MarinTrust Whole fish fishery assessment report

UK
Boarfish (Capros aper)
FAO 27, ICES area 6-8

Re-approval
WF15

Table 1: Whole fish fishery assessment scope

Fishery name	**UK | Boarfish (Capros aper) | FAO 27, ICES 6-8 (UK & Ireland)**
MarinTrust report code	**WF15**
Type 1 species (common name, Latin name)	Boarfish (*Capros aper*)
Fishery location	FAO 27, ICES 6-8
Gear type(s)	Pelagic trawl, pelagic pair trawl
Management authority (country/state)	Republic of Ireland, UK and European Commission

Table 2: Applicant and Certification Body details

Application details			
Applicant(s)		Killybegs (Pelagia), Greenock (Pelagia)	
Applicant country		UK, Ireland	
Certification Body details			
Name of Certification Body		NSF / Global Trust Certification Ltd	
Contact Information for CB		Fisheries@nsf.org	
Fishery Assessor name		Matthew Jew	
CB Peer Reviewer name		Léa Lebechnech	
Number of assessment days	2	**Assessment period**	10/2025 to 10/2026

Table 3: Assessment outcome

Assessment outcome (See Table 4 for a summary of assessment determination)		*Approve*
Approval validity	Valid from: 10/2025	Valid until: 10/2026
CB peer reviewer evaluation		*Agree with assessment determination*
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Group external peer reviewer evaluation		*Agree with assessment determination*

Table 4: Assessment determination

Assessment determination **Summary of assessment and outcome**
There have been no substantial changes to the status or management of this fishery since the time of the 2023 MT re-assessment. The client provided new catch composition data for the span of 2023 to 2025 and the catch profile was recharacterized. As previously, the only Type 1 species for this assessment is Boarfish (*Capros aper*). For 2025, the only type 2 species is horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*). Boarfish has been categorised by the IUCN as Least Concern and horse mackerel as vulnerable and neither appear in the CITES appendices. Therefore, all stocks are eligible to be certified under the MarinTrust Wholefish Standard v3.0. Management structure and function are almost entirely unchanged since the previous assessment, and all management clause requirements are met. Similarly, understanding and management of the impacts of the fishery on ETP species, habitats and ecosystems has not changed, and all of the requirements of ecosystems clause requirements are met. In 2024, ICES upgraded boarfish from a Category 3 to a Category 1 stock following a benchmark workshop (WKBHMB), signalling a significant improvement in the scientific understanding of the species. This reclassification means the stock now benefits from established reference points for management, as reflected in the latest ICES assessment published in September 2024. Building on this enhanced assessment, the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) has recommended setting the 2025 Total Allowable Catch (TAC) at 38,295 tonnes, aligning with the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) approach. This proposal supports sustainable fisheries management and adheres to ICES's precautionary guidance. As a result, boarfish qualifies as a Category A species under current MT evaluation criteria. Horse mackerel was assessed under Category C. Fishery removals are included in the stock assessment and that assessment shows biomass above the limit reference point. Category C is passed for the horse mackerel stock. Management and Ecosystem clauses are met. All clauses for the species under assessment are met. Boarfish in Subarea 8 and divisions 2.a, 3.a, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters) meets the MarinTrust Whole Fish Standard v3.01 requirements for re-approval under the fishmeal-authorised scope. Recommendation: The assessor recommends that the catch composition data be provided to the assessor at surveillance 1 (2026) to verify that the catch categorizations remain the same. In previous version of the report, the previous assessors determined that the same species categorization has been used dating back to at least the 2021 report. Each of three previous assessments provided on the MarinTrust website were stated that there were no new catch composition data available and those assessments would proceed as status quo. Catch should be verified at first surveillance in order to continue certification.

Summary of CB peer review	The CB peer-reviewer agrees with the assessor's determination. She agrees with the species classification along with the conclusion on clauses M and E, which in majority remained the same since the last surveillance report. She agrees with the scoring of boarfish under category A. Boarfish has been reclassified und ICES category 1, therefore stock assessments are conducted annually, and most requirements of Category A are achieved for this category 1 classification. She also agrees with horse mackerel being assessed under Category C and passing both clauses as catches are part of the assessment process and biomass is above LRP. As determined by the assessor, the CB peer-reviewer agrees that the requirements MarinTrust whole fish assessment v3.0 are met, meaning that the boarfish fishery under assessment should be re-approved as a source of raw material for MarinTrust-certified facilities.
Summary of external peer review (see Appendix 1 for the full peer review report)	Boarfish (Capros aper) is the single Type 1 species and meets the category A species criteria. Horse mackerel (Trachurus trachurus) was the only Type 2 species and meets the category C species criteria. Boarfish is listed as IUCN Least Concern, and horse mackerel is categorised as Vulnerable; neither species appears in CITES, so both are eligible under the Marine Trust requirements. Management and understanding of the impacts on ETP species, habitats, and ecosystems remain essentially unchanged; however, clarification of ecosystem impacts is recommended. In conclusion; the peer reviewer agrees with CB assessment.
Notes for on-site auditor	Factory auditor should clarify the catch composition and gear type because there is potential for boarfish catch to come from other gears being processed in the same facility.

Table 5: General results

Section	Outcome (Pass/Fail)
M1 - Management Framework	PASS
M2 - Surveillance, Control and Enforcement	PASS
E1 - Impacts on ETP Species	PASS
E2 - Impacts on Habitats	PASS
E3 - Ecosystem Impacts	PASS

Table 6: Species-specific results

See Table 7 for further details of species categorisation.

Category	Species name (common & Latin name)	Outcome (Pass/Fail/n/a)	
Category A	Boarfish (*Capros aper*)	A1	PASS
		A2	PASS
		A3	PASS
		A4	PASS
Category B	None	N/A	
Category C	Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*)	PASS	
Category D	None	N/A	

Table 7: Species categorisation table

List of all the species assessed. Type 1 species are assessed against Category A or Category B. Type 1 species must represent 95% of the total annual catch. Type 2 species are assessed against Category C or Category D. Type 2 species may represent a maximum of 5% of the annual catch. Species that comprise less than 0.1% of the catch are not required to be assessed or listed here.

Species name (common & Latin name)	Stock	CITES listed yes/no	IUCN Red list Category	% catch composition	Management (Y/N)	Category (A, B, C or D)
Boarfish (*Capros aper*)	Boarfish in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay)	No	LC	99.46%	Y	A
Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*)	Horse mackerel in Subarea 8 and divisions 2.a, 3.a, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters)	No	VU	0.52%	Y	C

Rationale

The client provided new catch data (Geraldine Fox, pers comm 22 October 2025) from the boarfish fishery over the past three years. The fishery is highly selective and boarfish make up over 99% of the total catch, making this species the only type 1 species. Horse mackerel is a very small component of the catch but is categorized as type 2. Both species are considered managed with stock assessments produced by ICES. Mackerel is not considered in this assessment as it composes less than 0.1% of the total catch.

Table 1. Catch composition for the boarfish fishery in ICES subarea 6-8. Source: Client provided on 22 October 2025.

	2023	2024	2025	Average	Percent
Boarfish	15498	15634	12201	14444	99.46
Horse mackerel	62	126	37	75	0.52
Mackerel	0	0	7	2	0.02
Total	15560	15760	12250	14523	

References
N/A

Management requirements

This section, or module, assesses the general management regime applied to the fishery under assessment. It comprises two parts, M1, which evaluates the management framework, and M2, which evaluates surveillance, control and enforcement within the fishery.

1.1. All management criteria must be met (pass) for a fishery to pass the Management requirements.

1.1.1. The sub-criteria offer a structured evidence base to demonstrate that the fishery sufficiently meets the management criteria. It is not expected that sub-criteria are assessed independently of the main criterion.

M1 Management framework

M1.1	**M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.** *In reaching a determination for M1.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*	
	M1.1.1	The management and administration organisations within the fishery are clearly identified.
	M1.1.2	The functions and responsibilities of the management organisations include the overall regulation, administration, science and data collection and enforcement roles, and are documented and publicly available.

	M1.1.3 Fishers have access to information and/or training materials through nationally recognised organisations.
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) provides management advice and stock status assessments for the species involved in this fishery. Regular evaluations by ICES involve monitoring stock levels, biological parameters, and the overall health of the fishery. However, the management of the fishery itself is provided by the Irish and U.K. governments.

The management of the boarfish fishery involves collaboration among several jurisdictions, each with specific responsibilities. In the Republic of Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) oversees marine policies aimed at supporting the economic and environmental health of coastal communities. In U.K., management of the fishery is divided among various national agencies. In England, the Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) manages fisheries by setting catch limits, issuing licenses, enforcing regulations, and promoting sustainable marine resource use in coordination with scientific and international bodies. In Scotland, Marine Scotland, a ministry of the Scottish Government, is tasked with monitoring and enforcing regulations for Scottish vessels and waters, including quota allocations and scientific research. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) manages Northern Ireland's waters, focusing on quota allocation and monitoring legislation, particularly in inshore fisheries. Similarly, the Welsh Government (Marine Fisheries Division) adopts a centralized approach to fisheries management, regulating quotas and licensing for Welsh vessels, while also ensuring compliance with marine laws. Although there is autonomy between the four organizations, there are agreements in place to manage fisheries at the U.K.-wide level. The Fisheries Act (2020) is the primary legislation governing fisheries management in the United Kingdom following Brexit. It provides the legal framework for sustainable fishing, quota allocation, licensing, and international negotiations.

The roles and responsibilities of these organizations are well documented and publicized. While the nature of these organizations might not take on all responsibilities under Clause M1.1.2, these roles may be covered by shared agreements or international organizations. For example, ICES takes on a large role for science and data collections, however smaller national scientific surveys can feed into the large models themselves.

Although U.K. is not subject to the EU policies and laws, the fishery is still managed to a degree by the EU and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Irish quota is managed through the CFP whereas DEFRA manages the allocated quota for U.K.

The fishery passes Clause M1.1

References

European Commission. (2023). Common fisheries policy (CFP). Oceans-AndFisheries.ec.europa.eu. https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheriespolicy-cfp_en

Fisheries Act. 2020. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/22/contents/enacted

Government of Ireland. (n.d.). *Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine: About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/

UK Government. (n.d.). *Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA): About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about

M1.2	**M1.2 Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.** *In reaching a determination for M1.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	M1.2.1 There are legal instruments in place to give authority to the management organisation(s) which can include policies, regulations, acts or other legal mechanisms.
	M1.2.2 Vessels wishing to participate in the fishery must be authorised by the management organisation(s).
	M1.2.3 The management system has a mechanism in place for the resolution of legal disputes.
	M1.2.4 There is evidence of the legal rights of people dependent on fishing for food or livelihood.
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

In both flag states, licenses are required to access the stock. In Ireland, harvesters must hold a valid pelagic license and operate under quota restrictions set by DAFM (DAFM, 2025). UK vessels require licenses issued by DEFRA or state specific management organization and must comply with quota limits and reporting requirements (DEFRA, 2025). Both management authorities issue License Conditions to each license holder that describes the policies, regulations, acts or other legal mechanisms for the fishery. Irish quota is managed through the CFP whereas DEFRA manages the allocated quota for U.K.

In the Republic of Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is responsible for fisheries management under the European Communities (Fisheries) Regulations. These regulations allow the DAFM to set quotas, issue fishing licenses, and enforce conservation measures to ensure sustainable practices (DAFM 2025). The DAFM's authority also extends to

implementing EU policies related to fisheries, which include maintaining fish stocks and protecting marine ecosystems, which is legally binding under the EU CFP.

In the United Kingdom, fisheries management is divided among various national agencies (see rationale for Clause M1.1 for specifics). After Brexit, the UK continues to work within the framework of the CFP for managing shared fish stocks but has also established its own regulations and governance structures.

In the UK, the Fisheries Act (2020) has multiple sections pertaining to the right of people dependent upon fishing for food and livelihood. Section 1(2)(a) requires that fish and aquaculture activities be managed to support environmental sustainability, social and employment benefits, and contribute to food supply availability. In Section 25(1)(b) requires fisheries authorities to consider the social and economic benefits when allocating catch quotas, this includes the inclusion of those individuals who depend on fishing for food and livelihood.

It has been concluded that fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions. Clause M1.2 is met.

References

DAFM. 2025. *Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine: About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/

DEFRA. 2025. *Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA): About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about \

Fisheries Act. 2020. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/22/contents/enacted

M1.3	**M1.3**	**There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and (scientifically) assessing the fishery.** *In reaching a determination for M1.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	M1.3.1	The organisation(s) responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery is/are clearly identified.
	M1.3.2	The management system receives scientific advice regarding stock, non-target species and ecosystem status.
	M1.3.3	Scientific advice is independent from the management organisation(s) and transparent in its formulation through a clearly defined process.
Clause outcome	*Pass*	

Rationale

Science and data collection, including stock assessments, is carried out by multiple organisations, however International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) takes on the primary role in this process. ICES plays a critical role in shaping fisheries policy by delivering independent, peer-

reviewed science that helps balance conservation with responsible resource use. The ICES Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE) conducts an annual stock assessment on Boarfish in FAO 27. WGWIDE provides fishery management advice, including catch recommendations based on the outcomes of the assessment.

In the Republic of Ireland, the Marine Institute is the primary source of scientific information and advice, conducting annual assessments of boarfish spawning aggregations and leading the Western European Shelf Pelagic Acoustic Survey (WESPAS) through its Fisheries Ecosystems Advisory Services (FEAS) section (O'Donnell et al, 2023). Additionally, there is the Irish Groundfish survey (IGS), South and West of Ireland Groundfish Survey (SPPGFS), and South and West of Ireland Nephrops Groundfish Survey (SPNGFS) (Marine Institute). In the United Kingdom, several entities contribute to data collection, including the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), DAERA in Northern Ireland, and Marine Scotland. These organizations work collaboratively to monitor the health of marine resources and ensure sustainable practices. In the stock assessment for Boarfish in ICES 6-8 (ICES 2025), the data inputs for the stock assessment model include the Irish data sources listed above and U.K. based data collection including: Scottish West Coast Groundfish Survey (SCOWCGFS) and West Coast of Scotland Groundfish Survey (WCSGFS) which are both collected by Marine Scotland (Marine Scotland Science, 2021).

As there are multiple organisations responsible for collecting data and (scientifically) assessing the fishery. Clause M1.3 is met.

References

ICES. 2025. Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524

Marine Institute. (n.d.). *Fisheries Ecosystems Surveys*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.marine.ie/site-area/areas-activity/fisheries-ecosystems/surveys

Marine Scotland Science. (2021). *Manual for Version 3 of the Groundfish Survey Monitoring and Assessment Data Product* (Scottish Marine and Freshwater Science Vol 8 No 18). Scottish Government. https://data.marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files//SMFS%200818_0.pdf

O'Donnell, C., O'Malley, M., Mullins, E., & Whitefield, J. (2023). *Western European Shelf Pelagic Acoustic Survey (WESPAS) 09 June – 20 July, 2023*. FSS Survey Series: 2023/03. Marine Institute, Galway, Ireland. Retrieved from https://oar.marine.ie/handle/10793/1871

M1.4	**M1.4**	**The fishery management system is based on the principles of sustainable fishing and a precautionary approach.** *In reaching a determination for M1.4, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	M1.4.1	A policy or long-term management objective for sustainable harvesting based on the best scientific evidence and a precautionary approach is publicly available and implemented for the fishery.
Outcome	*Pass*	

Rationale

This information has not changed since the previous surveillance report.

In 2024, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in Ireland has taken significant steps toward enhancing the sustainability of its fisheries. The department has launched four new schemes under the Seafood Development Programme, which are jointly funded by the Irish government and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) (DAFM, 2024). These initiatives aim to bolster both the fishing fleet and the seafood processing industry, addressing challenges faced by these sectors in recent years.

In the United Kingdom, fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability including the MMO whose stated purpose is to protect and enhance the UK's marine environment, and support UK economic growth by enabling sustainable marine activities and development (Marine Management Organisation, n.d.), Marine Scotland whose responsibilities include inter alia promoting sustainable, profitable and well-managed fisheries (Marine Scotland, n.d.), and Northern Ireland's Government Departments and District Councils who have a statutory duty to promote the achievement of sustainable development in the exercise of their functions (Northern Ireland Executive, 2020).

The fishery management system is based on the principles of sustainable fishing and a precautionary approach. Therefore, clause M1.4 is met.

References

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. (2024). *Seafood Development Programme 2021–2027*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/seafood-development-programme-2021-2027/

Marine Management Organisation. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation/about

Marine Scotland. (n.d.). *About Marine Scotland*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.scot/about/how-government-is-run/directorates/marine-scotland/

Northern Ireland Executive. (2020). *Sustainable Development Strategy*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/sustainable-development

M1.5	**M1.5**	**There is a clearly defined decision-making process which is transparent, with processes and results made publicly available.** *In reaching a determination for M1.5, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	M1.5.1	There is participatory engagement through which fishery stakeholders and other stakeholders can access, provide information, consult with, and respond to, the management systems' decision-making process.
	M1.5.2	The decision-making process is transparent, with results made publicly available.

	M1.5.3 The fishery management system is subject to periodic internal or external review to validate the decision-making process, outcomes and scientific data.
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

This information remains the same as was previously published in previous surveillance reports.

The consultation processes regarding fisheries management in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), the United Kingdom (UK), and under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in the European Union are designed to involve stakeholders effectively and ensure transparency and participation in decision-making.

In the Republic of Ireland, DAFM engages in consultations with various stakeholders, including industry representatives, environmental groups, and local communities. This is achieved through public consultations, workshops, and forums, where feedback is gathered on proposed regulations and policies. The DAFM also collaborates with the Marine Institute to conduct scientific assessments that inform these consultations (Marine Institute, 2025).

In the United Kingdom, consultation processes are similarly structured, involving multiple governmental bodies such as Marine Scotland, DAERA, Marine Fisheries Division, and DEFRA. Each agency conducts consultations on fisheries management plans, often seeking input from fishermen, scientists, and conservation groups. These consultations aim to ensure that management actions reflect the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders involved.

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) mandates a collaborative approach, requiring EU member states to consult with stakeholders during the formulation of fisheries policies. This includes regional advisory councils, where fishery representatives, scientists, and NGOs discuss management measures and provide recommendations to the European Commission (European Commission, 2023).

The fisheries management decision-making process in the Republic of Ireland, the UK, and under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is transparent, with procedures and outcomes publicly available. The DAFM in Ireland and agencies in the UK, like Marine Scotland and DEFRA, regularly publish reports and consultation results on their websites. Similarly, the European Commission ensures transparency by making relevant documents accessible to the public, thereby promoting accountability and stakeholder engagement in fisheries management decisions.

There is a clearly defined decision-making process which is transparent, with processes and results made publicly available. Clause M1.5 is met.

References

Marine Institute. 2025. *Fisheries Ecosystems Surveys*. Government of Ireland. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.marine.ie/site-area/about-us/fisheries-ecosystems-advisory-services

DEFRA. 2025. *Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA): About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about \

European Commission. (2023). Common fisheries policy (CFP). Oceans-AndFisheries.ec.europa.eu. https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheriespolicy-cfp_en

M2 Surveillance, control and enforcement

M2.1	**M2.1**	**There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations.** *In reaching a determination for M2.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	M2.1.1	There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with specific monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) mechanisms in place.
	M2.1.2	There are relevant tools or mechanisms used to minimise IUU fishing activity.
	M2.1.3	There is evidence of monitoring and surveillance activity appropriate to the intensity, geography, management control measures and compliance behaviour of the fishery.
Outcome	*Pass*	

Rationale

In both the Republic of Ireland and the UK, various governmental organizations are tasked with monitoring compliance with fisheries laws and regulations. In Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) oversees fisheries management. Enforcement of the fishery is handled by the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA). SFPA is a statutory governmental body in Ireland, established under the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006. The SFPA is responsible for enforcing sea-fisheries and seafood safety legislation in Ireland to ensure compliance with national and EU regulations for sustainable marine resource management (Government of Ireland, 2006).

In the UK, Marine Scotland, DEFRA, Marine Fisheries Division, and DAERA perform similar functions, ensuring that fishing activities comply with established laws. These organizations utilize scientific assessments and stakeholder input to facilitate sustainable fisheries management. Further, the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) is a European Union agency whose mission is to promote the highest common standards for control, inspection and surveillance under the CFP. EFCA's primary role is to organize coordination and cooperation between national control and inspection activities so that the rules of the CFP are respected and applied effectively. In practice, organizational responsibility for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations is carried out by the Member States' control authorities (European Fisheries Control Agency, 2025).

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

References

Government of Ireland. (2006). *Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006*. Irish Statute Book. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2006/act/8/enacted/en/html

Marine Scotland. (2025). *About Marine Scotland*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.scot/about/how-government-is-run/directorates/marine-scotland/

DEFRA. 2025. *Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA): About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about \

DAERA. 2025. *Fisheries and aquaculture*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/fisheries

European Fisheries Control Agency. 2025. *About EFCA*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.efca.europa.eu/en/content/mission-and-strategy

M2.2	**M2.2 There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when infringements against laws and regulations are discovered.** *In reaching a determination for M2.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	M2.2.1 The laws and regulations provide for penalties or sanctions that are adequate in severity to act as an effective deterrent.
	M2.2.2 There is no evidence of systematic non-compliance.
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

This has not changed from the previous surveillance report.

Both the Republic of Ireland and the UK have established frameworks of sanctions that are applied when fisheries laws and regulations are breached. In Ireland, the SFPA can impose penalties ranging from fines to the suspension of fishing licenses (SFPA, 2025). Similarly, in the UK, agencies like Marine Scotland (2025), Marine Fisheries Division (Welsh Government, 2020) and DEFRA (2025) have the authority to issue sanctions, which may include financial penalties, license revocation, and even criminal prosecution for severe violations. These measures are designed to deter illegal fishing practices and promote compliance among fishers.

There is currently no substantial evidence indicating widespread non-compliance or illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing within the fisheries of the Republic of Ireland or the UK. Monitoring systems and compliance checks have proven effective, as highlighted in various reports from fisheries management authorities. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and other organizations routinely assess fisheries and report minimal instances of noncompliance, reinforcing the effectiveness of management measures in place (ICES, 2025).

There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when infringements against laws and regulations are discovered. Clause M2.2 is met.

References

SFPA. 2025. *Compliance & enforcement: Enforcement actions*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from

https://www.sfpa.ie/What-We-Do/Compliance-Enforcement/Enforcement-Actions

Welsh Government. (2020). *Marine and Fisheries Compliance and Enforcement Strategy.* https://www.gov.wales/marine-and-fisheries-compliance-and-enforcement-strategy

Marine Scotland. (2025). *About Marine Scotland*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.scot/about/how-government-is-run/directorates/marine-scotland/

DEFRA. 2025. *Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA): About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about \

DAERA. 2025. *Fisheries and aquaculture*. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/fisheries

ICES. (2025). *Report of the Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE), 21–27 August 2025, ICES Headquarters, Copenhagen, Denmark*. ICES Scientific Reports, 2025:XX. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WGWIDE.aspx

M2.3	**M2.3**	**There is substantial evidence of widespread compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing.** *In reaching a determination for M2.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	M2.3.1	The level of compliance is documented and updated routinely, statistically reviewed and available.
	M2.3.2	Fishers provide additional information and cooperate with management/enforcement agencies/organisations to support the effective management of the fishery.
	M2.3.3	The catch recording and reporting system is sufficient for effective traceability of catches per vessel and supports the prevention of IUU fishing.
Outcome	*Pass*	

Rationale

Compliance with fisheries laws and regulations in the Republic of Ireland and the UK is actively monitored through a robust regime that includes various methods such as at-sea inspections, portside checks, and the implementation of observer programs. The VMS is also employed to track fishing vessels in real time, ensuring adherence to quotas and other regulations (EU,2009; UK 2024). These monitoring efforts are supported by both national and EU policies, which aim to enhance sustainability and compliance within fisheries (SFPA). Additionally, the European Commission's 2020–2023 report highlights strengthened traceability and digital tools that bolster IUU controls across member states, including Ireland and the UK (EU, 2024).

In addition, the UK Government's 2020 Evaluation of Fisheries Control and Enforcement (ICF, 2020)

provides independent evidence of widespread compliance in English fisheries. The report highlights that over 80% of fishers self-assess as fully or nearly fully compliant, and that increased enforcement capacity—through new patrol vessels, aerial surveillance, and intelligence-led inspections—has strengthened deterrence and monitoring. No substantial evidence of IUU fishing was identified, and voluntary compliance drivers such as awareness and moral duty were found to be key factors in sustaining high compliance levels (ICF, 2020).

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

References

Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA). (n.d.). Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. Retrieved from https://www.sfpa.ie

ICF. (2020). *Evaluation of Fisheries Control and Enforcement in England: Final Report of the Evidence Subgroup.* Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK Government. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6530e74692895c000ddcba1d/Fish_CE_Evaluation_-_FinalRevised_Nov2020_Evidence_subgroup.pdf

European Commission. (2024). *Fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing: new report on 2020–2023 achievements*. Retrieved from https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu

European Commission**.** (2009). *Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy.* Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009R1224

UK Government. (2024). *UK and England Quota Management Rules.* Marine Management Organisation. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-and-england-quota-management-rules

Species requirements

This section, or module, comprises of four species categories. Each species in the catch is subject to an assessment against the relevant species category in this section (see clauses 1.2 and 1.3 and Table 6).

Type 1 species can be considered the 'target' or 'main' species in the fishery under assessment. They make up the bulk of the catch and a subjected to a detailed assessment. Type 1 species must represent 95% of the total annual catch. If a species-specific management regime is in place for a Type 1 species, it shall be assessed under Category A. If there is no species-specific management regime in place for a Type 1 species, it shall be assessed under Category B.

Type 2 Species can be considered the 'non-target' species in the fishery under assessment. They comprise a small proportion of the annual catch and are subjected to a relatively high-level assessment. Type 2 species may represent a maximum of 5% of the annual catch. If a species-specific management regime is in place for a Type 2 species, it shall be assessed under Category C. If there is no species-specific management regime in place for a Type 2 species, it shall be assessed under Category D.

Species that comprise less than 0.1% of the catch are not required to be assessed or listed here.

Category A species

2.1. All clauses must be met for a species to pass the Category A assessment.

2.1.1. If a species fails any of the Category A clauses, it should be re-assessed as a Category B species.

Boarfish (*Capros aper*)

A1 Data collection

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

Rationale

The assessment for boarfish is a length-based age structured analytical assessment (Stock Synthesis 3). It incorporates data from various sources, including commercial catches, international landings, discards, and multiple acoustic surveys spanning from 2003 to 2024. Time-invariant maturity at length is estimated from survey data, while natural mortality is fixed at 0.174 for all lengths based on a maximum age of 31 years. Discard data from non-directed fisheries has been included since 2003. Catches for boarfish are shown in Figure 1.

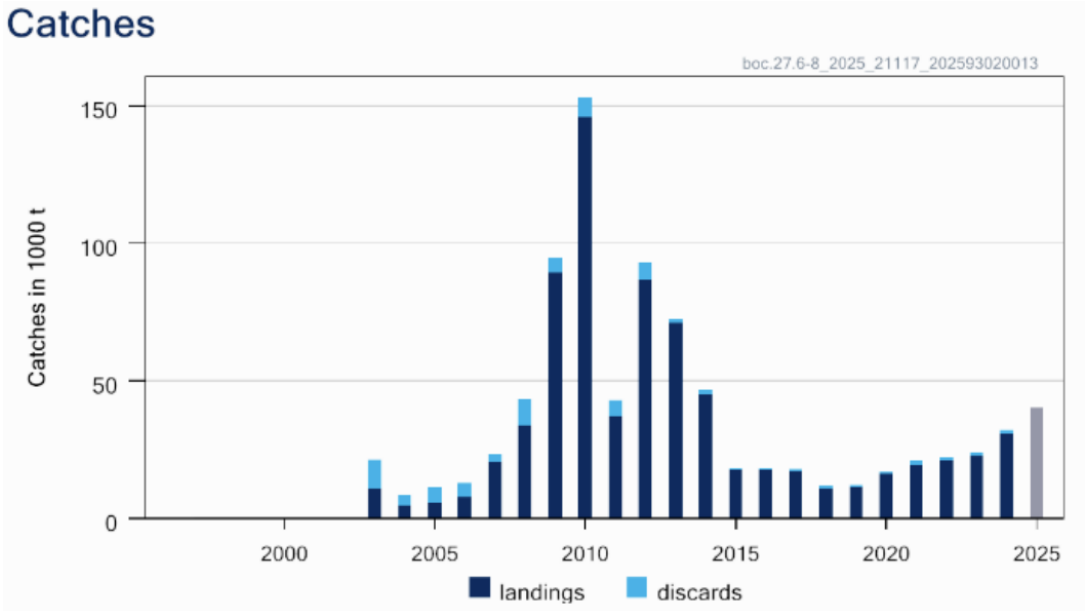

FIGURE 1. CATCHES OF BOARFISH IN SUBAREAS 6-8. SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT. THE 2025 CATCH (SHADED GREY) IS ESTIMATED BY ICES BASED ON NATIONAL QUOTAS, EXPECTED UPTAKE, AND AN ESTIMATE OF DISCARDS. SOURCE: ICES, 2025.

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

References

ICES. 2025. Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524

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

Rationale

The boarfish stock assessment is conducted using a length-based, age-structured analytical model known as Stock Synthesis 3, which integrates data from a wide range of sources (ICES, 2025). These include commercial catch records encompassing international landings and discards, as well as multiple acoustic surveys such as MSHAS (A9526) and BFAS (A2253) from Q2 (2011–2015), WESPAS (A8737) from Q2 (2016–2025), and PELGAS (A4150) from Q2 (2003–2025). The assessment also incorporates a standardized survey index generated using the vector autoregressive spatio-temporal (VAST) model, which combines data from EVHOE [G9527] and IGFS [G7212] in Q4 (2003–2024), WCSGFS in Q1 [G1179] and Q4 [G4299] (2003–2009), SCOWCGFS in Q1 [G4748] (2011–2025) and Q4 [G4815] (2011–2024), SPPGFS [G5768] in Q3 (2003–2024), and SPNGFS [G2784] in Q3/Q4 (2003–2024). Maturity-at-length is estimated from survey data and assumed to be time-invariant, while length–weight relationships are derived from commercial fishery samples collected in 2007 and acoustic survey samples from Q2 and Q3 in 2011. Natural mortality is fixed at a time-invariant rate of 0.174 across all lengths, based on a maximum estimated age of 31 years.

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

References

ICES. 2025. Boarfish (*Capros aper*) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524

A2 Stock assessment

A2.1	**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.**
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

The stock was benchmarked in 2024 and the basis of the advice changed to a length-based Stock Synthesis model as a Category 1 ICES stock (ICES, 2025a). Category 1 stocks are assessed annually because they are data-rich and support full analytical assessments. ICES uses these assessments to provide up-to-date scientific advice on stock status, fishing mortality, and reference points. This regular evaluation ensures that management decisions are based on the most current biological and ecological data, helping to maintain sustainable fisheries and respond to changing environmental conditions (ICES, 2025b).

A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species. Clause A2.1 is met.

References

ICES. 2025a. Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524

ICES. 2025b. *Stock Information Database*. International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, Copenhagen, Denmark. Retrieved October 7, 2025, from https://sid.ices.dk

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

Rationale

The stock was benchmarked in 2024 and the basis of the advice changed to a length-based Stock Synthesis model (Category 1) (ICES, 2025). ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches (ICES, 2024). MSY $B_{trigger}$ and B_{pa} are set at 190,845 tonnes, B_{lim} is set at 156,762 tonnes, F_{MSY} and F_{PA} are 0.042.

Figure 2 below shows the stock status against the reference points defined above. The biomass estimate provided on the 2025 stock assessment estimates the SSB to be approximately 758,773 tonnes (ICES, 2025).

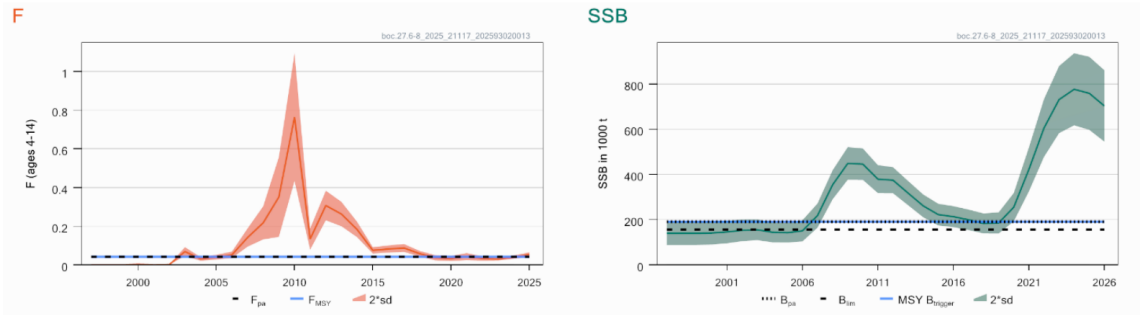

FIGURE 2. SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT FOR BOARFISH IN ICES SUBAREAS 6-8. SOURCE: ICES, 2025

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

References

ICES. 2024. Benchmark workshop on horse mackerel and boarfish (WKBHMB). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:8. 296 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.25002482

ICES. 2025. Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524

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

Outcome	*Pass*
Rationale ICES advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches should be no more than 29,720 tonnes in 2026 (ICES 2025). This value is set to be the equivalent of F_{PA}=0.042. The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status. Clause A2.3 is met.	
References ICES. 2025. Boarfish (*Capros aper*) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524	

A2.4	**A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.**
Outcome	*Pass*
Rationale The Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF) is ICES's system for documenting and managing the entire workflow of stock assessments—from raw data inputs to final scientific advice. It ensures that every step in the assessment process is traceable, reproducible, and transparent, supporting scientific integrity and stakeholder confidence. During the TAF process, assessments are subject to internal review by expert groups during the assessment phase, where scientists collaboratively evaluate data quality, model performance, and assumptions. External review occurs during the benchmark workshops and review groups. The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review. Clause A2.4 is met.	
References International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). (n.d.). *Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF)*. Retrieved October 7, 2025, from https://www.ices.dk/data/assessment-tools/Pages/transparentassessment-framework.aspx	

A2.5	**A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.**
Outcome	*Pass*
Rationale All ICES advice and stock assessments are available on the ICES website. The assessment is made publicly available. Clause A2.5 is met.	
References https://www.ices.dk/advice/pages/latest-advice.aspx	

A3 Harvest strategy

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

Rationale

The stock was benchmarked in 2024 and the basis of the advice changed to a length-based Stock Synthesis model (Category 1) (ICES, 2025). ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches (ICES, 2024). MSY $B_{trigger}$ and B_{pa} are set at 190,845 tonnes, B_{lim} is set at 156,762 tonnes, F_{MSY} and F_{PA} are 0.042. The reference points for fishing mortality in the boarfish stock assessment indicate that the MSY approach is being applied.

Advice for this stock is derived from the stock assessment and reference points. The TAC has been set at the advised catch since advice was provided in 2012. Total fishing mortality for the species is restricted through the implementation of this TAC. The TAC is applicable to EU, U.K., and international waters. Once the TAC is established, agreements in place appropriate quotas to individual states.

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

References

ICES. 2025. Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524

A3.2	**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.**
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

The TAC for the Boarfish in ICES 6-8 is consistently set to align with the advice since 2012, which was the first year advice was provided for this stock (ICES, 2025). In the year since then, the ICES catch has not exceeded TAC and advice with the exception of 2012 and 2024 (Table 2). The assessor has determined that this meets the criteria that total fishery removals do not regularly exceed the advised catch. However, as there are two years that exceed the advised catch, some may feel that this does not constitute regular adherence to the advised catch. Over the 13-year span that advice has been implemented, the stock has always remained above the limit reference point. In 2012 and 2024, the stock exceeded advised catch by 5.5% and 12.57%, respectively. Over the entire span (2012-2024), catches totaled to be 67.4% of the advised catch.

As previously discussed, the stock was benchmarked in 2024 and the biomass for the stock was higher than previously report which explains the harvest that exceeds TAC in that year (ICES, 2024).

TABLE 2. BOARFISH IN SUBAREAS 6–8. ICES ADVICE AND CATCH. ALL WEIGHTS ARE IN TONNES. SOURCE: ICES, 2025.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Total allowable catch (TAC) *	ICES catch
2010	None	-	None	145928
2011	None	-	33000	37109
2012	No increase in catches	82000	82000	86508
2013	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	82000	82000	71047
2014	MSY approach	133957	133957	44995
2015	Data-limited stocks (DLS) approach	53296	53292	17597
2016	Precautionary approach	≤ 42637	42637	17504
2017	Precautionary approach (–36% relative to previous advice)	≤ 27288	27288	17134
2018	Precautionary approach	≤ 21830	20380	10850
2019	Precautionary approach (same advice as for 2018)	≤ 21830	21830	11577
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 19152	19152	16211
2021	Precautionary approach (same advice as for 2020)	≤ 19152	19152	19166
2022	Precautionary approach	≤ 22791	22791	21115
2023	Precautionary approach (same advice as for 2022)	≤ 22791	22791	22612
2024	MSY approach	≤ 27349	27349	30787
2025	MSY approach**	≤ 38295	38295	
2026	MSY approach	≤ 29720		

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. Clause A3.2 is met.

References

ICES. 2024. Benchmark workshop on horse mackerel and boarfish (WKBHMB). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:8. 296 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.25002482

ICES. 2025. Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524

A3.3	**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).**
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

The stock was benchmarked in 2024 and a full set of reference points were defined for the stock (ICES, 2024a). As the stock has never been below the LRP or proxy, there is no evidence that indicates that removals from this stock are prohibited when the stock falls below LRP. However, there are plenty of other examples for ICES managed stocks where commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock is below LRP. Irish Sea Cod (*Gadus morhua;* Division 7.a) has fallen below the LRP and management has not allowed a directed fishery on the stock (ICEs, 2024b). Another example of this is Sandeel in Area 3R has recently fallen below LRP, and the fishery has recommended zero directed removals (ICES, 2025). While there is no evidence in place for the

boarfish fishery, there is evidence in other ICES managed fisheries that indicate that biomass below LRP would trigger a closure. Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy. Clause A3.3 is met.
References ICES. 2024a. Benchmark workshop on horse mackerel and boarfish (WKBHMB). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:8. 296 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.25002482 ICES. 2024b. Irish Sea mixed-fisheries considerations. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.26763907 ICES. 2025. Sandeel (Ammodytes spp.) in divisions 4.a–b and Subdivision 20, Sandeel Area 3r (northern and central North Sea, Skagerrak). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, san.sa.3r, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202851

A4 Stock status

A4.1	**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.**
Outcome	*Pass*	
Rationale The 2025 ICES stock assessment and advice states that fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY and FPA, and spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger, BPA, and Blim (Figure 2). The stock is at or above the target reference point. Clause A4.1 is met.		
References ICES. 2025. Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202524		

Category B species

Category B species are assessed using a risk-based approach.

2.2. The risk matrix in Table B(a) shall be used when assessing a Category B species when estimates of Fishing mortality (F), Biomass (B) and reference points are available.

2.3. The risk matrix in Table B(b) shall be used when assessing a Category B species when no reference points are available.

There are no category B species in this assessment.

B1	**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).**
Table used B(a) or B(b)	
Outcome	Choose an item.
Rationale	
References	

Category C species

2.4. All clauses must be met for a species to pass the Category C assessment.

2.4.1. Where a species fails this Category C clause, it should be assessed as a Category D species instead, except if there is evidence that the species is currently below the limit reference point.

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

Rationale

Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*) n Subarea 8 and divisions 2.a, 3.a, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters)

Horse mackerel in the northeast Atlantic is an ICES category 1 species, which means it is subject to an annual stock assessment. This stock is assessed using an age-based analytical assessment (Stock Synthesis) that uses catches in the model and in the forecast (ICES 2025). Input data for the model are commercial catches: international catches, age data from catch sampling. Four indices: triennial egg survey index (I4189, 1992–2022); a combined recruitment index (2003–2024) derived from EVHOE (G9527), IGFS (G7212), NS-IBTS(G1022), PORC (G5768), SCOWCGFS (G4748 and G4815), SP-NORTH (G2784), and SWC-IBTS (G1179 and G4299); a combined biomass index (2011-2024) derived from the acoustic surveys PELACUS (A2548), PELGAS (A4150) and WESPAS (A8737); and a commercial CPUE index (2017-2022). Mean weight-at-age estimated annually from catch samples. Time invariant maturity-at-age and natural mortality-at- age. Discards are provided and included in the assessment.

Horse mackerel removals in the boarfish fishery are included in the stock assessment process for horse mackerel. Under the EU Landing Obligation, all catches of quota species—including bycatch—must be landed and reported (European Commission, 2013). ICES incorporates these data into the horse mackerel stock assessment for Subareas 6–8 (ICES, 2025). While discards are generally assumed to be low due to the landing obligation, ICES may apply estimated discard rates (e.g., 4–7%) where relevant, as discussed in Borges et al. (2005) and Tenningen et al. (2021)

ICES (2025) advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches in 2026 should be no more than 74 214 tonnes (Figure 3). Catches are used in the model and forecast, Clause C1.1 is met.

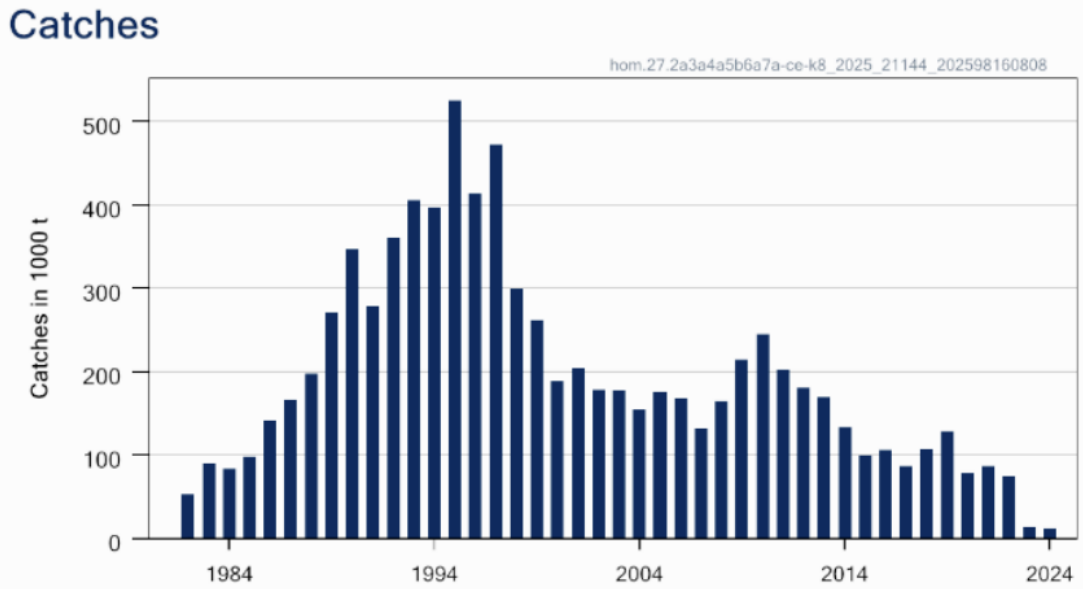

Figure 3. Catches of horse mackerel in in Subarea 8 and divisions 2.a, 3.a, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k. Summary of the stock assessment. Source: ICES, 2025.

References

Borges, L., Zuur, A. F., Rogan, E., & Officer, R. (2005). *Discarding by the demersal fishery in ICES area VI*. Fisheries Research, 76(1), 1–13

European Commission (2013). *Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy*.

Tenningen, M., et al. (2021). *Mortality of slipping pelagic fish from purse seines: A review*. ICES Journal of Marine Science, 78(1), 1–13.

ICES. 2025. Horse mackerel (Trachurus trachurus) in Subarea 8 and divisions 2.a, 3.a, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, hom.27.2a3a4a5b6a7a-ce-k8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202650

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

Rationale

Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*) in Subarea 8 and divisions 2.a, 3.a, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters)

ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches. MSY $B_{trigger}$ and B_{pa} are set at 787,443 tonnes, B_{lim} is set at 566,678 tonnes, F_{MSY} and F_{PA} are 0.080.

Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY and spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger, BPA, and Blim (Figure 4).

Biomass is above the LRP, Clause C1.2 is met.

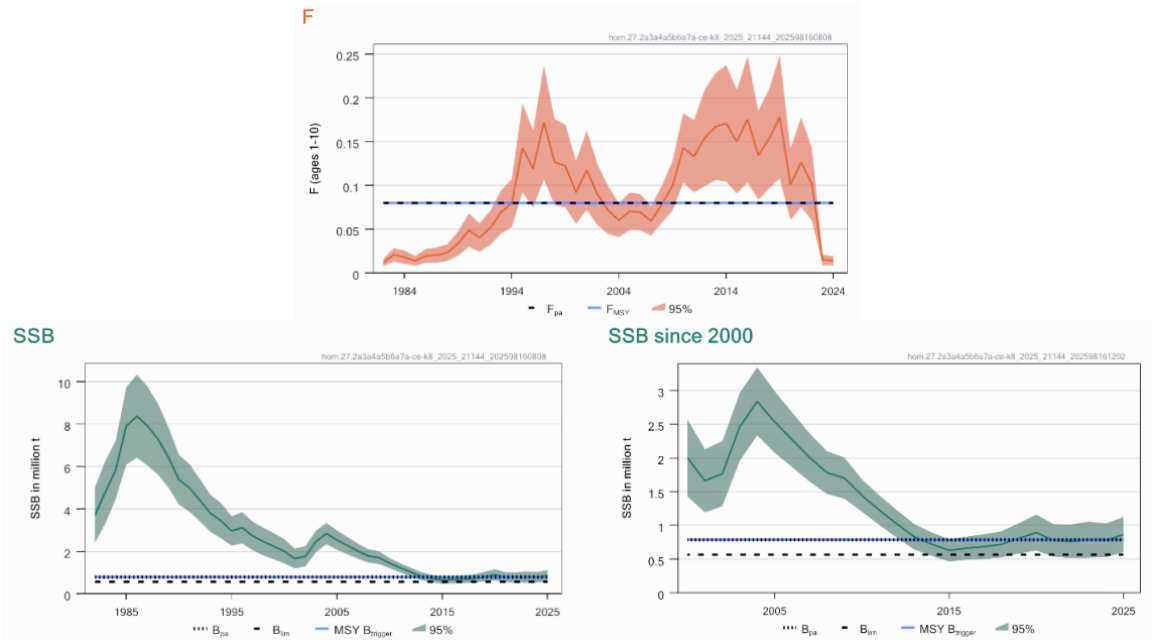

FIGURE 4.SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT FOR HORSE MACKEREL IN SUBAREA 8 AND DIVISIONS 2.A, 3.A, 4.A, 5.B, 6.A, 7.A–C, AND 7.E–K. SOURCE: ICES, 2025.

References

ICES. 2025. Horse mackerel (Trachurus trachurus) in Subarea 8 and divisions 2.a, 3.a, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES
Advice 2025, hom.27.2a3a4a5b6a7a-ce-k8, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202650

Category D species

Category D species are assessed against a risk-based approach.

2.5. The Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) in Table D(a) shall be used when assessing Category D species.

2.6. Table D(b) shall be used to calculate the overall PSA risk rating for the Category D species.

2.7. Should the PSA indicate a high risk, further assessment shall be completed against the requirements in Table D(C).

There are no Category D species included in this assessment.

Productivity Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) and scores

Table D(a) provides detailed values and scores for the species productivity and susceptibility attributes and attributes, the assessor shall use Table D(a) to the PSA table.
Table D(b) is used to calculate the overall PSA risk rating for the Category D species.

Species name		
Productivity attributes	**Value**	**Score**
Average age at maturity		
Average maximum age		
Fecundity		
Average maximum size		
Average size at maturity		
Reproductive strategy		
Mean Trophic Level (MTL)		
Density dependence (to be used when scoring invertebrate species only)		
Susceptibility attributes		
Areal overlap (availability): Overlap of the fishing effort with a species concentration of the stock		
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		
Selectivity of gear type:		

Potential of the gear to retain species		
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		
Average productivity score		
Average susceptibility score		
PSA risk rating (from Table D(b))		
Compliance rating		

Further assessment for Category D species

Should the PSA indicate a high risk, further assessment shall be completed against the requirements D1 and D2 – Table D(c).

D1	**D1. The potential impacts of the fishery on this species are considered during the management process, and reasonable measures are taken to minimise these impacts.**
Outcome	Choose an item.
Rationale	
References	

D2	**D2. There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the species.**
Outcome	Choose an item.
Rationale	
References	

Ecosystem requirements

This section, or module, assesses the impacts that the fishery under assessment may have on key ecosystem components: ETP species, habitat and the wider ecosystem.

2.8. All ecosystem criteria must be met (pass) for a fishery to pass the Ecosystem Requirements.

2.8.1. The sub-criteria offer a structured evidence base to demonstrate that the fishery sufficiently meets the ecosystem criteria, it is not expected that sub-criteria are assessed independently of the main criterion.

E1 Impact on Endangered, Threatened or Protected species (ETP species)

E1.1	**E1.1 Information on interactions between the fishery and ETP species is collected.** *In reaching a determination for E1.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*	
	E1.1.1	ETP species which may be directly affected by the fishery have been identified.
	E1.1.2	Interactions between the fishery and ETP species are recorded and reported to management organisations.
	E1.1.3	Collection and analysis of ETP information is adequate to provide a reliable indication of the impact the fishery has on ETP species.
Outcome	*Pass*	

Rationale

The information provided here has not changed from the previous surveillance report.

The boarfish fishery actively monitors interactions with endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species. Data collection mechanisms are in place to document any interactions that occur during fishing operations. Both the Marine Institute in Ireland and Marine Scotland conduct research and gather data on bycatch, including ETP species. This information is essential for understanding the impact of fishing practices on vulnerable marine life and is reported to regulatory bodies, ensuring that any interactions are accurately recorded and addressed. ICES obtains data on ETPs species (ETPs) bycatch through an annual data call. These data are most commonly linked to at-sea observations carried out for the purposes of fisheries monitoring in accordance with the EU Data Collection Framework Regulation 2017/1004 (DCF). The Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) was established in 2007 and collates and analyses information from across the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent sea areas related to the bycatch of ETPs species, including marine mammals, seabirds, turtles and sensitive fish species in commercial fishing operations, UK and Ireland provide data for this WG (ICES 2024).

Information on interactions between the fishery and ETP species is collected. Clause E1.1 is met.

References

European Parliament and Council of the European Union. (2017). *Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of 17*

May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy (recast). Official Journal of the European Union, L 157, 1–21. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/1004/oj

ICES. (2024). *Report of the Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC), 12–16 February 2024, ICES Headquarters, Copenhagen, Denmark*. ICES Scientific Reports, 2024:02. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Report_of_the_Working_Group_on_Bycatch_of_Protected_Species_WGBYC_/26042671

E1.2	**E1.2 The fishery has no significant negative impact on ETP species.** *In reaching a determination for E1.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	E1.2.1 The information collected in relation to E1.1.3 indicates that the fishery does not have a significant negative impact on ETP species.
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

Recent assessments indicate that pelagic fisheries, including the boarfish fishery, do not exert a substantial negative impact on endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species. The 2024 report from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) compiles data submitted by Member States, including the Republic of Ireland and the UK, on interactions between commercial fishing operations and ETP species (ICES, 2024). These data reflect the effectiveness of current management measures, such as gear selectivity and monitoring protocols, in minimizing bycatch risks. In 2023, reported observations from metiers that submitted bycatch data showed the following: in the Celtic Seas ecoregion, 112 marine mammals (4 species), 98 birds (2 species), 3,765 elasmobranchs (25 species), 39,210 teleosts (16 species), and 287 deep-sea holocephalans (1 species) were recorded over 1,312 days at sea. In the Greater North Sea ecoregion, 389 marine mammals (5 species), 162 birds (15 species), 7,943 elasmobranchs (23 species), 203,487 teleosts (26 species), 1 lamprey (1 species), and 745 deep-sea holocephalans (1 species) were recorded over 3,412 days at sea (ICES, 2024).

The fishery has no significant negative impact on ETP species. Clause E1.2 is met.

References

ICES. (2024). *Report of the Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC), 12–16 February 2024, ICES Headquarters, Copenhagen, Denmark*. ICES Scientific Reports, 2024:02. Retrieved October 6, 2025, from https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Report_of_the_Working_Group_on_Bycatch_of_Protected_Species_WGBYC_/26042671

E1.3	**E1.3 There is an ETP management strategy in place for the fishery.** *In reaching a determination for E1.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	E1.3.1 There are measures applied to the fishery which are designed to manage the impacts of the fishery on ETP species.

	E1.3.2 The measures are considered likely to achieve the objectives of regional, national and international legislation relating to ETP species.
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

There is a management strategy in place for the boarfish fishery in ICES 6-8 that is intended to reduce the risk for ETP species that interact with the fishery. Broader evidence from the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) supports the application of ETP mitigation measures in pelagic trawl fisheries, including observer coverage, safe release protocols, and gear selectivity standards that align with EU conservation regulations (ICES, 2024).

The fishery uses midwater pelagic trawls, which are generally considered to have lower interaction rates with demersal ETP species compared to bottom-contact gear types (European Commission, 2013). National authorities, including the UK Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Ireland's Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), are responsible for enforcing EU fisheries legislation, including provisions related to the protection of Endangered, Threatened, and Protected (ETP) species. While no fishery-specific protocols for the safe handling and release of ETP species in the boarfish fishery are publicly documented, the fishery operates under the broader regulatory framework of the EU Common Fisheries Policy (Regulation 1380/2013) and the EU Fisheries Control Regulation (Council Regulation 1224/2009), which require member states to minimize the impact of fishing on the marine environment and ensure compliance with conservation objectives (European Commission, 2009; European Commission, 2013).

There is an ETP management strategy in place for the fishery. Clause E1.3 is met.

References

ICES. (2024). Report of the Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC). ICES Scientific Reports. 4:45. 152 pp. Retrieved from https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Report_of_the_Working_Group_on_Bycatch_of_Protected_Species_WGBYC_/26042671

European Commission. (2009). Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy. Official Journal of the European Union, L 343, 22.12.2009, pp. 1–50. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009R1224

European Commission. (2013). Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy. Official Journal of the European Union, L 354, 28.12.2013, pp. 22–61. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1380

E2 Impact on the habitat

E2.1	**E2.1**	**Information on interactions between the fishery and marine habitats is collected.** *In reaching a determination for E2.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	E2.1.1	Habitats which may be directly affected by the fishery have been identified, including any habitats which may be particularly vulnerable.
	E2.1.2	Information on the scale, location and intensity of fishing activity relative to habitats is collected.
	E2.1.3	Collection and analysis of habitat information is adequate to provide a reliable indication of the impact the fishery has on marine habitats.
Outcome	*Pass*	

Rationale

The management decision-making process for the boarfish fishery in ICES areas 6 to 8 incorporates considerations of potential habitat interactions. This approach is guided by scientific assessments and stakeholder input to ensure that ecological impacts are factored into management plans. By evaluating how fishing practices may affect marine habitats, decision-makers aim to promote sustainable fishing while protecting marine ecosystems. Member states are required to comply with the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Technical Measures Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1241), which mandate protective measures for natural habitats and species. Member States must gather robust data on fishing efforts and bycatch to meet legislative obligations. Technological advancements, such as in-trawl cameras and automated catch profiling systems from various projects in Denmark, will be implemented to monitor and mitigate bycatch of endangered, threatened, or protected (ETP) species in UK and Ireland too as states member of ICES.

There are requirements from member states to collect these data on habitat interactions, however the boarfish fishery under assessment implements pelagic trawl and pelagic pair trawl. These gears do not contact the seabed and are operated fully in the water column. As such, the need to collect information between these gears and marine habitats is not applicable. There is minimal risk to habitats from this fishery.

Clause E2.1 is met.

References

European Council. (1992). *Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*. Official Journal of the European Communities, L 206, 22 July 1992, pp. 7–50. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31992L0043

European Union. (2019). *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*. Official Journal of the European Union, L 198, 25 July 2019, pp. 105–201. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019R1241

E2.2	**E2.2 The fishery has no significant impact on marine habitats.** *In reaching a determination for E2.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	E2.2.1 The information collected in relation to E2.1.3 indicates that the fishery does not have a significant negative impact on marine habitats.
Outcome	*Pass*
Rationale The boarfish fishery under assessment implements pelagic trawl and pelagic pair trawl. These gears do not contact the seabed and are operated fully in the water column. As such, the need to collect information between these gears and marine habitats is not applicable. There is minimal risk to habitats from this fishery. The fishery has no significant impact on marine habitats. Clause E2.2 is met.	
References None	

E2.3	**E2.3 There is a habitat management strategy in place for the fishery.** *In reaching a determination for E2.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	E2.3.1 There are measures applied to the fishery which are designed to manage the impact of the fishery on marine habitats.
	E2.3.2 The measures are considered likely to prevent the fishery from having a significant negative impact on marine habitats.
Outcome	*Pass*
Rationale Considering that pelagic trawl fisheries are not in contact with the seabed and therefore do not impact on the marine habitat, a specific habitat management strategy is not considered necessary. Clause E2.3 is met.	
References None	

E3 Impact on the ecosystem

E3.1	**E3.1 Information on the potential impacts of the fishery on marine ecosystems is collected.** *In reaching a determination for E3.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	E3.1.1 The main elements of the marine ecosystems in the area(s) where the fishery takes place have been identified.

	E3.1.2	The role of the species caught in the fishery within the marine ecosystem is understood, either through research on this specific fishery or inferred from other fisheries.
	E3.1.3	Collection and analysis of ecosystem information is adequate to provide a reliable indication of the impact the fishery has on marine ecosystems.
Outcome	*Pass*	

Rationale

The boarfish (*Capros aper*) fishery is managed under a Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)-based framework, which aims to maintain stock levels that support ecosystem services and long-term sustainability (ICEs, 2025). This management strategy is grounded in annual stock assessments and scientific advice provided by ICES, ensuring decisions are informed by the most current data (ICES, 2025). Member states contribute to these assessments through regular ICES data calls, supplying catch statistics, biological sampling, and effort data (ICES, 2025). These inputs support ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM), which aims to maintain stock productivity while minimizing adverse impacts on marine biodiversity and habitats (ICES, 2024a).

The marine ecosystem in ICES areas 6–8 includes key pelagic species such as boarfish, Atlantic mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*), and horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*), as well as predators like hake, whiting, seabirds, and marine mammals. Boarfish, in particular, contribute to energy transfer between planktonic producers and larger pelagic predators. While Egerton et al. (2017) identify boarfish as a key prey species in the Azores and Portuguese coast, the ICES overview suggests that similar trophic roles are likely within the Celtic Seas, even if direct predation studies are limited. The presence of these forage species supports ecosystem productivity and resilience, and their inclusion in ICES ecosystem modeling and mixed fisheries advice provides a basis for understanding species interactions and potential impacts of fishing pressure.

Ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) is actively promoted in the Celtic Seas through ICES ecosystem overviews, EU policy frameworks, and regional scientific initiatives. The ICES Celtic Seas Ecosystem Overview identifies key pressures such as fishing mortality, climate change, and habitat degradation, and emphasizes the importance of managing forage species like boarfish, mackerel, and horse mackerel within a broader food web that includes predators such as hake, whiting, seabirds, and marine mammals (ICES, 2024a). At the fishery level, the boarfish fishery contributes to EBFM through the collection of catch statistics, biological sampling (e.g., length, age, maturity), and effort data submitted via ICES data calls. Boarfish are also included in acoustic surveys and multispecies benchmark workshops (e.g., WKBHMB 2024), which support biomass estimation, spatial distribution modeling, and ecosystem-level assessments (ICES, 2024b). While direct observer coverage and ecosystem modeling specific to boarfish remain limited, the integration of boarfish into regional assessments and mixed fisheries advice provides a reliable foundation for evaluating the fishery's impact on marine ecosystems and implementing EBFM in ICES areas 6–8.

Information on the potential impacts of the fishery on marine ecosystems is collected. Clause E3.1 is met.

References

ICES. (2024a). ICES Ecosystem Overview – Celtic Seas Ecoregion. https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Ecosystem%20Overviews/CelticSeas_EcosystemOverview.pdf

ICES. (2024b). Benchmark Workshop on Boarfish, Horse Mackerel, and Blue Whiting (WKBHMB 2024). ICES Scientific Reports. https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/_Benchmark_workshop_on_horse_mackerel_and_boarfish_WKBHMB_/25002482?file=50880189

ICES. (2025). *Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay)*. In *Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025*. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8. https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Boarfish_Capros_aper_in_subareas_6_8_Celtic_Seas_English_Channel_and_Bay_of_Biscay_/27202524

Egerton, J., et al. (2017). Boarfish biology, distribution, and trophic role in the Northeast Atlantic. Journal of Marine Science, 74(3), 623–635. https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsw200

E3.2	**E3.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.** *In reaching a determination for E3.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*
	E3.2.1 The information collected in relation to E3.1.3 indicates that the fishery does not have a significant negative impact on marine ecosystems.
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

Boarfish (*Capros aper*) exhibit a broad geographic distribution, spanning from the coastal waters of Norway to Senegal, and extending into the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, as well as around Macaronesian islands such as the Azores, Canaries, and Madeira, including the Great Meteor Seamount (Egerton et al., 2017; FishBase, 2025). They typically inhabit continental shelf regions and upper continental slopes, occurring at depths between 40 and 600 meters, where they are associated with demersal and mesopelagic zones (FishBase, 2025).

As zooplanktivores, boarfish feed primarily on copepods—notably *Calanus helgolandicus*—alongside mysid shrimps, euphausiids, and hyperiid amphipods, forming part of the mid-trophic level in marine food webs (Egerton et al., 2017; ICES, 2025). Research indicates that boarfish serve as a significant prey item for larger pelagic fish and seabirds, particularly in regions such as the Azores and the Portuguese coast, where alternative prey may be less abundant (ICES, 2025; Silva et al., 2014). However, stomach content analyses from Irish waters suggest that boarfish do not play a comparable trophic role in the Northeast Atlantic, with little to no evidence of predation in those areas (Egerton et al., 2017).

Given these regional differences, continued research is essential to refine understanding of boarfish's ecological role across its range. While localized studies support its importance in predator diets in specific areas, this pattern is not consistent throughout its distribution. In recognition of these potential ecological interactions, the ICES Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE) applies a precautionary management approach to the boarfish fishery, aiming to mitigate unintended ecosystem impacts (ICES, 2025).

There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem. Clause E3.2

References

Egerton, S., Culloty, S., Whooley, J., Stanton, C., & Ross, R. (2017). Boarfish (*Capros aper*): Review of a new capture fishery and its valorization potential. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*, 74(8), 2059–2067. https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsx048

ICES. (2025). *Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay)*. In *Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025*. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8. https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Boarfish_Capros_aper_in_subareas_6_8_Celtic_Seas_English_Channel_and_Bay_of_Biscay_/27202524

FishBase. (2025). *Capros aper* summary page. Retrieved October 7, 2025, from https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Capros-aper.html

Silva, M. A., Prieto, R., Magalhães, S., Seabra, M. I., Santos, R. S., & Hammond, P. S. (2014). Incorporating uncertainty into habitat models for cetaceans: A case study of bottlenose dolphins around São Miguel Island (Azores). *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, 512, 265–281. https://doi.org/10.3354/meps10955

E3.3	**E3.3 There is an ecosystem management strategy in place for the fishery.** *In reaching a determination for E3.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:*	
	E3.3.1	There are measures applied to the fishery which are designed to manage the impacts of the fishery on marine ecosystems.
	E3.3.2	The measures are considered likely to prevent the fishery from having a significant negative impact on marine ecosystems.
Outcome	*Pass*	

Rationale

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) identifies ecosystem-based management (EBM) as the cornerstone for regulating human activities that affect marine ecosystems (ICES, 2019). In accordance with this principle, ICES incorporates EBM into its fishing opportunity advice, ensuring that changes in ecosystem productivity are considered alongside the overarching goal of achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) (ICES, 2025). This approach is designed to guide policy decisions that promote long-term sustainable yields while maintaining the integrity of marine ecosystems.

ICES's advisory framework is informed by global conservation standards, including the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which emphasize the need to manage fisheries with attention to impacts beyond the target species (FAO, 2021). This includes implementing measures to reduce discards and bycatch, and to mitigate interactions with endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species, thereby addressing the broader ecological footprint of fishing activities (ICES, 2023). The fishery is managed through an annually reviewed Total Allowable Catch (TAC) system, which is based on scientific assessments,

historical catch data, and monitoring surveys, ensuring adaptive and precautionary management.

References

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. (2023). *Guide to ICES advisory framework and principles*. https://iceslibrary.figshare.com/articles/report/Guide_to_ICES_advisory_framework_and_principles/22116890

ICES. (2019). *Ecosystem approach*. https://www.ices.dk/advice/Pages/Ecosystemapproach.aspx

ICES. (2025). *Boarfish (Capros aper) in subareas 6–8 (Celtic Seas, English Channel, and Bay of Biscay)*. In *Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025*. ICES Advice 2025, boc.27.6-8. https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Boarfish_Capros_aper_in_subareas_6_8_Celtic_Seas_English_Channel_and_Bay_of_Biscay_/27202524

FAO. (2021). *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. https://www.fao.org/fisheries/code-of-conduct/en

Annex 1: External Peer Review report

Assessment and determination summary

Fishery name	*UK | Boarfish (Capros aper) | FAO 27, ICES 6-8*
MarinTrust report code	*WF15*
Type 1 species (common name, Latin name)	*Boarfish (Capros aper)*
Fishery location	*FAO 27, ICES 6-8*
Gear type(s)	*Pelagic trawl, pelagic pair trawl*
Management authority (country/state)	*Republic of Ireland, UK and European Commission*
Certification Body recommendation	*Approved*
FAPRG reviewer recommendation	Agree with CB determination

Summary of peer review outcomes

Summary *Provide any information about the fishery that the reviewers feel is significant to their decision. This summary is used by the Certification Body in the Fishery Assessment Report.*
Boarfish (Capros aper) is the single Type 1 species and meets the category A species criteria. Horse mackerel (Trachurus trachurus) was the only Type 2 species and meets the category C species criteria. Boarfish is listed as IUCN Least Concern, and horse mackerel is categorised as Vulnerable; neither species appears in CITES, so both are eligible under the Marine Trust requirements. Management and understanding of the impacts on ETP species, habitats, and ecosystems remain essentially unchanged; however, clarification of ecosystem impacts is recommended. In conclusion; the peer reviewer agrees with CB assessment.
General comments on the draft report provided to the peer reviewer
The CB would greatly appreciate if PR comments were reviewed for spelling, grammar, appropriate punctuation, and formatting prior to submitting the PR report. It takes a noticeably longer time to decipher the content of the comments when these errors interupt the flow of reading. There are multiple spelling/grammar errors in the comment provided above and clause-specific comments provided below.

1. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MarinTrust fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?	See notes
2. Does the Species Categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?	See notes
3. Are the scores in the following sections consistent with the MarinTrust requirements (i.e. do the scores reflect the evidence provided)?	Yes
Section M – Management Requirements	See notes
Category A Species	See notes
Category B Species	n/a
Category C Species	See notes
Category D Species	Yes
Section E – Ecosystem Impacts	See notes

Detailed Peer Review Justification

1. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MarinTrust fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?	Yes
Yes, the scoring within the report is mostly consistent with the Marin Trust V3 standard for whole fishery assessment. The report is well-written, with references, accessible web links, and relevant figures and tables provided throughout to support scoring. Very few minor comments are made below, where further clarification could be provided. In regards to the MT methodology and associated guidance: Table 7, Species catergoration there is no reference provided for client data, even a per comms reference should be included (name/company, per comms/email, date). Gear type listed should it include mesh sizes? i.e., Boarfish report WGWIDE states the fishery uses pelagic pair trawl nets with mesh sizes ranging from 32 to 54mm *is this a vessel licence condition; does it make a difference to catch composition? Finally, due to the potential for boarfish catch from other gear types being used in MT factory, the factory aduitor should clarify the catch composition and gear type.	
Certification Body response	
The personal communication reference has been added for discussion with the client. Thank you for pointing that out. Mesh size on gear was not included as niether MarinTrust nor the client application provided this information to the assessor. Ultimately, the assessor feels that it would provide a negligible difference in rationale, scoring, and context. PR's suggested note for on-site auditor was added to the report.	

2. Does the species categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?	Yes
What evidence was reviewed to valdiate client sourced catch data? The only public catch data I could find was the Seafish fleet enquiry tool; but I couldn't find any record of landings for Boarfish in the UK for the last three years (presumably this is because most pelagic vessel data is confidential in the UK?). The only other information I could find on catch composition was from White et al 2011 (https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsq150) which describes boarfish as previously being caught as bycatch in pelagic and demersal trawls targetting mackerel and horse mackerel and crustaceans; but around 2008 due to displacement and diversification some of the the irish pelagic fleet started to target boarfish. The previous assessment had Mackerel listed as <5% but no assessment of horse mackerel was completed. In any case, a justification from the previous report is still relevant here for dealing with data quality - if still accurate - "the fishery is subject to localised closure if bycatch exceeds 5% of the total catch per day in an ICES statistical rectangle (PelAC 2015)" - also note boarfish report from WGWIDE says "Information on the bycatch of other species in the boarfish fishery is sparse, though thought to be minimal." Finally, the numbers for % catch composition in the header table do not match the numbers in the scoring rational (table1)	
Certification Body response	
Initially, the assessor used the catch categorization from the previous surveillance reports. However upon further investigation, the assessor determined that this same species categorization has been used dating back to at least the 2021 report. Each of three previous assessments provided on the MarinTrust website were stated that there were no new catch composition data available and those assessments would proceed as status quo. Due to the assessors inability to locate the source of the previous categorization, the client was contacted to determine the catch profile in the current state of the fishery. There is no published literature available to support the client provided data, but the assessor has added a recommendation for the 2026 surveillance report that states that catch data should be verified at the first surveillance audit.	

3. Is the scoring of the fishery consistent with the MarinTrust requirements, and clearly based on the evidence presented in the assessment report?	Yes
It is apparent that the Marin Trust whole fishery v3 assessment methodology and associated guidance have been followed.	
Certification Body response	
None	

3a. Are the “Category A Species” scores clearly justified?	Yes
A2.1 Justification should clarify that because it is a new Cat1 stock that from now on the benchmark will be annual, and ICES have a track record of having rigorous timelines for delivery; but when was the last assessment completed as a Cat3 stock?	
Certification Body response	
During the last assessment, it was stated that the stock was benchmarked and that stock was now classified as Category 1. The last MarinTrust assessment completed when boarfish was a Category 3 stock was in 2023. This clarification was clearly stated in the assessment determination and various rationale sections under Category A scoring. The assessor feels that this is sufficient clarification and no changes were made.	

3b. Are the “Category B Species” scores clearly justified?	n/a
Certification Body response	
N/A	

3c. Are the “Category C Species” scores clearly justified?	No
C1.1. Justification could be clearer and linked to the fishery under assessment i.e., boarfish targetted fishery. Where it is law to declare all landings; all landings are the reported through EU data sharing iniative; which are provided to ICES for stock assessment; discards are estimated to be zero because of landing obligation - or e.g., Stock assessment assumes 4-7% discard rate for this species (Borges et al.,) Table 5 of horsce mackerel stock assessment says discards and bycatch (discards are included) but the boarfish stock assessment says discards from non-target fishery are included, could be worth double checking data inputs.	
Certification Body response	
Under C1.1, clarification was added to the rationale to indicate that removals from the boarfish fishery are required to be reported, and they are also incorporated into the stock assessment process for horse mackerel. Thank you for bringing that lapse in rationale to the assessor's attention.	

3d. Are the “Category D Species” scores clearly justified?	n/a
Please clarify if Cat D scoring is needed.	
Certification Body response	
At the top of the Category D (Page 25) it already states that there are no Category D species included in the assessment. Furthermore, Table 7: Species Categoization also states that there are no Category D species. The CB feels that this clarification is already provided and no further	

clarification is needed.

Are the scores in “Section M – Management Requirements” clearly justified?	No
The management scoring is well evidenced, and provides scoring justifications for both the Irish, UK and EU management systems. A few areas clarification is needed: M1.1 for the UK Defra negoiated catch and facilitate overarching policy but the devolved adminstrations (DAs) are responsible for regional policy and impelementation of management measures. The DAs being England (Marine Management Organisation); Scotland (Marine Scotland); Wales (Welsh gov and Natural Resources wales); and northern ireland (DAERA). Not sure this is clear in the text (MMO is not mentioned) or in other sections i.e., M2.1 and M2.2, the MMO is missing for enforcement and so is Natural Resource Wales. Finally, it's not clear if all is relevant i.e., are there any welsh registered pelagic vessels targetting boarfish? M2.3 the justification is geared up to address 2.3.3., but please clarify if VMS used to enforce quota? Is this information also in the SFPA report, if so please could provide an additional reference with page numbers associated. Furthermore it may be appropraite to include information from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6530e74692895c000ddcba1d/Fish_CE_Evaluation_-_FinalRevised_Nov2020_Evidence_subgroup.pdf review of UK management measures - which is the only report I could find with compliance numbers (M2.3.1) page 20 - "The proportion of inspections detecting at least one infringement also increased (from 20% in 2018). "	
Certification Body response	
Yes, the assessor is aware of the DAs, which is why they were included in the rationale. MMO was not mentioned because the parent department (Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)) was included in the rationales. But the explanation stated pertaining to DEFRA can be said about MMO as well. As there is no material change in rationale and scoring by referencing MMO in lieu of DEFRA, no changes were made. However, clarification for the Marine Fisheries Division was added to the text pertaining to the Welsh government (in M1.1 and other sections including enforcment). The ICF enforcement report was considered, but was not initally inlcuded because it is outdated. However, the assessor wasn't confident in that decision to include or exclude. Given PR's suggestion to include it, the ICF (2020) was readded to the report. Finally, yes, VMS is used to enforce quota and was rationalized in the report using the following text, "The VMS is also employed to track fishing vessels in real time, ensuring adherence to quotas and other regulations."	

Are the scores in “Section E – Ecosystem Impacts” clearly justified?	Yes
This fishery is well managed in terms of its impacts on ETP and ecosystems. The gear type, pelagic trawl, doesn't interact with the seabed so habitat management is minimised. Scoring is well presented however which references are relevant to which text could be clearer. E1.3 ETP species interactions are documented in the WGWIDE report? What about boarfishery measures impelmented to reduce mortality of ETP, is that in the WGWIDE report, why was it needed, to reduce mortality of what? Finally, scoring mentions guidance produced by MMO, is	

this specific to the boarfish fishery? Or braoder advice for other gear types. Please also provide a refenece for statement on continuous training and awareness too, is this a mandate set by the client (and per comms)? licensing laws?... E2.1/E2.2 Conclusion is there is 'no risk', there is never no risk, what about lost gear? Regardless I agree the criteria is met. E3.1 Scoring justification could be stonger, focusing on elements of the ecosystem in which the fishery operates; impact on bycatch species (Mackeral and Horse Mackerel); or collection of data. Currently it's to centred on stock assessment and examples from outside fishering area under assessment.
Certification Body response
E1.3. The assessor completely agrees with your comment and has reformatted the entire rationale to better suit the focus of this scoring clause. E2. 'No risk' has been changed to 'minimal risk'. E3. The assessor agrees with the comment here. The rationale has been reconfigured in order to focus on the Celtic Seas region, however broadscale information pertaining to EBFM has been added as it is applicable to the boarfish fishery.

Optional: General peer reviewer comments on the draft report
Certification Body response