



MarinTrust Whole fish fishery assessment report

Denmark

*Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) and Herring (*Clupea harengus*)
in FAO 27, ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3.a.*

Surveillance

WF31

Table 1: Whole fish fishery assessment scope

Fishery name	Denmark sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) and herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in FAO 27, ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3.a.
MarinTrust report code	WF31
Type 1 species (common name, Latin name)	Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)
Fishery location	ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3.a.
Gear type(s)	Small-meshed pelagic trawl
Management authority (country/state)	EU (Denmark)

Table 2: Applicant and Certification Body details

Application details			
Applicant(s)	FF Skagen A/S, Thyborøn (TripleNine)		
Applicant country	Denmark		
Certification Body details			
Name of Certification Body	NSF / Global Trust Certification Ltd		
Contact Information for CB	Fisheries@nsf.org		
Fishery Assessor name	Sam Peacock		
CB Peer Reviewer name	Matthew Jew		
Number of assessment days	2	Assessment period	05/2026 to 06/2026

Table 3: Assessment outcome

Assessment outcome (See Table 4 for a summary of assessment determination)		Approve
Approval validity	Valid from (06/2026)	Valid until (06/2027)
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	
<p>The status of the Danish fishery targeting sprat in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat is almost entirely unchanged relative to the MT re-assessment conducted in October 2025. Updated catch information from the ICES Herring Assessment Working Group (HAWG) indicates that catch composition has not significantly changed, meaning that species categorisation for this surveillance report is identical to the 2025 re-assessment.</p> <p>This results in two Category A assessments: sprat in the Division 3a and Subarea 4, and North Sea Autumn-Spawning herring. Both of these stocks has been subjected to a new stock assessment since 2025, with sprat also undergoing a full benchmarking and revision of biomass-based reference points. Sprat biomass is estimated by the most recent stock assessment to be substantially above the target reference point level; similarly, herring biomass is around 150% of the target level. With no significant changes in any other aspect of the stock assessment process or outcomes, all the Category A requirements are met.</p> <p>The three Category C stocks are Northeast Atlantic mackerel, whiting in the North Sea and Eastern English Channel, and haddock in the North Sea, West of Scotland and Skagerrak. No new stock assessment is available for any of these stocks, and so the conclusions remain unchanged from the 2025 re-assessment. The only point of note is that, as previously, mackerel biomass is below the limit reference point level, and meets the requirements of C1.2 only because the quantity of mackerel caught in the sprat-targeting fishery is negligible relative to the mackerel fishery itself. Therefore, all Category C requirements are met.</p> <p>There have been no substantial changes in the aspects of the fishery relevant to Sections M and E, and so all of these requirements also continue to be met.</p> <p>Overall, this fishery continues to meet the MT requirements, and should remain approved for use as a source of raw material for MT-certified factories.</p>	
<p>Summary of CB peer review</p>	<p>The assessor correctly categorized the two species in this fishery and supported the categorization with cited evidence from 2026. The management clauses are largely unchanged since last year’s reassessment and therefore remain in compliance. The Category A species have been appropriately updated given the 2026 ICES stock advices and continue to meet Category A requirements. Category C assessments use the same stock assessments as the 2025 reassessment as no new stock assessments were available. The ecosystem clauses are largely unchanged since last year’s reassessment and therefore remain in compliance.</p> <p>Therefore the internal review concludes that this fishery should remain approved.</p>

Summary of external peer review (see Appendix 1 for the full peer review report)	Very few changes have occurred in the fishery since the reassessment, with updates limited to catch reports and stock assessments. The assessor has prepared a clear, well-referenced report, providing updates where necessary and thorough justifications for all scoring decisions. The peer reviewer agrees with the assessment outcomes and assigned scores. Only minor editorial comments have been provided.
Notes for on-site auditor	

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	Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	A1	Pass
		A2	Pass
		A3	Pass
		A4	Pass
	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)	A1	Pass
		A2	Pass
		A3	Pass
		A4	Pass
Category B	No Category B Species		
Category C	Mackerel (<i>Scomber scombrus</i>)	Pass	
	Whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>)	Pass	
	Haddock (<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>)	Pass	
Category D	No Category D Species		

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)
Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	Sprat in ICES Division 3a and Subarea 4	No	LC	≈ 92%	Y	A
Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)	NSAS ¹ herring	No	LC	≈ 5%	Y	A
Mackerel (<i>Scomber scombrus</i>)	Northeast Atlantic mackerel	No	LC	< 1%	Y	C
Whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>)	Whiting in the North Sea and Eastern English Channel	No	LC	< 1%	Y	C
Haddock (<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>)	Haddock in the North Sea, West of Scotland and Skagerrak	No	LC	< 1%	Y	C

Rationale

The 2025 re-assessment of this fishery utilised ICES catch data from the Herring Assessment Working Group (HAWG) report as the primary source. This resulted in sprat and herring as Type 1 species, and mackerel, whiting and haddock as Type 2. Since that time a new HAWG report has been published (ICES 2026), with updated catch composition data for the Danish sprat fishery (see Figure 1 below). There is no substantial difference in catch composition compared to previous years, and so the catch composition remains essentially unchanged.

Figure 1: Catch composition from the 2025 re-assessment (middle column), and the 2025 HAWG catch composition data (right column).

¹ North Sea Autumn Spawning

Species	% catch 2020-2024 ²	% catch 2025 ³
Sprat	91.64%	92.83%
Herring	5.41%	4.55%
Mackerel	0.73%	0.46%
Whiting	1.22%	1.00%
Haddock	0.53%	0.56%
Others	0.48%	0.60%

Stocks are also unchanged, and all five stocks continue to managed relative to established reference points. Therefore the species categorisation for this surveillance is the same as that used in the 2025 re-assessment.

References

ICES (2026). Report of the Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31424315.v2>

ICES (2025). Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28389008.v5>

² Taken from the 2025 MT re-assessment report, which itself sourced the data from (ICES 2025).

³ Calculated from (ICES 2026).

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.

- 1.6. All management criteria must be met (pass) for a fishery to pass the Management requirements.
 - 1.6.1. 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.
	<i>In reaching a determination for M1.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
<p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>The organisation with primary responsibility for the management of commercial fisheries within Denmark is the Danish Fisheries Agency (DFA), within the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries (MFAF 2026). The DFA operates under the Danish Fisheries Act 2019, which empowers the agency to issue permits, monitor compliance and impose penalties. Danish fisheries management operates under the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which was most recently reformed in 2013 but which is also subject to more frequent review and revision (e.g. the 2023 fisheries policy package) (EC 2026).</p> <p>There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery, and M1.1 continues to be met.</p>	
References	

EC (2026). Common Fisheries Policy. https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en

MFAF (2026). The Danish Fisheries Agency. <https://en.fvm.dk/the-ministry/the-danish-fisheries-agency>

M1.2	<p>M1.2 Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.</p> <p><i>In reaching a determination for M1.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i></p>
	<p>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.</p>
	<p>M1.2.2 Vessels wishing to participate in the fishery must be authorised by the management organisation(s).</p>
	<p>M1.2.3 The management system has a mechanism in place for the resolution of legal disputes.</p>
	<p>M1.2.4 There is evidence of the legal rights of people dependent on fishing for food or livelihood.</p>
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
<p>Rationale</p> <p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>Danish fisheries are managed under the Danish Fisheries Act (2019), which establishes the legal framework for regulating fisheries, licensing, quota management, sustainable resource use, and enforcement. All vessels operating under the Danish flag are subject to this legislation, and are also required to be authorised via fishing license.</p> <p>Fisheries management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions, and M1.2 continues to be met.</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>Executive Order on Fisheries and Fish Farming Act (Fisheries Act) 2019. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/261</p>	

M1.3	M1.3 There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and (scientifically) assessing the fishery.
	<i>In reaching a determination for M1.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
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Rationale

There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.

Stock assessment are conducted by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), which incorporates data collected by all relevant coastal states (ICES 2026a). In Denmark, the DFA is the primary collector of fishery-dependent data which it passes on to ICES to support the stock assessment process. Specifically in relation to the herring and sprat fishery, the ICES Herring Assessment Working Group (HAWG) conducts an annual assessment of both Type 1 stocks (sprat and herring), and provides management advice on the basis of the outcomes of that assessment (e.g. ICES 2026b).

There are organisations responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery, and M1.3 continues to be met.

References

ICES (2026a). Who we are. <https://www.ices.dk/about-ICES/who-we-are/Pages/Who-we-are.aspx>

ICES (2026b). Report of the Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31424315.v2>

M1.4	M1.4 The fishery management system is based on the principles of sustainable fishing and a precautionary approach.
	<i>In reaching a determination for M1.4, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
<p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>Management of the fishery is underpinned by the Danish Fisheries Act and the EU CFP (EC 2026), both of which are committed to sustainable fishing practices and implementation of the precautionary approach.</p> <p>The fishery management system continues to be rooted in sustainability-based objectives, and M1.4 is met.</p>	
References	
<p>EC (2026). Common Fisheries Policy. https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en</p> <p>Executive Order on Fisheries and Fish Farming Act (Fisheries Act) 2019. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/261</p>	

M1.5	<p>M1.5 There is a clearly defined decision-making process which is transparent, with processes and results made publicly available.</p> <p><i>In reaching a determination for M1.5, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i></p>
	<p>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.</p>
	<p>M1.5.2 The decision-making process is transparent, with results made publicly available.</p>
	<p>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.</p>
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
<p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please</p>	

refer to the re-assessment report for more details.

As previously, the information used to complete this surveillance assessment was all freely available online, primarily from the ICES website (ICES 2026). Decisions and outcomes at the EU level continue to be published on the EC website (EC 2026). Danish fisheries legislation continues to facilitate the engagement of fishers in the decision-making process, and the Danish Public Administration Act grants the public the right to access administrative documents in cases where decisions are made.

The transparent decision-making process continues to be in place, and M1.5 is met.

References

EC (2026). Oceans and Fisheries. https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/index_en

ICES (2026). ICES front page. <https://www.ices.dk/Pages/default.aspx>

M2 Surveillance, control and enforcement

M2.1	<p>M2.1 There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations.</p> <p><i>In reaching a determination for M2.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i></p>
	<p>M2.1.1 There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with specific monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) mechanisms in place.</p>
	<p>M2.1.2 There are relevant tools or mechanisms used to minimise IUU fishing activity.</p>
	<p>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.</p>
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
<p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>Monitoring fisheries compliance is the responsibility of EU member states; in the case of Denmark, it falls under the role of the DFA, which operates a small fleet of enforcement vessels (DFA 2026). National control agencies are supported by the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), which aims to promote common standards under the CFP (EFCA 2026).</p>	

Control and enforcement activities continue as previously, and M2.1 is met.
References DFA (2026). Fishery control and enforcement. https://lfst.dk/english/fishery-control-and-enforcement EFCA (2026). Mission and Strategy. 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. <i>In reaching a determination for M2.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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 <p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>Sanctions are set out in the EU CFP and transposed into Danish law via the Fisheries Act 2019. These sanctions include fines, license suspension, confiscation of catch or equipment, and imprisonment.</p> <p>The framework of sanctions identified in the 2025 re-assessment is still in place, and M2.2 is met.</p>
References Executive Order on Fisheries and Fish Farming Act (Fisheries Act) 2019. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/261

M2.3	M2.3 There is substantial evidence of widespread compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing. <i>In reaching a determination for M2.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
<p>Rationale</p> <p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>The EFCA publishes quarterly reports summarising enforcement activity in the North Sea (and other locations). The most recent available report covers the period January – September 2025 (EFCA 2026). The report indicates that during this period, a total of 664 inspections were carried out on land, resulting in 77 suspected infringements; and 402 inspections were carried out at sea, which identified 53 suspected infringements. Of these, the most common infringement was a discrepancy between the catch reported and the catch landed, which represented 22% of suspected infringements.</p> <p>No evidence was encountered to indicate a change in compliance levels within the fishery, and M2.3 continues to be met.</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>EFCA (2026). North Sea Joint Deployment Plan report, Q3 2025. https://www.efca.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2026-01/9M-2025-WEB%20report-JDP-NS.pdf</p>	

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 are 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.

Sprat in ICES Division 3a and Subarea 4

A1 Data collection

A1.1	A1.1 Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
<p>As identified by the 2025 re-assessment, international catches are recorded incorporated into the annual stock assessment conducted by the ICES HAWG (ICES 2026a). Discarding is assumed to be negligible. Bycatch of sprat in other fisheries is recorded and incorporated into the assessment. Total international catches are shown in Figure 2 below.</p> <p>Landings data are collected such that fishery-wide removals of this species are known, and A1.1 is met.</p>	

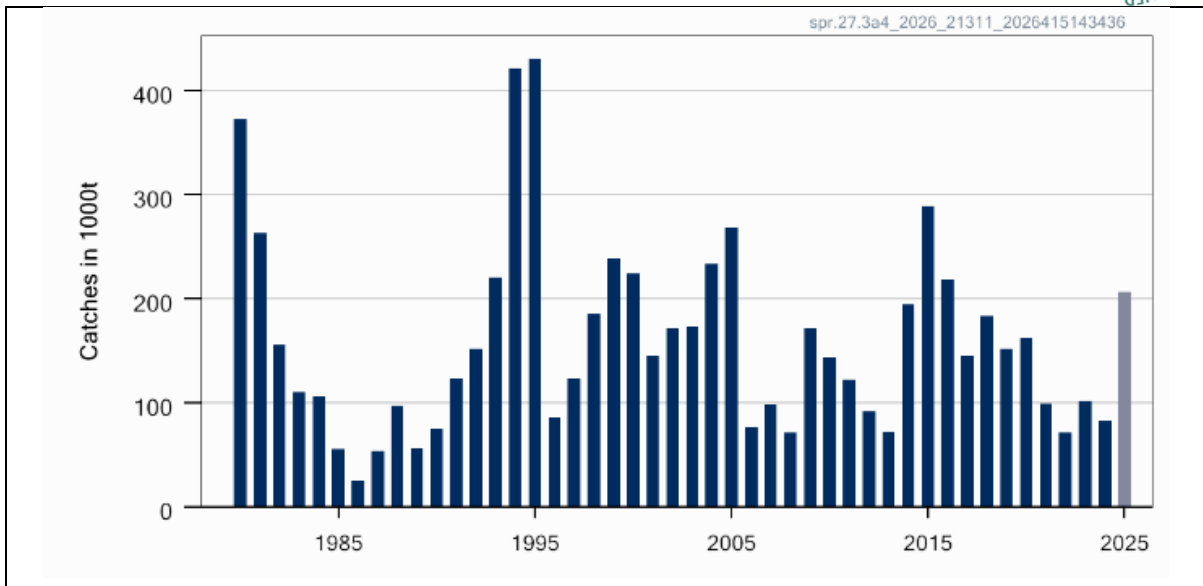


Figure 2: Sprat in Division 3a and Subarea 4, catches. Data for 2025 is preliminary and includes catches up to March 2026 (ICES 2026b).

References

ICES (2026a). Report of the Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31424315.v2>

ICES (2026b). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32134120.v1>

A1.2	A1.2 Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.
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Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
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Rationale

The additional data identified by the 2025 re-assessment continues to be collected and incorporated into the stock assessment process; specifically, age and length frequencies from catch sampling, three survey indices, weight data from catches, and natural mortality rates from the ICES multispecies model (ICES 2026).

Sufficient information continues to be collected, and A1.2 is met.

References

ICES (2026). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32134120.v1>

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	
<p>Stock assessments continue to be conducted on an annual basis by the ICES HAWG, the most recent of which was carried out in 2026 (ICES 2026a). The 2026 stock assessment used an age-based analytical assessment seasonal model with half-year time-steps, which incorporates catches and utilises all the additional data listed in A1.2 (ICES 2026b).</p> <p>Annual stock assessments which consider all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the stock continue to be conducted, and A2.1 is met.</p>	
References	
<p>ICES (2026a). Report of the Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31424315.v2</p> <p>ICES (2026b). Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32134120.v1</p>	

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	
<p>The 2026 stock assessment provides an indication of the current status of the stock relative to established reference points. These reference points were most recently updated via a full stock benchmarking exercise conducted in 2025 (ICES 2026a), which resulted in the target and limit reference points for biomass being revised down relative to those identified by the 2025 re-assessment. At present the target reference points MSY, $B_{escapememnt}$ and B_{PA} are set at 99,842t (previously 135,952t); and the limit reference point B_{lim} is set at 77,157t (previously 107,598t) (ICES 2026b). The 2026 stock assessment estimated SSB in 2026 to be 147,191t, around 150% of the target reference point level.</p> <p>The annual stock assessment continues to provide an indication of stock status relative to</p>	

established reference points, and A2.2 is met.

References

ICES (2026a). Benchmark Workshop on Selected Herring and Sprat Stocks (WKBHERSPR). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31538287.v1>

ICES (2026b). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32134120.v1>

A2.3	A2.3 The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.
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Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
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Rationale

The annual ICES catch advice provides an indication of the appropriate volume of fishery removals based on the outcomes of the stock assessment. The 2026 advice states that “when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches in the period from 01 July 2026 to 30 June 2027 should be no more than 82 822 tonnes” (ICES 2026).

Advice on fishery removals continues to be provided, and A2.3 is met.

References

ICES (2026). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32134120.v1>

A2.4	A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.
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Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
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Rationale

There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. As previously, the ICES Transparent Assessment Framework incorporates internal and external peer review stages, and A2.4 continues to be met.

References

ICES (2026). Transparent Assessment Framework. <https://www.ices.dk/data/assessment-tools/Pages/transparent-assessment-framework.aspx>

A2.5	A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
All information required for this MT assessment, including the outputs of the ICES HAWG and the catch advice, were freely accessible on the ICES website. A2.5 is met.	
References	
ICES (2026). Latest advice. 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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
As described in the 2025 re-assessment, total fishing mortality is restricted via annual quota. Although sprat is subject to stock assessment as a single stock in Division 3a and Subarea 4, separate TACs are set for the two areas via international negotiation and, for the purposes of the Danish fishery, EU legislation. The most recent of this legislation was Council Regulation (EU) 2025/1350 of 8 July 2025, which allocated Denmark a TAC of 28,953t in Division 3a and 165,826t in Subarea 4 (EC 2025).	
Total fishing mortality continues to be restricted via TAC, and A3.1 is met.	
References	
EC (2025). Council Regulation (EU) 2025/1350 of 8 July 2025 amending Regulation (EU) 2025/202 fixing for 2025 and 2026 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32025R1350	

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	Choose an item.

Rationale

Since 2020, TACs have been set in line with the ICES advice. Catches have generally not exceeded the TAC, with the exceptions of 2022 (when catches exceeded the TAC and therefore advice by around 3%) and 2024 (around 9%) (ICES 2026, see Figure 3). In both of these instances, the catch advice was exceeded by less than 10%, and stock biomass was estimated to be above the target reference point level. Therefore, as previously, A3.2 is met.

Figure 3: Sprat in Division 3a and Subarea 4, ICES advice and catches, 2019 – 2026.

Year	ICES advice	Predicted catch corresponding to advice*	Agreed total allowable catch (TAC)*	ICES catches*
2019	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 138 726	151 940**	151 773
2020	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 207 807	207 807	161 683
2021	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 106 715	106 715	99 324
2022	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 68 690	68 690	70 935
2023	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 143 598	143 598	101 502
2024	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 75 321	75 321	82 215
2025	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 236 114	236 114	206 616^
2026	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 82 822		

* For 01 July to 30 June. Catches in coastal areas of Norway and Sweden are excluded.
 ** The sum of the TACs for July 2019–June 2020 in Subarea 4 and from January 2019 to June 2020 in Division 3.a.
 ^ Catches are preliminary and include data until 01 March 2026.

References

ICES (2026). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.
<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32134120.v1>

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	<i>Pass</i>

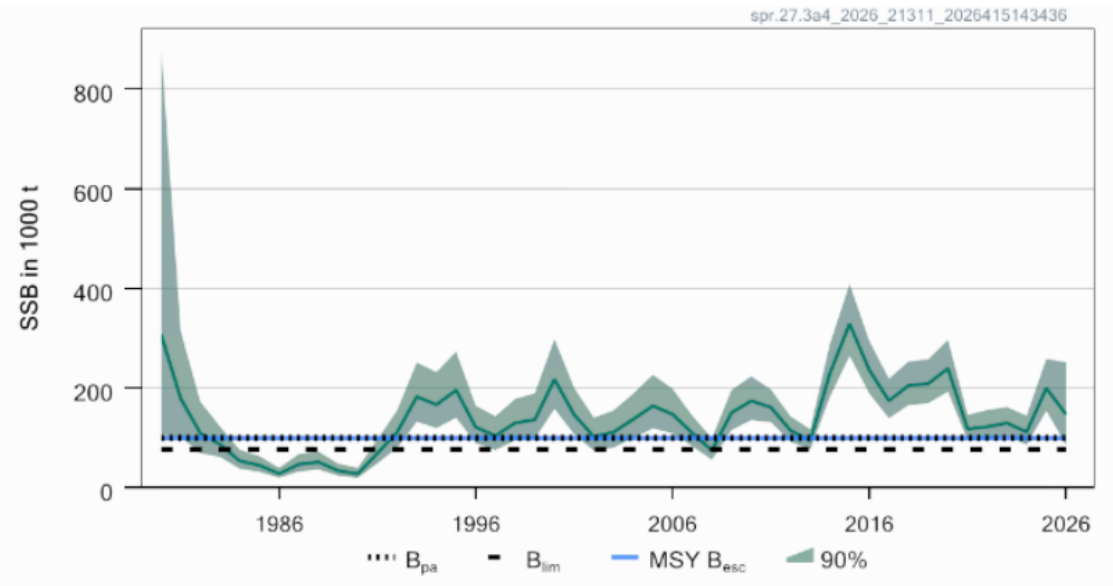
Rationale

There have been no substantial changes in the management approach applied to the fishery with regards to closures related to low biomass levels since the 2025 re-assessment. Additionally, biomass is currently estimated to be significantly higher than the target reference point level. Therefore, A3.3 continues to be met.

References

ICES (2026). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.
<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32134120.v1>

A4 Stock status

<p>A4.1</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Outcome</p>	<p>Pass</p>
<p>Rationale</p> <p>According to the outcomes of the 2026 stock assessment, sprat stock biomass is currently above the target reference point level (ICES 2026, see Figure 4 below), thus meeting the first requirement of this clause.</p>  <p>Figure 4. Sprat in Division 3a and Subarea 4, estimated spawning stock biomass relative to the current reference points, established in 2025 (ICES 2026)</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>ICES (2026). Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32134120.v1</p>	

North Sea Autumn Spawning Herring

A1 Data collection

A1.1	A1.1 Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.
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Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
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Rationale

As identified by the 2025 re-assessment, international catches are recorded incorporated into the annual stock assessment conducted by the ICES HAWG (ICES 2026a). Discarding is assumed to be negligible. Bycatch of herring in other fisheries is recorded and incorporated into the assessment. Total international catches are shown in Figure 5 below.

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

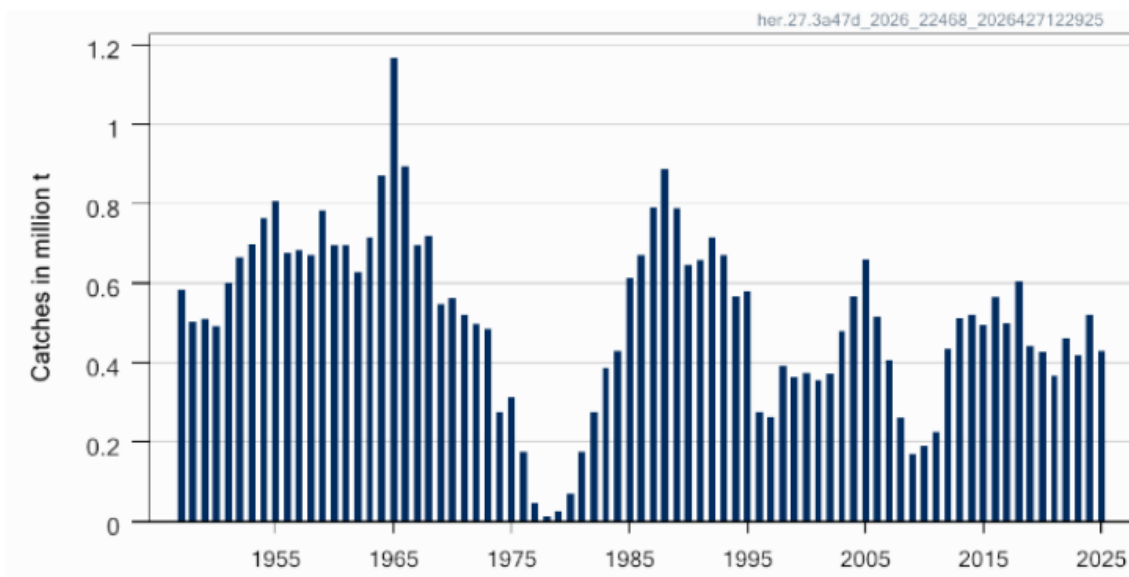


Figure 5. NSAS herring total international catches (ICES 2026b).

References

ICES (2026a). Report of the Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31424315.v2>

ICES (2026b). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1>

A1.2	A1.2 Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.
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Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
<p>The additional data identified by the 2025 re-assessment continues to be collected and incorporated into the stock assessment process; specifically, five survey indices, annual maturity and weight data from a fishery-independent survey, and natural mortalities from an ICES multispecies model (ICES 2026).</p> <p>Sufficient information continues to be collected, and A1.2 is met.</p>	
References	
<p>ICES (2026). Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1</p>	

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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
<p>Stock assessments continue to be conducted on an annual basis by the ICES HAWG, the most recent of which was carried out in 2026 (ICES 2026a). The 2026 stock assessment used an age-based analytical assessment which incorporates catches in the model and forecast and utilises all the additional data listed in A1.2 (ICES 2026b).</p> <p>Annual stock assessments which consider all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the stock continue to be conducted, and A2.1 is met.</p>	
References	
<p>ICES (2026a). Report of the Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31424315.v2</p> <p>ICES (2026b). Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1</p>	

A2.2	A2.2 The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
<p>Rationale</p> <p>The 2026 stock assessment provides an indication of the current status of the stock relative to established reference points. These reference points are unchanged since the time of the 2025 re-assessment, as follows: the target reference point $MSY B_{trigger}$ is set at 1,100,000t; the target reference point B_{PA} is set at 1,049,521t; and the limit reference point B_{lim} is set at 828,874t (ICES 2026). The 2026 stock assessment forecast SSB in 2026 to be 1,505,176t, approximately 150% of the target reference point levels (ICES 2026).</p> <p>The annual stock assessment continues to provide an indication of stock status relative to established reference points, and A2.2 is met.</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>ICES (2026). Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1</p>	

A2.3	A2.3 The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
<p>Rationale</p> <p>The annual ICES catch advice provides an indication of the appropriate volume of fishery removals based on the outcomes of the stock assessment. The 2026 advice states that “when the Long Term Management Strategy (LTMS) agreed by European Union, Norway, and UK is applied, catches in 2027 should be no more than 396 680 tonnes” (ICES 2026).</p> <p>Advice on fishery removals continues to be provided, and A2.3 is met.</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>ICES (2026). Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1</p>	

A2.4	A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>

Rationale	There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. As previously, the ICES Transparent Assessment Framework incorporates internal and external peer review stages, and A2.4 continues to be met.
References	ICES (2026). Transparent Assessment Framework. https://www.ices.dk/data/assessment-tools/Pages/transparent-assessment-framework.aspx

A2.5	A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	All information required for this MT assessment, including the outputs of the ICES HAWG and the catch advice, were freely accessible on the ICES website. A2.5 is met.
References	ICES (2026). Latest advice. 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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	As described in the 2025 re-assessment, total fishing mortality of NSAS herring is restricted through the use of a series of quotas. These include separate TACs for Divisions 4a-b; Divisions 4c & 7d; and Division 3a. Additionally, there is a limit on the total allowable quantity of bycatch in the small-meshed fisheries, which includes the Danish sprat-targeting fishery which is the subject of this MT assessment (ICES 2026). The international TACs are discussed and agreed between the EU, UK and Norway during fisheries consultations, the most recent of which occurred in late 2025 (Scottish Government 2025). Total fishing mortality continues to be restricted via TAC, and A3.1 is met.
References	ICES (2026). Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners

(North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice.

Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1>

Scottish Government (2025). European Union, Norway and the United Kingdom - fisheries consultations: agreed records 2026; herring.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/european-union-norway-and-the-united-kingdom-fisheries-consultations-agreed-records-2026/pages/herring/>

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.
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Outcome	<i>Pass</i>
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Rationale
 As identified in the 2025 re-assessment, TACs are generally set in line with the ICES advice (see Figure 6 below). Total catches have exceeded the advice in some years; specifically, since 2020, in 2023 (by around 1%) and 2025 (by around 4%). In both these years, biomass was estimated to be above the target reference point level (ICES 2026). Therefore, as in the 2025 re-assessment, A3.2 is met.

Figure 6. NSAS herring, ICES advice, quotas and catches, 2015 – 2027 (ICES 2026).

Year	ICES advice	Predicted catch corresponding to advice	Agreed TAC*	B-fleet###	ICES landings in 4, 7.d#	ICES catch in 4, 7.d##	ICES catch of autumn spawners in 3.a, 4, 7.d
2015	2008 management plan	See scenarios	445 000	16 000	480 000	482 000	494 000
2016	2014 management strategy	555 086	518 000	13 000	559 700	559 900	563 600
2017	2014 management strategy	458 926	481 608	11 375	491 693	491 693	498 662
2018	2014 management strategy	517 891	600 588	9 669	602 328	602 328	603 536
2019	ICES maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	311 572	385 008	13 190	444 001	445 631	442 886
2020	ICES MSY approach	431 062	385 008	8 954	424 799	427 321	426 928
2021	ICES MSY approach	365 792	356 357	7 750	364 453	364 616	365 351
2022	ICES MSY approach	532 183	427 628	8 174	465 957	467 134	462 246
2023	ICES MSY approach	414 886	396 556	7 716	420 699	421 404	419 774
2024	ICES MSY approach	532 166	510 323	7 716	523 878	524 441	520 716
2025	ICES MSY approach	410 707	388 542	7 716	428 125	429 151	428 593
2026	ICES MSY approach	287 772	328 566				
2027	2025 Long Term Management Strategy (LTMS)	396 680					

* TAC in directed fishery in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (A-fleet) until 2025. From 2026, the agreed TAC is for all catches in Subarea 4 and divisions 7.d and 3.a.

** Revision of advice given in 1995.

*** Revised in June 1996, down from 263 000 tonnes.

Landings are provided by ICES and do not in all cases correspond to official statistics.

ICES catch includes unallocated and misreported landings, discards, and slipping. Includes catches for western Baltic spring-spawning (WBSS) herring in the North Sea.

Bycatch ceiling up to 2012 and TAC from 2013. Since 2026, no bycatch ceiling is in place between the EU, Norway, and UK.

References

ICES (2026). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1>

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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
There have been no substantial changes in the management approach applied to the fishery with regards to closures related to low biomass levels since the 2025 re-assessment. Additionally, biomass is currently estimated to be significantly higher than the target reference point level. Therefore, A3.3 continues to be met.	

References
ICES (2026). Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1

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	Choose an item.

Rationale
According to the outcomes of the 2026 stock assessment, herring stock biomass is currently above the target reference point level (ICES 2026, see Figure 7 below), thus meeting the first requirement of this clause.

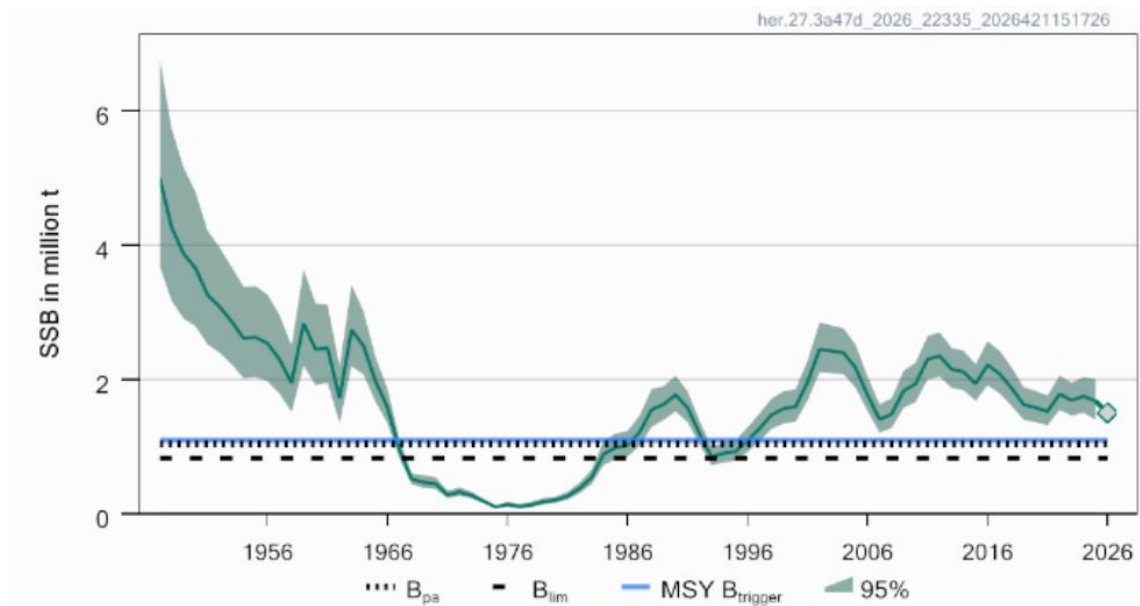


Figure 7. NSAS herring estimated biomass relative to established reference points (ICES 2026)

References
ICES (2026). Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.32133961.v1



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.

Mackerel in the Northeast Atlantic

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	<i>Pass</i>																																																						
Rationale																																																							
<p>Mackerel in the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters is subject to regular stock assessment by the ICES Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE). The most recent stock assessment remains the one identified by the 2025 MT re-assessment, therefore there are no changes to the scoring of mackerel in Category C.</p> <p>International catches are recorded and incorporated into an annual stock assessment. Catches are shown in Figure 8 below. C1.1 continues to be met.</p>																																																							
<table border="1"> <caption>Estimated data for Figure 8: Mackerel in the Northeast Atlantic, total catches (ICES 2025)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Catches (million t)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1999</td><td>0.65</td></tr> <tr><td>2000</td><td>0.65</td></tr> <tr><td>2001</td><td>0.70</td></tr> <tr><td>2002</td><td>0.75</td></tr> <tr><td>2003</td><td>0.75</td></tr> <tr><td>2004</td><td>0.65</td></tr> <tr><td>2005</td><td>0.65</td></tr> <tr><td>2006</td><td>0.55</td></tr> <tr><td>2007</td><td>0.50</td></tr> <tr><td>2008</td><td>0.60</td></tr> <tr><td>2009</td><td>0.65</td></tr> <tr><td>2010</td><td>0.85</td></tr> <tr><td>2011</td><td>0.95</td></tr> <tr><td>2012</td><td>0.90</td></tr> <tr><td>2013</td><td>0.95</td></tr> <tr><td>2014</td><td>1.40</td></tr> <tr><td>2015</td><td>1.25</td></tr> <tr><td>2016</td><td>1.15</td></tr> <tr><td>2017</td><td>1.20</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>1.05</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>0.85</td></tr> <tr><td>2020</td><td>1.05</td></tr> <tr><td>2021</td><td>1.10</td></tr> <tr><td>2022</td><td>1.05</td></tr> <tr><td>2023</td><td>1.05</td></tr> <tr><td>2024</td><td>0.90</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Year	Catches (million t)	1999	0.65	2000	0.65	2001	0.70	2002	0.75	2003	0.75	2004	0.65	2005	0.65	2006	0.55	2007	0.50	2008	0.60	2009	0.65	2010	0.85	2011	0.95	2012	0.90	2013	0.95	2014	1.40	2015	1.25	2016	1.15	2017	1.20	2018	1.05	2019	0.85	2020	1.05	2021	1.10	2022	1.05	2023	1.05	2024	0.90
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<p>ICES (2025). Mackerel (<i>Scomber scombrus</i>) in subareas 1-8 and 14 and in divisions 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202689.v2</p>																																																							

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

As noted above, no new stock assessment has been conducted for this stock since the 2025 MT re-assessment. Therefore, the conclusions of that assessment still stand; namely, that while the mackerel stock is currently estimated to be below the limit reference point, mackerel catches in the sprat fishery which is the subject of this MT assessment represent less than 0.1% of the total mackerel catch. The 2025 MT assessment report stated, “[according to the ICES catch advice], The average over the 5-year span describes removals of mackerel from the North Sea fleet for sprat/herring to be 0.06% of TAC and 0.08% of ICES Advised Catch. To further demonstrate the reduced risk from the 3.a and 4 sprat and herring fishery, the client provided data specific to the fishery/vessels under assessment. The fishery under assessment only accounts for 0.02% of overall mackerel TAC and 0.03% of ICES advised catch from 2022 to 2024”.

Therefore, as previously, it is reasonable to conclude that mackerel catches in the sprat fishery have negligible impact on the status of the mackerel stock, and thus C1.2 continues to be met.

Figure 9, below, shows the current estimated status of the northeast Atlantic mackerel stock.

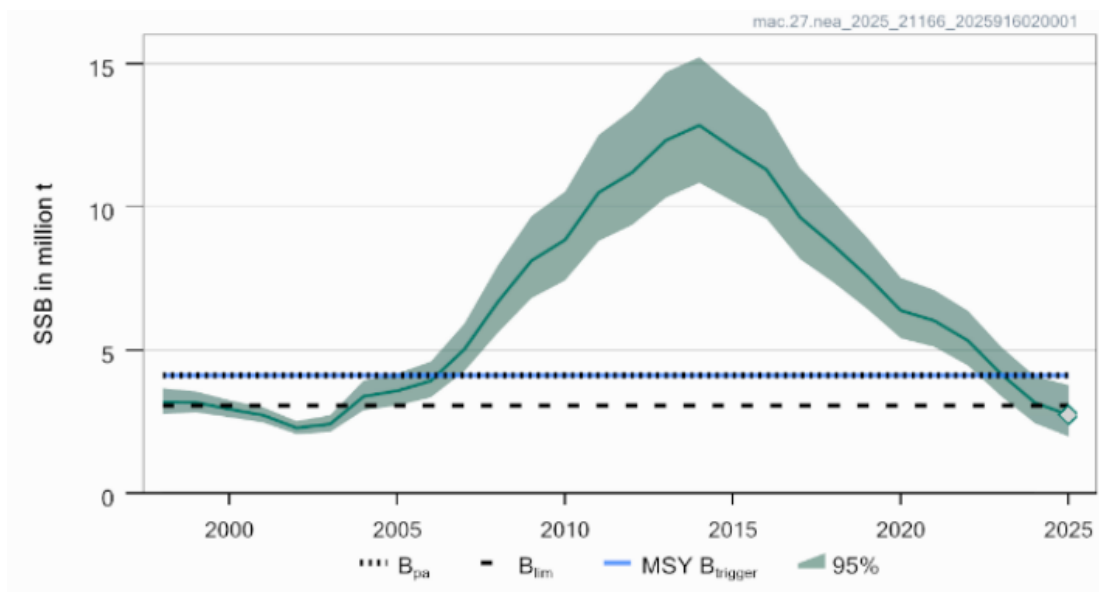


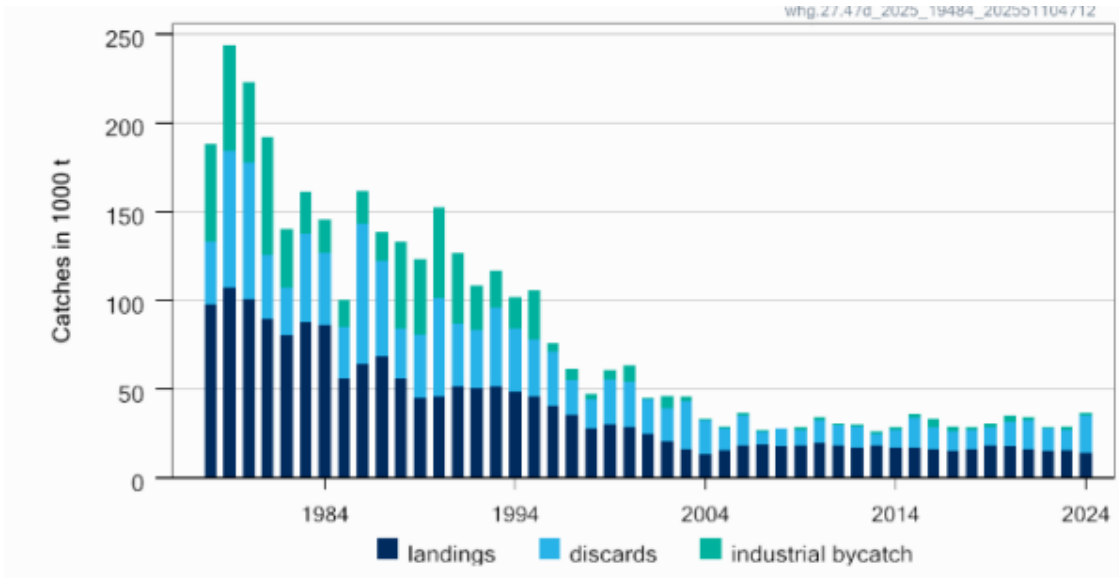
Figure 9. Mackerel in the Northeast Atlantic and Adjacent Waters, estimated biomass relative to current reference points (ICES 2025)

References

ICES (2025). Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) in subareas 1-8 and 14 and in divisions 9.a, 12.a, and

12.b (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.
<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202689.v2>

Whiting in the North Sea and eastern English Channel

<p>C1.1</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Outcome</p>	<p><i>Pass</i></p>
<p>Rationale</p> <p>Whiting in the North Sea and eastern English Channel is subject to regular stock assessment by the ICES Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSK). The most recent stock assessment remains the one identified by the 2025 MT re-assessment, therefore there are no changes to the scoring of mackerel in Category C.</p> <p>International catches are recorded and incorporated into an annual stock assessment. Catches are shown in Figure 10 below. C1.1 continues to be met.</p>  <p>Figure 10. Whiting in the North Sea and eastern English Channel, total catches, discards and bycatch (ICES 2025)</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>ICES (2025). Whiting (<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>) in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.</p>	

<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202941.v1>

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.
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Outcome	Pass
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Rationale

As noted above, no new stock assessment has been conducted for this stock since the 2025 MT re-assessment. Therefore, the conclusions of that assessment still stand; namely that the whiting stock biomass is currently estimated to be substantially above the target reference point level, and therefore C1.2 is met. Figure 11 below shows the current estimated biomass of the stock.

Figure 11. Whiting in the North Sea and eastern English Channel, estimated biomass relative to current reference points (ICES 2025)

References

ICES (2025). Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.
<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202941.v1>

Haddock in the North Sea, West of Scotland, and Skagerrak

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
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	authorities to be negligible.
Outcome	<i>Pass</i>

Rationale

Haddock in the North Sea, West of Scotland and Skagerrak is subject to regular stock assessment by the ICES Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). The most recent stock assessment remains the one identified by the 2025 MT re-assessment, therefore there are no changes to the scoring of mackerel in Category C.

International catches are recorded and incorporated into an annual stock assessment. Catches are shown in Figure 12 below. C1.1 continues to be met.

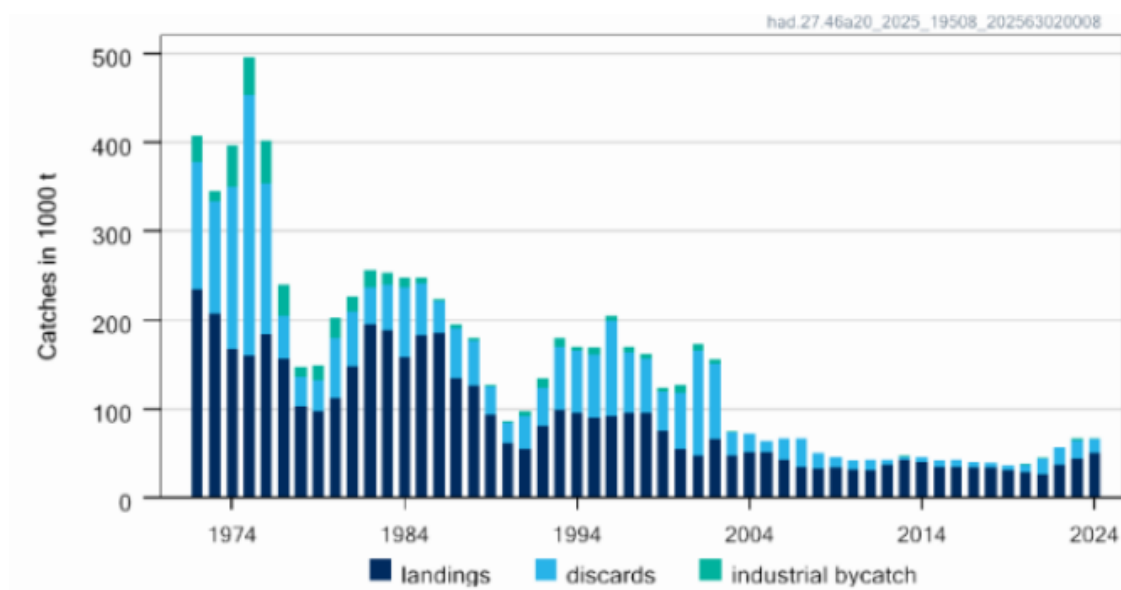


Figure 12. Haddock in the North Sea, West of Scotland and Skagerrak, total catches (ICES 2025)

References

ICES (2025). Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.

<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202596.v1>

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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	

As noted above, no new stock assessment has been conducted for this stock since the 2025 MT re-assessment. Therefore, the conclusions of that assessment still stand; namely that the haddock stock biomass is currently estimated to be substantially above the target reference point level, and therefore C1.2 is met. Figure 13 below shows the current estimated biomass of the stock.

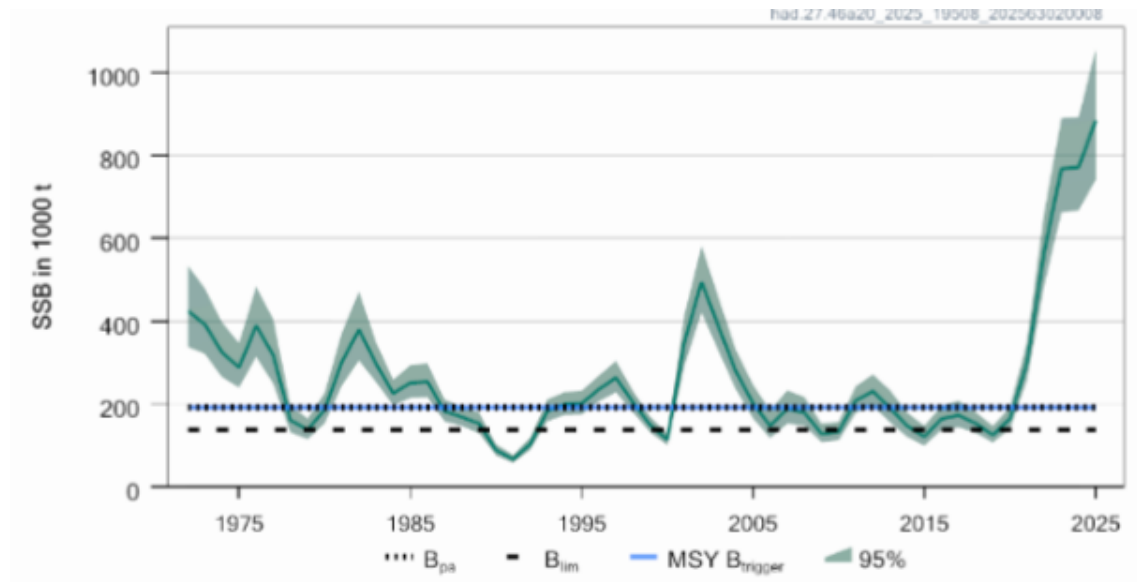


Figure 13. Haddock in the North Sea, West of Scotland and Skagerrak, estimated biomass relative to current reference points (ICES 2025)

References

ICES (2025). Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.
<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202596.v1>

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 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.

- 3.1. All ecosystem criteria must be met (pass) for a fishery to pass the Ecosystem Requirements.
 - 3.1.1. 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.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E1.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale <p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>Interactions with ETP must be recorded, as required by the CFP and Danish legislation. Data is submitted to the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species for analysis; the most recent report is now the one published in 2025 (ICES 2025).</p> <p>There have been no changes in the collection of ETP data, and E1.1 is met.</p>	
References <p>ICES (2025). Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) 2025 Report. ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.30610370.v2</p>	

E1.2	E1.2 The fishery has no significant negative impact on ETP species.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E1.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. As previously, there is no mention of the impacts of the sprat fishery specifically in the WGBYC report. The MSC assessment report described in the 2025 re-assessment remains relevant, and there is no new information to suggest a change to the conclusion that E1.2 is met.	
References	
ICES (2025). Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) 2025 Report. ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.30610370.v2	

E1.3	E1.3 There is an ETP management strategy in place for the fishery.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E1.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. The EU Habitat Directive remains in place, and the fishery continues to be considered low impact on ETP species due to the gear deployment methodology.	
There have been no substantial changes to the mechanisms in place to protect ETP species, and E1.3 continues to be met.	
References	
ICES (2019). Stock Annex: Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat and North Sea). ICES Stock Annexes. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.18623360.v1	

E2 Impact on the habitat

E2.1	E2.1 Information on interactions between the fishery and marine habitats is collected.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E2.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	Choose an item.
Rationale The pelagic gears used by this fishery are generally thought to have minimal potential impact on seabed habitats, and as at the time of the 2025 re-assessment, there is no evidence to indicate that this fishery is different to other pelagic fisheries in that regard. E2.1 continues to be met.	
References None.	

E2.2	E2.2 The fishery has no significant impact on marine habitats.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E2.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
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	Choose an item.
Rationale The pelagic gears used by this fishery are generally thought to have minimal potential impact on seabed habitats, and as at the time of the 2025 re-assessment, there is no evidence to indicate that this fishery is different to other pelagic fisheries in that regard. E2.2 continues to be met.	
References None.	

E2.3	E2.3 There is a habitat management strategy in place for the fishery.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E2.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	Choose an item.
Rationale	
The pelagic gears used by this fishery are generally thought to have minimal potential impact on seabed habitats, and as at the time of the 2025 re-assessment, there is no evidence to indicate that this fishery is different to other pelagic fisheries in that regard. E2.3 continues to be 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.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E3.1, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	
There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please	

refer to the re-assessment report for more details.

Sprat and herring are important forage fish species within the Greater North Sea ecoregion. The main potential impact of this fishery is a bottom-up effect by limiting the supply of low trophic level species. ICES reviews ecosystem status and potential impacts regularly, and publishes conclusions in Ecosystems Overviews. The most recent Overview for the Greater North Sea ecosystem remains the 2024 document identified by the 2025 re-assessment.

There have been no changes in the collection of ecosystems data, and E3.1 is met.

References

ICES (2024). Greater North Sea ecoregion - Ecosystem Overview. ICES Advice: Ecosystem Overviews. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25714239.v1>

E3.2	E3.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E3.2, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
Rationale	
<p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>As was stated by the 2025 HAWG report, the 2025 report concludes “The influence of the sprat fishery on other fish species and seabirds are at present not documented to be substantial” (ICES 2026). As previously, no other evidence was encountered to indicate that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem, and E3.2 continues to be met.</p>	
References	
<p>ICES (2026). Report of the Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31424315.v2</p>	

E3.3	E3.3 There is an ecosystem management strategy in place for the fishery.
	<i>In reaching a determination for E3.3, the assessor should consider if the following is in place:</i>
	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	<i>Pass</i>
<p>Rationale</p> <p>There have been no substantial changes in the elements of the fishery relevant to the scoring of this clause since the 2025 re-assessment. A summary of the current status is provided below; please refer to the re-assessment report for more details.</p> <p>ICES identifies ecosystem-based management as the cornerstone for regulating human activities which affect marine ecosystems (ICES 2019). The fishery is managed through an annually reviewed TAC. There have been no substantial changes to the ecosystem management strategy, and E3.3 continues to be met.</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>ICES (2026). Report of the Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.31424315.v2</p> <p>ICES (2019). ICES and ecosystem-based management. https://www.ices.dk/about-ICES/Documents/ICES%20and%20EBM.pdf</p>	

Annex 1: External Peer Review report

Assessment and determination summary

Fishery name	Denmark - Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) and Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) - FAO 27, ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3.a., North Sea
MarinTrust report code	W31
Type 1 species (common name, Latin name)	<i>Sprat (Sprattus sprattus) and Herring (Clupea harengus)</i>
Fishery location	FAO 27, ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3.a., North Sea
Gear type(s)	Small-meshed pelagic trawl
Management authority (country/state)	European Union (Denmark)
Certification Body recommendation	Approved
FAPRG reviewer recommendation	Agree with CB determination

Summary of peer review outcomes

<p>Summary</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>
<p>Very few changes have occurred in the fishery since the reassessment, with updates limited to catch reports and stock assessments. The assessor has prepared a clear, well-referenced report, providing updates where necessary and thorough justifications for all scoring decisions. The peer reviewer agrees with the assessment outcomes and assigned scores. Only minor editorial comments have been provided.</p>
<p>General comments on the draft report provided to the peer reviewer</p>

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

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

Detailed Peer Review Justification

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

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

Boxes may be extended if more space is required.

1. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MarinTrust fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?	Yes
Yes, the Marine Trust assessment methodology has been applied appropriately and consistently.	
Certification Body response	
n/a	

2. Does the species categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?	Yes
The assessor used the updated catch data to identify and classify species in accordance with the Marine Trust Standard. No changes were identified, and the same Category A and Category C species remain represented in the catch.	
Certification Body response	
n/a	

3. Is the scoring of the fishery consistent with the MarinTrust requirements, and clearly based on the evidence presented in the assessment report?	Yes
Yes, the fishery scoring is consistent with the Marine Trust Standard and its requirements. The evidence presented is sufficient to support the assessment, and the rationale for the assigned scores is clear and well justified throughout the report.	
Certification Body response	
n/a	

3a. Are the “Category A Species” scores clearly justified?	Yes
Yes, the assessor has used the updated ICES stock assessments for the two Category A species to score sprat and herring. Although both stocks have shown variable trends over time, they remain above their respective target reference points, supporting the assigned scores.	
Certification Body response	
n/a	

3b. Are the “Category B Species” scores clearly justified?	n/a
No category B species identified in the catch.	
Certification Body response	
n/a	

3c. Are the “Category C Species” scores clearly justified?	Yes
<p>No new stock assessments are available for the three Category C species (mackerel, whiting, and haddock). The only issue warranting further consideration is the treatment of mackerel, whose stock remains below Blim.</p> <p>C1.2 The assessor concludes that the fishery's mackerel catch is negligible, as it represents less than 0.1% of the total catch of the stock, and therefore applies the second part of the scoring justification. While there are no defined thresholds for what constitutes a negligible catch, and scientific authorities do not formally classify catches as negligible, the reviewer agrees that a contribution of less than 0.1% of the total catch is sufficiently low to be considered negligible in this context.</p> <p>However, as this issue is currently under review by the Fisheries Decision Oversight Committee (FDOC), it would be beneficial to include the full explanation provided in the previous reassessment within this surveillance report. Doing so would make the basis for this interpretation clearer and provide greater transparency regarding the rationale applied. It would also help ensure that, should future guidance or requirements change as a result of the ongoing MT review, the justification and outcome of this assessment remain robust.</p>	
<p>Certification Body response</p>	
<p>Additional detail explaining the reason the previous assessment report concluded that mackerel catches are negligible was added to section C1.2.</p>	

3d. Are the “Category D Species” scores clearly justified?	n/a
<p>No category D species identified in the catch.</p>	
<p>Certification Body response</p>	
<p>n/a</p>	

Are the scores in “Section M – Management Requirements” clearly justified?	Yes
<p>The fishery continues to be managed under the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), with no significant changes since the previous assessment. Updated information has been incorporated where available.</p> <p>My only comment relates to M2.3. The information provided indicates 77 infringements from 664 land-based inspections and 53 infringements from 402 at-sea inspections. While there is no obvious threshold for determining whether this level of non-compliance is of concern, the overall infringement rate (approximately 12%) appears relatively high for a fishery of this nature. It would therefore be useful to investigate the underlying reasons for these infringements and clarify whether they primarily relate to minor administrative issues or more substantive compliance concerns.</p>	
Certification Body response	
<p>This rate of infringements is similar to that identified in the previous MT assessment, and therefore for the purposes of this surveillance the assessor considers it appropriate to maintain the Pass rating. However, further analysis would be useful in future full re-assessments.</p>	

Are the scores in “Section E – Ecosystem Impacts” clearly justified?	Yes
<p>Yes, there have been no substantial changes since the reassessment. The impacts of this small pelagic fishery on ETP species and habitats remain limited, and no significant ecosystem impacts have been identified. Relevant reports have been updated and incorporated into the assessment where available.</p>	
Certification Body response	
n/a	

Optional: General peer reviewer comments on the draft report	
<p>My only substantive comment relates to the statement in the summary: "Biomass of both stocks is estimated to be around 150% of the target reference point level" This wording could be misleading, as it may imply that the two Category A species are assessed jointly by ICES, which is not the case. Rephrasing this sentence to clearly indicate that the stocks are assessed separately would improve clarity and avoid potential misunderstandings.</p>	
Certification Body response	
<p>Section has been re-worded to remove the implication that the stocks are assessed together.</p>	