisheries laboratories participate. The assessment is presented and reviewed at the meeting and must meet ICES standards to be accepted. If the assessment is agreed, it is subsequently reviewed by the ICES Advice Drafting Group which consists of National Experts and, finally, by the Advisory Committee (ACOM) which delivers the ICES advice.

A group of external experts participate every few years in the benchmark process to provide a review of the assessment. The most recent meeting was for a benchmark in April 2023 (ICES 2023a).

The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review. Sub-clause A2.4 is met.

A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.

ICES operate a transparent assessment framework (TAF); an online open resource of annual ICES stock assessments. All data input and output are fully traceable and versioned. The open framework enables anyone to easily find, reference, download, and run the assessment from any stage in the process leading to published ICES advice for a given stock.

The assessment is made publicly available. Sub-clause A.2.5 is met.

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Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	12.3
GSSI	D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A3	Harvest Strategy - Minimum Requirements	
	A3.1	There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.
	A3.2	Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.
	A3.3	Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).
Clause outcome:		Fail
<p>A3.1 There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.</p> <p>Total fishing mortality is restricted through the implementation of catch quotas. In EU waters a TAC is set, and is generally based on the ICES advice which in turn is guided by the EU Baltic Sea MAP (Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 as amended). Total removals by the Russian fleet are restricted by a Russian autonomous quota.</p> <p>There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted. Sub-clause A.3.1 is met.</p>		

A3.2 Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.

Since 2018, ICES has provided a range of potential catch recommendations to reflect the specifics of the Baltic Sea MAP. The total international quota – i.e. the sum of the EU TAC and the Russian autonomous quota – is generally within the boundaries of the ICES advice.

Regarding these boundaries, MarinTrust assessment team got in contact with ICES WGBFAS/WFIAB in April 2024 and it was explained that: “The FMSY ranges [FMSY lower, FMSY upper] are derived to deliver no more than a 5% reduction in long-term yield, compared with the MSY obtained by fishing at FMSY in the long term. To be consistent with ICES precautionary approach, FMSY or FMSY upper is capped so that the probability of $SSB < Blim$ is no more than 5% in any single year [...]. The ranges are produced by first estimating ranges of fishing mortalities leading to no less than 95% of MSY (FMSY lower and FMSY upper) without FMSY Btrigger but including advice error. This range is then compared with the estimated $F_{p.05}$ (value of F corresponding to 5% probability of $SSB < Blim$). Where the estimated FMSY upper exceeded the estimated $F_{p.05}$, FMSY upper is specified as $F_{p.05}$. Where the estimated FMSY exceeds the estimated $F_{p.05}$, FMSY and FMSY upper are both specified as $F_{p.05}$ and FMSY lower redefined as the lower fishing mortality providing 95% of the yield at $F_{p.05}$ ($F_{p.05}lower$).”

According to the MAP: “For the purposes of fixing fishing opportunities, there should be an upper threshold for FMSY ranges in normal use and, provided that the stock concerned is considered to be in a good state (above MSY Btrigger), an upper limit for certain cases. It should only be possible to fix fishing opportunities to the upper limit if, on the basis of scientific advice or evidence, it is necessary for the achievement of the objectives laid down in this Regulation in mixed fisheries or necessary to avoid harm to a stock caused by intra- or inter-species stock dynamics, or in order to limit the year-to-year variations in fishing opportunities. For the purpose of applying the upper limit, it is necessary to recall the objectives set out in Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 that the MSY exploitation rate is to be achieved in any event by 2020.”

Catches from 2021-2023 were very close to the upper limit advised by ICES, however it is not clear if this limit is the same as referred in MAP in the transcript text above. The stock has been found below MSY Btrigger and catches have been close to the upper limit since 2021 (Figure 6). Catches have been consistently above the mid-point, by about 10%, even exceeding the upper boundary of the advice in 2023, by about 2% (Figure 7, Table 5). In addition,, with the new benchmark, it is assumed that the biomass of the stock has been fluctuating around $Blim$ since 1994 (Figure 5).

Moreover, the 2024 ICES catch advice called for maximum catches within the range of 41,706t – 52,549t, and the total international TAC was set at 67,368t, nearly 30% greater than the maximum recommended level.

Therefore, considering uncertainties regarding the upper limit defined for the catches and that catches have exceeded this limit in the last years even with the biomass fluctuating amount $Blim$, as a precautionary approach the assessment team concluded that the stock failed in this sub-clause.

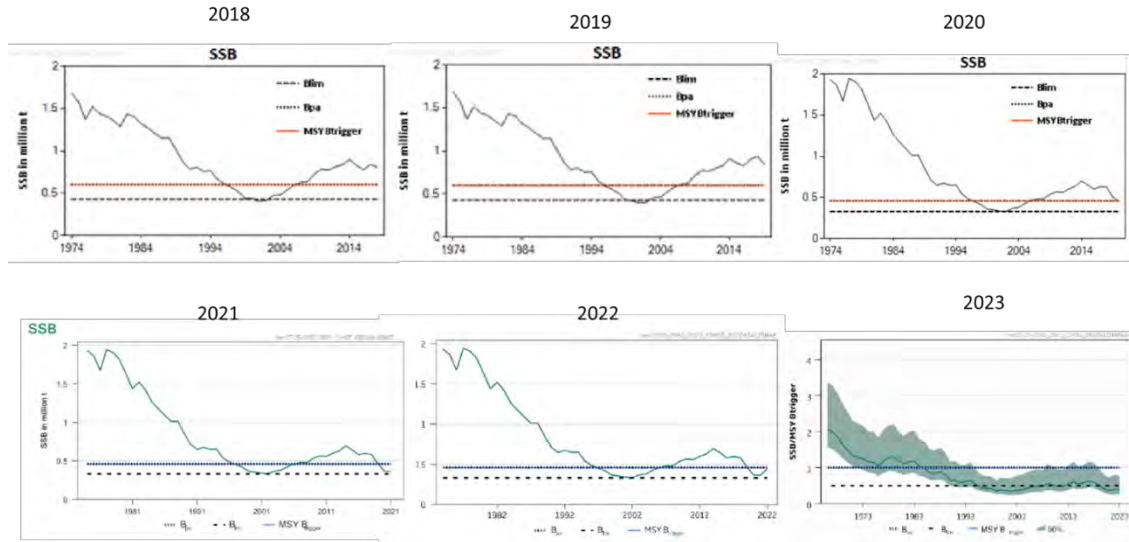


Figure 6. Spawning biomass of herring stock over the years. Noted that in 2023 there was a change in the benchmark (ICES 2018,2019,2020,2021,2022a,2023d).

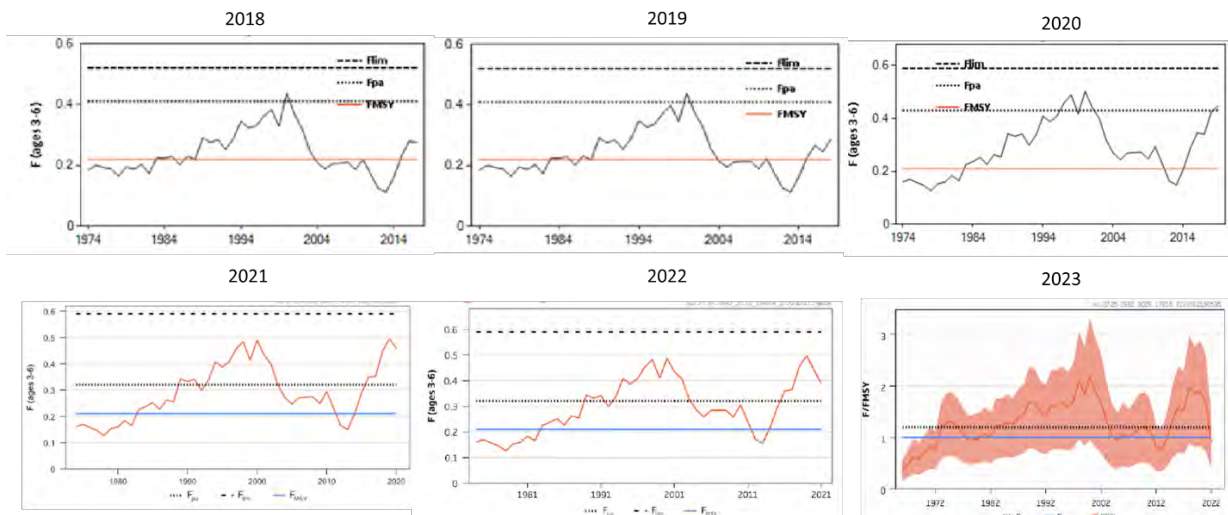


Figure 7. Fishing pressure over the herring stock over the years. Noted that in 2023 there was a change in the benchmark (ICES 2018,2019,2020,2021,2022a,2023d).

Table 7. Central Baltic herring, ICES advice, TACs and catches. All weights in tonnes (ICES 2024 b)

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to the advice	Agreed TAC	ICES catch SDs 25–29 and 32	ICES catch
2018	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.16–0.28), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.22$ only under conditions specified in MAP	200 236–331 510 but catch higher than 267 745 only under conditions specified in MAP	258 855 ^{AA}		240 739
2019	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.16–0.28), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.22$ only under conditions specified in MAP	115 591–192 787 but catch higher than 155 333 only under conditions specified in MAP	200 260 ^{AA}		200 957
2020	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.16–0.28), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.22$ only under conditions specified in MAP	130 546–214 553 but catch higher than 173975 only under conditions specified in MAP	182 484 ^{AA}		174 520
2021	Management plan	111 852 (range 83 971–138 183)	126 051 ^{AA}		128 961
2022	Management plan	71 939 (range 52 443–87 581)	80 753 ^{AA}		83 821 ^{AAA} ‡
2023	Management plan	95 643 (range 70 130–95 643)	97 822 ^{AA}		98 696 ^{AAA}
2024	Management plan	52 549 (range 41 706–52 549)	67 368 ^{AA}		
2025	Management plan	125 344 (range 95 340–125 344)			

* 1988–2003 including Gulf of Riga herring.

** TAC for subdivisions 22–29S and 32.

*** TAC for subdivisions 25–28.2, 29, and 32.

^ EU TAC for subdivisions 25–28.2, 29, and 32.

^{AA} TAC is calculated as EU (subdivisions 25–28.2, 29, and 32) + Russian Federation autonomous quotas.

^{AAA} Russian Federation landings were not officially reported to ICES, but an estimate is included.

‡ Russian Federation landings were updated in during the Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS) 2024 meeting.

Total fishery removals regularly exceed the range of catch recommendations provided by ICES by up to 10% and the stock status is below the limit reference point or proxy. Sub-clause A3.2 is not met.

A3.3 Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).

The ICES advice states that the stock is substantially below the LRP and notes that the MAP requires fishing pressure to be set at a level which reduces the chance of SSB falling below LRP to less than 5%. However, despite this, the ICES headline advice of 2023 recommended a quota of up to 52,549t, instead of recommending the closure of the fishery. The TAC was cut to the half compared to the TAC from the previous year and ICES calculated that this would bring a short-term probability of 69-71% for the stock to be above the LRP by 2025. However, ICES (2023d) also pointed that this “probability relates to the short-term probability of SSB < Blim and MSY Btrigger and is not comparable to the long-term probability of SSB < Blim and MSY Btrigger tested in simulations when estimating fishing mortality reference points”. ICES (2023d) also stated that “the Bpa and MSY Btrigger options were left blank because Bpa and MSY Btrigger cannot be achieved in 2025, even with zero catch in 2024”.

As pointed in clause A.2.3 there were disagreements regarding the closure of this fishery in 2023, however in 2024 the Regulation (EU) 2023/2638, article 8, established closures for pelagic trawlers to protect herring spawning in subdivisions 25–27, 28.2, 29 and 32. Fishing for pelagic species with pelagic trawls was prohibited during the following periods (ICES 2024b):

- In subdivisions 25 and 26 from April 1 to April 30

- In subdivisions 27 and 28.2 from April 16 to May 15
- In subdivisions 29 and 32 from May 1 to May 31

Although there was a delay on establishing measures for prohibiting commercial fishery removals when the stock was predicted to be below the LRP, as this condition was recognized recently with the new benchmark and resulted in a fishing ban, the MarinTrust assessment team decided that the clause was met.

Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy. A.3.3 is met.

References

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Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R1139>

Standard clause 1.3.2.1.3

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.3, 1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.22 (e), 7.5.3
GSSI	D3.04, D6.01

A4	Stock Status - Minimum Requirements	
	A4.1	The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT: The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT: The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.
Clause outcome:		Pass

A4.1 The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT:

The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure **OR IF NOT:**

The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.

The stock is currently above the limit reference point or proxy (ICES, 2024b. The new benchmark established in 2023 showed that the herring stock was below LRP in 2023 as demonstrated in Figure 7 in A.3.2(ICES 2023b), and fishing closures were established for April and May 2024 (ICES 2024b). The agreed TAC has been reduced in 2023 and even further in 2024.

The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure.

References

ICES. 2023b. Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). Replacing advice provided in May 2023. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2023. ICES Advice 2023, her.27.25–2932. Published 13 June 2023. <https://ices-library.figshare.com/browse>

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Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.2.2 (e)
GSSI	D6 01

CATEGORY B SPECIES

Category B species are those which make up greater than 5% of landings in the applicant raw material, but which are not subject to a species-specific research and management regime sufficient to pass all Category A clauses. If there are no Category B species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted.

Category B species are assessed using a risk-based approach. The following process should be completed once for each Category B species.

If there are estimates of biomass (B), fishing mortality (F), and reference points

It is possible for a Category B species to have some biomass and fishing mortality data available. When sufficient information is present, the assessment team should use the following risk matrix to determine whether the species should be recommended for approval.

TABLE B(A) - F, B AND REFERENCE POINTS ARE AVAILABLE

Biomass is above MSY / target reference point	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
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Biomass is below MSY / target reference point, but above limit reference point	Pass, but re-assess when fishery removals resume	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
Biomass is below limit reference point (stock is overfished)	Pass, but re-assess when fishery removals resume	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Biomass is significantly below limit reference point (Recruitment impaired)	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
	Fishery removals are prohibited	Fishing mortality is below MSY or target reference point	Fishing mortality is around MSY or target reference point, or below the long-term average	Fishing mortality is above the MSY or target reference point, or around the long-term average	Fishing mortality is above the limit reference point or above the long-term average (Stock is subject to overfishing)

If the biomass / fishing pressure risk assessment is not possible

Initially, the resilience of each Category B species to fishing pressure should be estimated using the American Fisheries Society procedure described in Musick, J.A. (1999). This approach is used as the resilience values for many species and stocks have been estimated by FishBase and are already available online. For details of the approach, please refer to Appendix A. Determining the resilience provides a basis for estimating the risk that fishing may pose to the long-term sustainability of the stock. Table B(b) should be used to determine whether the species should be recommended for approval.

TABLE B(b) - NO REFERENCE POINTS AVAILABLE. B = CURRENT BIOMASS; B_{av} = LONG-TERM AVERAGE BIOMASS; F = CURRENT FISHING MORTALITY; F_{av} = LONG-TERM AVERAGE FISHING MORTALITY.

B > B_{av} and F < F_{av}	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail
B > B_{av} and F or F_{av} unknown	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
B = B_{av} and F < F_{av}	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
B = B_{av} and F or F_{av} unknown	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
B > B_{av} and F > F_{av}	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
B < B_{av}	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
B unknown	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Resilience	High	Medium	Low	Very Low

Assessment Results

Species Name		Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)						
B1	Species Name	<i>Clupea harengus</i>						
	Table used (Ba, Bb)	Ba						
	Outcome	Pass						
<p>The herring stock failed on Category A, therefore it was assessed under Category B.</p> <p>Fishing mortality and biomass at MSY are available for the stock, thus it was assessed under Table Ba. Biomass is below MSY/target reference point, but above limit reference point and Fishing mortality is below MSY or target reference point, leading to a “Pass” outcome.</p> <p>The 2024 assessment showed that fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and spawning-stock size is below MSY Btrigger and between Bpa and Blim. There was an increase in SSB as a result of the decreased fishing mortality in the most recent years and the relatively large incoming 2022-year class. According to ICES (2024b), in last year’s assessment, the 2022-year class was underestimated and this, in addition to an increase in weight-at-age in 2023, has led to an upward revision of the SSB.</p>								
<p>References</p> <p>ICES. 2024b. Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in subdivisions 25-29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.25-2932. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276</p>								
<p>Links</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>MarinTrust Standard clause</td> <td>1.3.2.2, 4.1.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FAO CCRF</td> <td>7.5.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GSSI</td> <td>D.5.01</td> </tr> </table>			MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2, 4.1.4	FAO CCRF	7.5.1	GSSI	D.5.01
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2, 4.1.4							
FAO CCRF	7.5.1							
GSSI	D.5.01							

CATEGORY D SPECIES

Category D species are those which make up less than 5% of landings and 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	Baltic flounder (<i>Platichthys solemdali</i>)	
	Productivity Attribute	Value	Score
	Average age at maturity (years)	3.2	1
	Average maximum age (years)	12.3	2
	Fecundity (eggs/spawning)	>20,000	1
	Average maximum size (cm)	28	1
	Average size at maturity (cm)	16.7	1
	Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner	1
	Mean trophic level	3.9	3
	Average Productivity Score		1.43
	Susceptibility Attribute	Value	Score
	Availability (area overlap)	>30%	3
	Encounterability (the position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear)	High	3
	Selectivity of gear type	Precautionary	3
	Post-capture mortality	Retained	3
	Average Susceptibility Score		3
	PSA Risk Rating (From Table D3)		PASS
	Compliance rating		PASS
	Further justification for susceptibility scoring (where relevant)		
	<p><i>For susceptibility attributes, please provide a brief rationale for scoring of parameters where there may be uncertainty affecting your decision</i></p> <p>Baltic flounder (<i>Platichthys solemdali</i>) is a species found in northeast Atlantic: endemic to the Baltic Sea. Mature females are reported lay up to 2 million relatively small eggs after fertilization develop on the bottom. It is a demersal species, with depth range 0 - 50 m and the average depth of Baltic Sea is 50m. As it is endemic of Baltic Sea and it is found along the whole water column of Baltic Sea, Baltic flounder is easily caught by the pelagic trawling. A precautionary score was given for selectivity of gear type due lack of information. It is a commercial species; thus it is usually retained.</p>		
References			
<p>Froese, R. and D. Pauly. Editors. 2023. FishBase. World Wide Web electronic publication. Baltic flounder (<i>Platichthys solemdali</i>) https://www.fishbase.se/summary/69158</p> <p>MarineFinland. 2023. The Baltic Sea is small, shallow and surrounded by several states. https://www.marinefinland.fi/en-US/Nature_and_how_it_changes/The_unique_Baltic_Sea/The_Baltic_Sea_in_numbers</p>			
Standard clauses 1.3.2.2			

CATEGORY D SPECIES

Category D species are those which make up less than 5% of landings and 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.

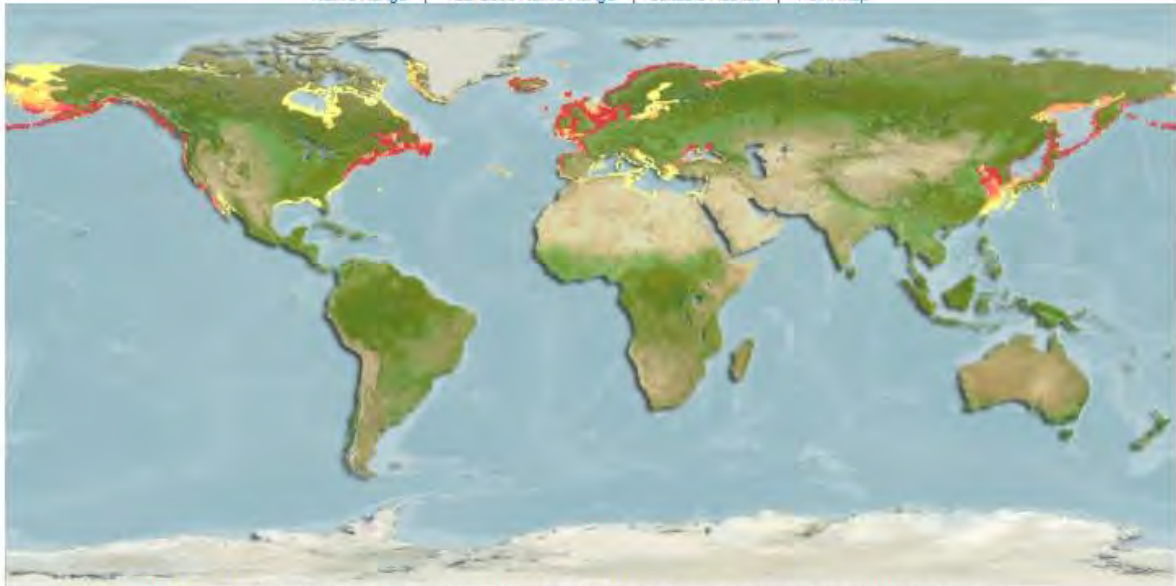
D1	Species Name		Three-spined stickleback (<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>)	
	Productivity Attribute	Value	Score	
	Average age at maturity (years)	0.5	1	
	Average maximum age (years)	1.6	1	
	Fecundity (eggs/spawning)	255	3	
	Average maximum size (cm)	8.5	1	
	Average size at maturity (cm)	5.7	1	
	Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner	1	
	Mean trophic level	3.3	3	
	Average Productivity Score		1.57	
	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)	High	3	
	Selectivity of gear type	Precautionary	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>			
	Three-spined stickleback (<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>) is found in Circumarctic and temperate regions: extending south to the Black Sea, southern Italy, Iberian Peninsula, North Africa; in Eastern Asia north of Japan (35°N), in North America north of 30-32°N; Greenland. The depth range of the species is 0 – 100 m and the average depth of Baltic Sea is 50m, thus there is a high probability of the species be caught by pelagic trawling. A precautionary score was given for selectivity of gear type and post-capture mortality due lack of information.			



Computer Generated Native Distribution Map for *Gasterosteus aculeatus* (Three-spined stickleback), with modelled year 2050 native range map based on IPCC RCP8.5 emissions scenario

Currently known distribution: Circumarctic and temperate regions: Extending south to the Black Sea, southern Italy, Iberian Peninsula, North Africa; in Eastern Asia north of Japan (35°N), in North America north of 30-32°N; Greenland.

Native Range | Year 2050 Native Range | Suitable Habitat | Point Map



Note: Distribution range colours indicate degree of suitability of habitat which can be interpreted as probabilities of occurrence.

<p>Relative probabilities of occurrence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.80 - 1.00 0.60 - 0.79 0.40 - 0.59 0.20 - 0.39 0.01 - 0.19 	<p>Explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native range map Suitable habitat map Point map Show mapping parameters Create your own map 	<p>Download native range data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> csv format NetCDF (view in Godiva) About AquaMaps 	<p>More species info:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of countries List of FAO areas List of ecosystems Comments & Corrections 	<p>Session no. 4</p> <p>-Close window-</p> <p>Please use -Close window-link just above to exit instead of the browser's X button.</p>
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Figure 8. Distribution of three-spined stickleback (Aquamaps 2019).

References

AquaMaps. 2019. Computer generated distribution maps for *Gasterosteus aculeatus* (Three-spined stickleback), with modelled year 2050 native range map based on IPCC RCP8.5 emissions scenario. https://www.aquamaps.org/receive.php?type_of_map=regular&map=cached

Froese, R. and D. Pauly. Editors. 2023. FishBase. World Wide Web electronic publication. Three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*). <https://www.fishbase.se/summary/2420>

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

FURTHER IMPACTS

The three clauses in this section relate to impacts the fishery may have in other areas. A fishery must meet the minimum requirements of all three clauses before it can be recommended for approval.

F1	Impacts on ETP Species - Minimum Requirements		
	F1.1	Interactions with ETP species are recorded.	Pass
	F1.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species.	Pass
	F1.3	If the fishery is known to interact with ETP species, measures are in place to minimise mortality.	Pass
Clause outcome:			Pass

F1.1 Interactions with ETP species are recorded.

There is a requirement for EU member states to record ETP bycatch initially through Council Regulation (EC) 812/2004 (which was focused on cetaceans, although member states also provided information on other species) and from 2019 through the technical Conservation Measures Regulation (EU Regulation 2019/1241) (Annex XIII sets out monitoring requirements for marine mammals, reptiles and seabirds) and the Habitats and Birds Directives (1992/43/EC and 2009/47/EC) also require monitoring of bycatch of species protected under the Directives (ICES 2020b). Information collected through these mechanisms is collated and assessed by the ICES WGBYC.

According to 2022 WGBYC report: “In the Baltic Sea Ecoregion, at-sea observer monitored days for 2021 included bottom trawls (23), nets (53), pelagic trawls (2), longlines (10), seines (2) and traps (32). Notably, there was also 318 days electronically monitored in nets, and a significant amount of monitored days from logbooks and port observers for most métiers. In 2021 four marine mammal species were reported as bycatch in the Baltic Sea Ecoregion; three harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) caught in nets, six harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) caught in nets, eight ringed seals (*Pusa hispida*) in nets and traps, and 82 grey seals in nets, traps and pelagic trawls. At least 21 species of birds were reported caught in traps and nets (461 individuals), of which at least eight species were anatids (137 individuals). Logbook data accounted for most reported records for both mammals (61 incidents; 99 individuals) and birds (182 incidents; 461 individuals). Electronic monitoring was the second most used form of monitoring for mammals (8 incidents; 8 individuals), and birds (50 incidents; 73) individuals. For both taxa port and at-sea observer monitoring accounted for smaller numbers of records. Five fish species were reported as bycatch in 2021; one Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*) caught in nets, 17 twaite shad (*Alosa fallax*) caught in traps, 17 European river lampreys (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) caught in pelagic trawls, 68 lumpfish (*Cyclopterus lumpus*) caught in bottom trawls, nets, surrounding nets and traps, and 170 whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) caught in bottom trawls, nets, and surrounding nets. Whiting have been classified as vulnerable in the Baltic Sea since 2014. All fish bycatch was reported by at-sea observers.”

Table 6. The five most frequently reported marine mammal, seabird and fish species in the Baltic Sea ecoregion during 2021 based on data submitted through the ICES data call and held in the WGBYC bycatch database (WGBYC, 2022).

Marine mammals		Seabirds	
Species	Number reported	Species	Number reported
Grey seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	82	Great cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	278
Ringed seal <i>Pusa hispida</i>	8	Common eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	36
Harbour porpoise <i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	6	Common guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	28
Harbour seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	3	Great black-backed gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	2
		<i>Larus</i> sp.	1
Fish		Turtles	
Species	Number reported	Species	Number reported
Whiting <i>Merlangius merlangus</i>	220	none reported	0
Lumpsucker <i>Cyclopterus lumpus</i>	68		
River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>	17		
Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i>	17		
Atlantic sturgeon <i>Acipenser oxyrinchus</i>	1		

Interactions with ETP species are recorded. Sub-clause F1.1 is met.

F1.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species.

The 2022 WGBYC report indicates that pelagic gears in the Baltic Sea reported no interactions with sharks, seabirds or turtles in 2021 (WGBYC 2022) [Figure 9]. Previously, the WGBYC has assessed the bycatch risk posed by different fishing gears to protected species in the Baltic Seas using expert judgement. Each combination of protected species and gear type was assigned a simple 1 to 3 (lower higher risk) score. Pelagic trawls were scored at '1', except for seals and harbour porpoise, which were scored at '2' based on a record from Poland of one porpoise bycatch from a pelagic trawl (ICES 2018).

EcoRegion	MetierL4	DaS_rdb_2021	n_country_rdb_2021	DaS_wgbyc_2021	n_country_wgbyc_2021	DaS_monitor_2021	n_country_monitor_2021	n_individ_Elasmobranchii	n_incident_Elasmobranchii	n_individ_Fish	n_incident_Fish	DaS_monitor_2017_2021	n_country_monitor_2017_2021	n_individ_Aves	n_incident_Aves	n_individ_Reptilia	n_incident_Reptilia	n_individ_Mammalia	n_incident_Mammalia
Baltic Sea	GNS	14982 1	8	137716	8	390	4			105	15	1116	5	437	178			47	44
Baltic Sea	GTR	4118	2	3675	2	49	2			5	3	105	2	27	20			2	2
Baltic Sea	LHM			93	2														
Baltic Sea	LHP	306	5	7	1														
Baltic Sea	LLD	1129	4	1123	4	14	2					69	2	5	5				
Baltic Sea	LLS	2320	8	2270	8							4	1						
Baltic Sea	MIS	211	1																
Baltic Sea	OTB	7291	6	7117	4	23	3			171	10	530	6						
Baltic Sea	OTM	21826	8	19725	8	448	2			17	2	3709	5					2	1
Baltic Sea	OTT	45	1	45	1							3	1						

Figure 9. Summary of metrics on fishing effort, monitoring effort and bycatch events by EcoRegion and Metier level 4. DaS, Days at Sea; RDB, Regional DataBase; n_country, number of countries; n_individ, number of individuals (Adapted table from WGBYC (2022), highlighting in yellow results for the mid-water otter trawl fishery in Baltic Sea).

There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species. Sub-clause F.1.2 is met.

F1.3 If the fishery is known to interact with ETP species, measures are in place to minimise mortality.

Denmark and Latvia are contracting parties to HELCOM which agreed in 2006 on a Recommendation of the ‘Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea’. This is a regional agreement on joint management principles, management units for the different seal populations, limit reference levels for the respective management unit, and coordinated monitoring programmes.

There is an Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS). However, Latvia is not a contracting party. The purpose of the Agreement is to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for small cetaceans. ASCOBANS has made a number of resolutions relating to harbour porpoise bycatch, most recently in ASCOBANS Resolution 8.5, which sets out targets for the reduction of bycatch. A number of harbour porpoise recovery plans have also been developed of which the ‘Jastarnia Plan’ (ASCOBANS 2016) covers the harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea, and a plan covering the Western Baltic, Belt Sea and Kattegat population (ASCOBANS 2012). These list a range of actions to protect harbour porpoise including for instance by reducing bycatch in fisheries towards zero, designating marine protected areas for them and minimising the impacts of anthropogenic noise.

ICES has recently been requested by the EU to produce advice on emergency measures to prevent bycatch of harbour porpoise (ICES 2020c). Following this advice, BALTFISH and the European Commission met on the 3rd March 2021 and agreed emergency measures for the protection of harbour porpoises for 6 months starting April/May 2021. These measures (closures, use of pingers) are focused on the ‘fisheries of concern’, namely static net fisheries (i.e. trammel net, gillnet and semi-driftnet) rather than the pelagic trawls considered in this assessment.

The EU technical measure regulations, which covers all marine mammals listed under the Habitats Directive Annexes II and IV and seabirds covered by the Birds Directive, prohibits their capture and where captured requires their prompt release.

Latvia's primary national statutes pertaining to biodiversity preservation, encompassing marine biodiversity, comprise the Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories and the Law on Species and Habitats Conservation. These legislative frameworks encompass diverse regulatory provisions, encompassing the designation of protected species and habitats, the creation of marine protected zones, and the delineation of comprehensive guidelines for safeguarding and managing protected.

Even though the fishery is thought unlikely to interact with ETP species, general measures to protect such species are in place. Sub-clause F1.3 is met.

References

ASCOBANS. 2016. ASCOBANS Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises. Jastarnia Plan (2016 Revision). https://www.ascobans.org/sites/default/files/document/ASCOBANS_JastarniaPlan_MOP8.pdf

ASCOBANS. 2012. Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat. <https://www.ascobans.org/en/documents/action%20plans/Western-Baltic-Conservation-Plan>

ICES. 2018. Report from the Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC), 1–4 May 2018, Reykjavik, Iceland. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:25. 128 pp [https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/01_WGBYC - Report from the Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species/19290758](https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/01_WGBYC_-_Report_from_the_Working_Group_on_Bycatch_of_Protected_Species/19290758)

ICES. 2020b. Road map for ICES bycatch advice on protected, endangered, and threatened species. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2020. ICES Advice 2020, section 1.6. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.6022>

ICES. 2020c. EU request on emergency measures to prevent bycatch of common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) and Baltic Proper harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Northeast Atlantic. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2020. ICES Advice 2020, sr.2020.04. <https://10.17895/ices.advice.6023>.

WGBYC. 2022. ICES Scientific Reports. 4:91. 265 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.21602322>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.1
FAO CCRF	7.2.2 (d)
GSSI	D4.04, D.3.08

F2 Impacts on Habitats - Minimum Requirements		
F2.1	Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management decision-making process.	Pass
F2.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats.	Pass
F2.3	If the fishery is known to interact with physical habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Pass

F2.1 Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management decision-making process.
 For fisheries in the region which interact with seabed habitats, measures are in place to manage and mitigate impacts via mechanisms such as the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the requirements associated with Natura 2000 sites, and the technical measures set out in EU regulation.

The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) adopted by all the Baltic coastal states and the EU in 2007, provides the basis for HELCOM work. Under BSAP, several actions are being implemented. Of relevance here, is the establishment of an ecologically coherent and effectively managed network of coastal and marine Baltic Sea protected areas (HELCOM MPAs) to protect marine habitats and species.

The Natura 2000 network was established under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (2009/147/EC; 92/43/EEC). This is a network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types which are protected in their own right. Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, Member States are required to establish the necessary conservation measures, including if necessary, management plans for these sites and the impact of any ‘plans or projects’ likely to have a significant effect on the sites subject to assessment. The definition of “plans or projects” is broad and includes fishing activities.

The management of European fisheries falls under the European Union Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). This regulation outlines the strategic objectives of the CFP, emphasizing the adoption of ecosystem-based management approaches. Such strategies include the implementation of multispecies management plans, the prohibition of discards, and the mitigation of unintended bycatches involving mammals, birds, and non-targeted or undersized fish. The CFP operates through a series of regulations addressing various aspects including monitoring, control, and surveillance, fleet composition, overarching technical conservation measures, and Total Allowable Catches (TACs), among others.

The Baltic Sea Technical Measures for the conservation of the fishery resources in the Baltic Sea, the Belts and the Sound was established in the Council Regulation 2187/2005. This Regulation sought to summarise all this legislation in a single legislative text, from measures on gears to those on target species, by-catches, minimum landing sizes and geographical and seasonal restrictions. This Regulation have been later amended by other Regulations (landing obligation, multiannual plans established, etc.), but some of the technical measures included in this Regulation are still in place for the whole region.

Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management process. Sub-clause F2.1 is met.

F2.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats.

Pelagic trawl gears are not designed to make contact with the seabed. Such contact is likely to be minimal and consequently the impact of this gear on benthic habitats and seabed structures is considered minimal, if any. In relation to impact upon the pelagic habitat, the trawl fisheries are targeted at dense homogeneous shoals of herring and sprat with very little bycatch of non-target species so impacts on biological diversity and abundance of the habitat is limited to the target species and bycatch.

There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats. Sub-clause F.2.2 is met.

F2.3 If the fishery is known to interact with physical habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.

Pelagic gears such as those used in this fishery are highly unlikely to cause significant habitat disruption. However, within the broader fisheries management structures present in the Baltic, measures are in place to protect habitats. Habitats are provided protection through the Natura 2000 network established under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (2009/147/EC;92/43/EEC). The Technical Measures Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1241) also sets out technical measures which can protect habitats including regional measures under Article 15 and powers to introduce real-time closures and moving-on provisions.

Even though the fishery is thought very unlikely to interact with seabed habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts. Sub-clause F.2.3 is met.

References

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. <https://eurlex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:01992L0043-20130701>

Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009L0147>

HELCOM. 2023. Baltic Sea Action Plan 2021 update. <https://helcom.fi/baltic-sea-action-plan/>

Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019R1241>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.2
FAO CCRF	6.8
GSSI	D.2.07, D.6.07, D3.09

F3 Ecosystem Impacts - Minimum Requirements		
F3.1	The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process.	Pass
F3.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.	Pass
F3.3	If one or more of the species identified during species categorisation plays a key role in the marine ecosystem, additional precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Pass
<p>F3.1 The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process.</p> <p>Commercial fisheries in the Baltic Sea are managed according to a Multi-Annual Plan (MAP), EU Regulation 2016/1139. The objectives of the MAP include implementing the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, the precautionary approach, and EU legislation including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Directive 2008/56/EC. The regular management advice published by ICES includes an ecoregion overview for the Baltic Sea (ICES 2022b), which summarises the most up to date understanding of the Baltic ecosystem and the ways in which this knowledge influences the management advice. These include noting the likely current and future impacts of climate change, and the shifts in the food web which have occurred since the late 1980s.</p> <p>The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process. Sub-clause F.3.1 is met.</p>		
<p>F3.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.</p> <p>The most significant potential ecosystem impacts of the fishery arise from the removal of herring and sprat biomass. The ICES ecosystem overview (ICES 2022b) states that since the late 1980's "the open-sea system has been dominated by small pelagic fish, such as sprat", and that "in general, those seabird species eating sprat and herring have increased in number". Prey depletion is not considered to be a determining factor in the health of populations of porpoise, seal, or cod populations, all of them predate sprat and herring.</p> <p>There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem. Sub-clause F.3.2 is met.</p>		
<p>F3.3 If one or more of the species identified during species categorisation plays a key role in the marine ecosystem, additional precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals.</p> <p>Herring and sprat are both considered to be important prey species in the Baltic Sea ecosystem. Predation of sprat is considered in the EU MAP, and factored in when establishing reference points and management regulations such as quotas, area and seasonal restrictions, gear limitations, and controls on the number of vessels in the fishery.</p> <p>Precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals. Sub-clause F.3.3 is met.</p>		
<p>References</p> <p>ICES. 2022b. Baltic Sea Ecoregion – Ecosystem overview. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2022. ICES Advice 2022, Section 4.1, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21725438</p> <p>Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 (as amended) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02016R1139-20190814&from=EN</p>		
Links		
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.3	
FAO CCRF	7.2.2 (d)	
GSSI	D.2.09, D3.10, D.6.09	

SOCIAL CRITERION

In addition to the scored criteria listed above, applicants must commit to ensuring that vessels operating in the fishery adhere to internationally recognised guidance on human rights. They must also commit to ensuring there is no use of enforced or unpaid labour in the fleet(s) operating upon the resource.

Appendix A - Determining Resilience Ratings

The assessment of Category B species described in this assessment report template utilises a resilience rating system suggested by the American Fisheries Society. This approach was chosen because it is also used by FishBase, and so the resilience ratings for many thousands of species are freely available online. As described by FishBase, the following is the process used to arrive at the resilience ratings:

“The American Fisheries Society (AFS) has suggested values for several biological parameters that allow classification of a fish population or species into categories of high, medium, low and very low resilience or productivity (Musick 1999). If no reliable estimate of r_m (see below) is available, the assignment is to the lowest category for which any of the available parameters fits. For each of these categories, AFS has suggested thresholds for decline over the longer of 10 years or three generations. If an observed decline measured in biomass or numbers of mature individuals exceeds the indicated threshold value, the population or species is considered vulnerable to extinction unless explicitly shown otherwise. If one sex strongly limits the reproductive capacity of the species or population, then only the decline in the limiting sex should be considered. We decided to restrict the automatic assignment of resilience categories in the Key Facts page to values of K , t_m and t_{max} and those records of fecundity estimates that referred to minimum number of eggs or pups per female per year, assuming that these were equivalent to average fecundity at first maturity (Musick 1999). Note that many small fishes may spawn several times per year (we exclude these for the time being) and large live bearers such as the coelacanth may have gestation periods of more than one year (we corrected fecundity estimates for those cases reported in the literature). Also, we excluded resilience estimates based on r_m (see below) as we are not yet confident with the reliability of the current method for estimating r_m . If users have independent r_m or fecundity estimates, they can refer to Table 1 for using this information.”

Parameter	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Threshold	0.99	0.95	0.85	0.70
r_{max} (1/year)	> 0.5	0.16 - 0.50	0.05 - 0.15	< 0.05
K (1/year)	> 0.3	0.16 - 0.30	0.05 - 0.15	< 0.05
Fecundity (1/year)	> 10,000	100 - 1000	10 - 100	< 10
t_m (years)	< 1	2 - 4	5 - 10	> 10
t_{max} (years)	1 - 3	4 - 10	11 - 30	> 30

[Taken from the FishBase manual, “Estimation of Life-History Key Facts”, <http://www.fishbase.us/manual/English/key%20facts.htm#resilience>]

Appendix B - MarinTrust Fishery Assessment Peer Review Template

This section comprises a summary of the fishery being assessed against version 2 of the MarinTrust Standard.

Fishery under assessment	Whole fish Fishery Assessment WF10 Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) Flounder (<i>Platichthys flesus</i>) Three-spined stickleback (<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>)
Management authority (Country/State)	European Commission (EC), Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia
Main species	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) Flounder (<i>Platichthys flesus</i>) Three-spined stickleback (<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>)
Fishery location	FAO 27, ICES 3.d.25-29, 32 (excluding Gulf of Riga)
Gear type(s)	Mainly pelagic trawls. Minor part taken by trapnets, gillnets, and purse-seines
Overall recommendation. (Approve/ Fail)	Approved

Summary: in this section, provide any additional information about the fishery that the reviewers feel is significant to their decision.

It is a bit concerning the fail of the clause A.2.3 in the case of sprat, it is now unusual that ICES recommendations are not followed. This should be taken into account in the next assessment of the fishery. The clause is approved under Category B, next time the fishery would not pass the assessment.

This is a good and complete report under the Marin Trust standard. Except of the comment in the section above, everything else looks right in the fishery, including the case of ETP species.

General Comments on the Draft Report provided to the peer reviewer

The external peer-reviewer has written some of her/his comments on this section, which is allocated for the certification body response; thus, the assessor reorganized this part of the report, adding the peer-reviewer comments to the section above.

I believe the reviewer meant to refer to clause A.3.2 of the herring stock, not A.2.3 of sprat. Sprat did not fail in any clause of Category A and the cause 3.2 that assess the compliance of fishery removals with the recommendations, not A.2.3. There were intense discussions regarding the upper limit of catches on ICES recommendations for herring stock and considering the precautionary approach, the certification body decided to give a failed on A.3.2 for this stock.

Summary of Peer Review Outcomes

Peer reviewers should review the fishery assessment report with the primary objective of answering the key questions listed in the table below. Where the situation is more complicated, reviewers may instead answer “See Notes”.

	YES	NO	See Notes
A – Fishery Assessment			
1. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MarinTrust fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?	Yes		
2. Does the Species Categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?	Yes		
3. Are the scores in the following sections accurate (i.e. do the scores reflect the evidence provided)?			
Section M - Management	Yes		
Category A Species	Yes		
Category B Species	Yes		
Category C Species			
Category D Species	Yes		
Section F – Further Impacts	Yes		

Detailed Peer Review Justification

Peer reviewers should provide support for their answers in the boxes provided, by referring to specific scoring issues and any relevant documentation as appropriate.

Detailed justifications are only required where answers given are one of the ‘No’ options. In other (Yes) cases, either confirm ‘scoring agreed’ or identify any places where weak rationales could be strengthened (without any implications for the scores).

Boxes may be extended if more space is required.

1. Is the scoring of the fishery consistent with the MarinTrust standard, and clearly based on the evidence presented in the assessment report?
Scoring agreed
Certification body response
No comments.

2. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MARINTRUST fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?

Scoring agreed

Certification body response

No comments.

3. Does the Species Categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?

Scoring agreed as an exception in the case of sprat

Certification body response

No comments.

3M. Are the scores in "Section M – Management" clearly justified?

M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.	
There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.	Yes
Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability.	Yes
Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.	Yes
There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making.	Yes
The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available.	Yes

Certification body response

No comments.

3A. Are the "Category A Species" scores clearly justified?

Scoring agreed

Certification body response

No comments.

3B. Are the "Category B Species" scores clearly justified?

Scoring agreed as an exception this time in the case of sprat

Certification body response

No comments.

3C. Are the "Category C Species" scores clearly justified?

n.a.

Certification body response

No comments.

3D. Are the "Category D Species" scores clearly justified?

Scoring agreed

Certification body response

No comments.

3F. Are the scores in “Section F – Further Impacts” clearly justified?

Scoring agreed

Certification body response

No comments.

Optional: General comments on the Peer Review Draft Report

As far as I can recall, this, and the Peruvian fishery, are the only ones that made explicit the impact on ETP species, which enable authorities to dictate specific regulations to decrease the impacts of fishing.

Certification body response

No comments.

Glossary

Non-target: Species for which the gear is not specifically set, although they may have immediate commercial value and be a desirable component of the catch. OECD (1996), Synthesis report for the study on the economic aspects of the management of marine living resources. AGR/FI(96)12

Target: In the context of fishery certification, the target catch is the catch of stock under consideration by the unit of certification – i.e. the fish that are being assessed for certification and ecolabelling. (GSSI)