MarinTrust Whole fish fishery assessment report

Denmark
Sprat (Sprattus sprattus) and Herring (Clupea harengus)
FAO 27, ICES subarea 4 and division 3.a

Re-approval
WF31

Table 1: Whole fish fishery assessment scope

Fishery name	**Denmark - *Clupea harengus* Herring and *Sprattus sprattus* - Sprat - FAO 27, ICES 3 a. 4**
MarinTrust report code	**WF31**
Type 1 species (common name, Latin name)	*Herring* (*Clupea harengus*), Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)
Fishery location	FAO 27, ICES Division 3.a & Subarea 4
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 (e.g. email address/address/telephone number)		Fisheries@nsf.org	
Fishery Assessor name		Matthew Jew	
CB Peer Reviewer name		Léa Lebechnech	
Number of assessment days	5	**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*

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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 2024 First Surveillance. No new information on catch composition was available, and so the species categorisation for this assessment remains unchanged. As previously reported, the Type 1 species for this assessment are herring (*Clupea harengus*) and sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*). The Type 2 species for this assessment are mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*), whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), and haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*). All species have been categorised by the IUCN as Least Concern and none appear in the CITES appendices. Therefore, all stocks are eligible to be certified under the MarinTrust Wholefish Standard v3.0. Management structure and function is 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. Sprat in Division 3a and Subarea 4 continues to be managed relative to established reference points and is subjected to a robust annual stock assessment. Last year, the stock was below the LRP, but the 2025 advice has shown that the stock has rebounded (as predicted) and is well above MSY $B_{escapement}$, B_{PA}, and B_{lim}. ICES advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches in the period from 01 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 should be no more than 236,114 tonnes. TAC has not been established for this fishing year, but the previous five years have aligned with the ICES advised catch. As a result, sprat qualifies as a Category A species under current evaluation criteria. Autumn spawn herring in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d also continues to be managed relative to established reference points and is subjected to a robust annual stock assessment. The 2025 advice for herring states that fishing pressure on the stock is above F_{MSY} and F_{PA}, and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{PA}, and B_{lim}. ICES advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches in 2026 should be no more than 287,772 tonnes for North Sea autumn-spawning (NSAS) herring (Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d). TAC has not been established for this fishing year, but the previous five years have aligned with the ICES advised catch. As a result, NSAS herring qualifies as a Category A species under current evaluation criteria. Mackerel was assessed under Category C. Fishery removals are included in the stock assessment and that assessment shows biomass below the limit reference point. Despite mackerel biomass being below LPR, mackerel removals from this fishery are considered negligible. Whiting was assessed under Category C. Fishery removals are included in the stock assessment and that assessment shows biomass above the limit reference point. Haddock 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 all stocks. All clauses for the species under assessment are met. Herring and sprat fishery in in FAO 27, ICES Division 3.a & Subarea 4 meets the MarinTrust Whole Fish Standard v3.01 requirements for re-

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

approval under the fishmeal-authorised scope. These products should be re-approved as a source of raw material for MarinTrust-certified facilities.	
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 also agrees with Mackerel being assessed under Category C and passing it due to the fact that despite mackerel biomass being below LPR, mackerel removals from this fishery are considered negligible. As determined by the assessor for mackerel, whiting, and haddock, the CB peer-reviewer agrees that the requirements for Category C of the MarinTrust whole fish assessment v3.0 were met. Finally, the assessor correctly determined a passing rating for herring and sprat under Category A. All scoring clauses are met, meaning that the sprat 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)	The peer reviewer agrees with the CB determination. The assessment utilises the available information to the most. Sprat in Division 3a and Subarea 4 continues to be managed relative to established reference points and is subjected to a robust annual stock assessment. The assessor refers to last year, the stock was below the LRP, and now the 2025 advice has shown that the stock is now above the MSY Bescapement, Bpa and Blim reference points assigned by ICES. The 2025 advice for herring states that fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY and FPA, and spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger, BPA, and Blim. Catch composition places both species as Type 1 species and sprat continues to be the dominant species at >91%, herring <6%, the majority of which is taken in subarea 4 Type 2 species remain as previous, mackerel, whiting and haddock. Other species (horse mackerel, cod and sandeel are encountered in very minor quantities, which individually remain <0.1%. The FAPRG makes some suggestions on potential other evidence that may be considered in support of the approval. Overall, the peer reviewer is in agreement with the determination to re-approve the fishery.
Notes for on-site auditor	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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 (*Sprattus sprattus*)	A1	PASS
		A2	PASS
		A3	PASS
		A4	PASS
	Herring (*Clupea harengus*)	A1	PASS
		A2	PASS
		A3	PASS
		A4	PASS
Category B	None	N/A	
Category C	Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*)	PASS	
	Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*)	PASS	
	Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*)	PASS	
Category D	None	N/A	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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 (*Sprattus sprattus*)	Sprat in ICES Division 3a and Subarea 4	No	LC	91.65%	Y	A
Herring (*Clupea harengus*)	Herring in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel	No	LC	5.41%	Y	A
Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*)	Mackerel in in subareas 1-8 and 14 and in divisions 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters)	No	LC	0.73%	Y	C
Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*)	Whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel)	No	LC	1.22%	Y	C
Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*)	Haddock in in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak)	No	LC	0.53%	Y	C
Rationale The large majority of catch continues to be taken in ICES Subarea 4. The 2025 report (Volume 7, Issue 20) from the Herring Assessment Working Group (HAWG) contains the bycatch composition of the sprat fishery in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (ICES, 2025; Table 1). As in previous MT assessments, sprat and herring combined represent more than 95% of landings by weight in every recent year which categorizes those species as Type A (Table 2). The inclusion of mackerel, whiting, and haddock sums the total catch to 99.74%, categorizing those three species as Type 2 (Table 2). All five species are managed by ICES so all take on either the Category A or C classification.						

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

Table 1. Species composition in Danish sprat fishery in tonnes and percentage of the total catch. Source: ICES, 2025.						
	Subarea 4 catch (tonnes)					
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Percent catch
Sprat	140954	68492	78825	78222	71202	91.65
Herring	6227	5518	3829	6390	3881	5.41
Mackerel	1188	747	397	686	497	0.74
Whiting	898	1064	488	1802	1414	1.19
Haddock	93	345	124	1120	916	0.54
Other	754	643	232	393	230	0.47
Total	150114	76809	83895	88613	78140	
	Division 3.a catch (tonnes)					
Sprat	9494	638	316	17	1835	91.14
Herring	551	82	19	4	73	5.40
Mackerel	41	1	0	0	4	0.34
Whiting	249	13	1	0	53	2.34
Haddock	5	1	0	0	0	0.04
Other	32	32	32	0	2	0.73
Total	10372	767	368	21	1967	

Table 2. Total percent composition of catch across Subarea 4 and Division 3.a. Source: Derived from ICES, 2025.	
Species	Percent catch
Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)	91.64
Herring (*Clupea harengus*)	5.41
Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*)	0.73
Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*)	1.22
Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*)	0.53
Other	0.48

Herring caught as bycatch in the sprat fishery belongs to two stocks: North Sea Autumn Spawners (NSAS herring) and Western Baltic Spring-Spawners (WBSS herring). Herring bycatch in the sprat fishery in the North Sea (ICES Subarea 4) is thought to be exclusively NSAS herring, whereas bycatch in ICES Division 3a is a mixture of NSAS and WBSS herring (ICES, 2024).

Based on this updated data, catch composition is largely unchanged since the initial MT assessment of this fishery (2022).

- Sprat and herring consistently represent 95% of catch or more, and are the only Type 1 species.
- Almost all herring caught in the sprat fishery is NSAS herring, therefore WBSS herring is excluded from the assessment.
- Mackerel and whiting are consistently present in the catch, and are Type 2 species.
- Horse mackerel, cod and sandeel are caught in very small quantities and are not included in the assessment. See the report linked in the references section below for a

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

full list of bycatch in this fishery.

Sprat and NSAS herring undergo annual stock assessment and are managed relative to established reference points, and therefore were both assessed under Category A.

Whiting, mackerel and haddock are similarly managed relative to reference points using regular stock assessments, and were assessed under Category C.

References

ICES. 2025. Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62° North (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. 7:20. xx pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28389008

ICES (2024). 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.25019285.v1

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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. Fisheries in Denmark and other EU countries are managed according to the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which was most recently updated through Regulation (EU) No. 1380/2013. Individual member states generally incorporate the requirements of the CFP into their national legislation, and are individually responsible for its implementation.

The Danish Fisheries Agency (part of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries) is the managing authority for commercial fisheries in Denmark. The Danish Fisheries Act (MEFD, 2019) applies to Danish vessels and foreign vessels operating in Danish waters. This act establishes the legal framework for regulating fisheries and aquaculture in Denmark. It outlines provisions for licensing, quota management, sustainable resource use, and enforcement mechanisms, while aligning national policy with EU directives such as the Common Fisheries Policy. The Act empowers authorities (Danish Fisheries Agency) to issue permits, monitor compliance, and impose penalties to ensure responsible marine stewardship and economic viability of the fishing sector.

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery. Clause M1.1 is met.
References EC (2018). Common Fisheries Policy. https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark. (2019). *Consolidated Act No. 261 of 21 March 2019 on Fisheries and Aquaculture (Fisheries Act)*. Retsinformation. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/261 EU. 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 December 2013, pp. 22–61. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1380/oj

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

As above, the Danish Fisheries Act (MEFD, 2019) applies to Danish vessels and foreign vessels operating in Danish waters. This act establishes the legal framework for regulating fisheries and aquaculture in Denmark. It outlines provisions for licensing, quota management, sustainable resource use, and enforcement mechanisms, while aligning national policy with EU directives such as the Common Fisheries Policy. The Act empowers authorities to issue permits, monitor compliance, and impose penalties to ensure responsible marine stewardship and economic viability of the fishing sector.

All vessels operating under the Danish flag or in Danish waters are subject to the Danish Fisheries Act and the EU CFP.

Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions. Clause M1.2 is met.

References

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

EC (2018). Common Fisheries Policy. https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en

Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark. (2019). *Consolidated Act No. 261 of 21 March 2019 on Fisheries and Aquaculture (Fisheries Act)*. Retsinformation. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/261

EU. 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 December 2013, pp. 22–61. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1380/oj

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 2025). However, in Denmark, the Danish Fisheries Agency collects relevant information pertaining to catch, landings, and effort and passes that information along to ICES. 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 Herring Assessment Working Group (HAWG) conducts an annual stock assessment on sprat and herring in FAO 27. HAWG provides fishery management advice, including catch recommendations based on the outcomes of the assessment.

ICES carries out annual stock assessments of the sprat and herring stocks which are Type 1 species within this MT assessment, along with periodic benchmarking exercises to ensure the stock assessment processes and their underpinning assumptions remain appropriate.

There are organisations responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery. Requirement M1.2 is met.

References

ICES (2025). Who we are. https://www.ices.dk/about-ICES/who-we-are/Pages/Who-we-are.aspx

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

ICES. 2025. Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62° North (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. 7:20. xx pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28389008

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 Both the EU CFP and the Danish Fisheries Act are committed to sustainable fishing practices and the precautionary approach. Objective 1 of the CFP, as set out in Regulation (EU) No. 1380/2013 is to "ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long-term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies". The Danish Fisheries Act shares the EU Common Fisheries Policy's (as previously stated, it aligns with EU CFP regulations) commitment to sustainable fishing and a precautionary approach. It empowers Danish authorities to implement quotas, issue licenses, and enforce environmental protections that align with Danish and EU directives. The fishery management system is based on the principles of sustainable fishing and a precautionary approach. Clause M1.4 is met.	
References EC (2018). Common Fisheries Policy. https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark. (2019). *Consolidated Act No. 261 of 21 March 2019 on Fisheries and Aquaculture (Fisheries Act)*. Retsinformation. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/261 EU. 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 December 2013, pp. 22–61. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1380/oj	

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

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

	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

All of the information used to produce this MarinTrust assessment report was freely available online. The fisheries management decision-making process is primarily guided by the ICES advice, the basis for and outcomes of which are made available via the ICES website. Decisions and outcomes at the EU level are published on the EC website and elsewhere.

Additionally, it is important to note that Danish legislation provides mechanisms for fishermen to participate in fisheries management decision-making. The Danish Fisheries Act establishes advisory councils and co-management structures that enable formal input from fishermen's organizations into policy processes (Denmark, 2004). Additionally, the Danish Public Administration Act grants parties the right to access administrative documents in cases where decisions are made, ensuring transparency and facilitating stakeholder involvement (Denmark, 1985a; Denmark, 1985b).

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

References

Denmark. 2004. Fisheries Act (No. 828 of 2004). Available at: https://leap.unep.org/en/countries/dk/national-legislation/fisheries-act-no-828-2004

Denmark. 1985a. Public Administration Act (Act No. 571 of 1985). Available at: https://legislationline.org/taxonomy/term/14153

Denmark. 1985b. Access to Public Administrative Documents Act (Act No. 572 of 1985). Available at: https://www.rti-rating.org/wp-content/uploads/Denmark.pdfEC (2018). Common Fisheries Policy. https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en

Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark. (2019). *Consolidated Act No. 261 of 21 March 2019 on Fisheries and Aquaculture (Fisheries Act)*. Retsinformation. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/261

EU. 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 December 2013, pp. 22–61. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1380/oj

ICES. 2025. Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62° North (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. 7:20. xx pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28389008

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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

Monitoring and enforcement of fisheries compliance in the EU is the responsibility of the individual member states. The agency responsible in Danish waters is the Danish Fisheries Agency (DFA, 2025). The FA operates a small fleet of enforcement vessels and is responsible for regulating, monitoring and inspection of Danish fishing activities.

National control and enforcement activities are supported by the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA). The EFCA aims to "promote the highest common standards for control, inspection and surveillance under the CFP" (EFCA 2025). The EFCA works in conjunction with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the European Maritime Safety Agency to support the various national agencies carrying out coastguard functions.

Also to note, the EU IUU Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008) provides concrete tools—such as catch certification, vessel blacklisting, and port access restrictions—that directly minimise IUU fishing activity by blocking illegal products from entering the EU market.

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

References

Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, amending Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1936/2001 and (EC) No 601/2004 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1093/94 and (EC) No 1447/1999.

Danish Fisheries Agency. 2025. *Fishery control and enforcement*. LFST. https://lfst.dk/english

European Fisheries Control Agency. (2025). *Single Programming Document 2025–2029: Strategic Priorities and Actions*

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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

A system of sanctions is established under the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and transposed into Danish national law through the Fisheries Act (DFA, 2025; EU, 2025). These sanctions may include fines, licence suspension, confiscation of catch or equipment, and imprisonment for serious violations. The CFP also mandates a points-based system for serious infringements, which can lead to disqualification from subsidies and affect licence eligibility. These provisions are reflected in the most recent consolidated Danish Fisheries Act (Act No. 261 of 2019) and enforced by the Danish Fisheries Agency (MEFD, 2019).

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

References

Danish Fisheries Agency. 2025. *Fishery control and enforcement*. LFST. https://lfst.dk/english

European Commission. 2025. *Inspections, monitoring and surveillance*. Oceans and Fisheries. Retrieved October 13, 2025, from https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/rules/enforcing-rules/inspections-monitoring-and-surveillance_en

Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark. (2019). *Consolidated Act No. 261 of 21 March 2019 on Fisheries and Aquaculture (Fisheries Act)*. Retsinformation. 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.** *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	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

	traceability of catches per vessel and supports the prevention of IUU fishing.
Outcome	*Pass*
Rationale The EFCA North Sea Joint Deployment Plan (JDP) 2024 report highlights a high level of compliance with EU fisheries regulations across Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (EFCA, 2024). Coordinated inspections by member states reports small levels detected across multiple fisheries. The report concludes that the control and enforcement regime in these waters is robust, well-coordinated, and effective in maintaining regulatory standards. There is substantial evidence of widespread compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing. Clause M2.3 is met.	
References EFCA. (2024). North Sea Joint Deployment Plan: Operational Report 2023. https://www.efca.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-05/North%20Sea%20JDP%20Report%202023.pdf	

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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.

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 **Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)** The assessment for this stock is an age-based analytical assessment (SMS), quarterly time-steps that uses catches in the model (ICES, 2025a). It incorporates data from various sources, including commercial catches (international catches, ages and length frequencies from catch sampling), three survey indices (IBTS Q1 [G1022], IBTS Q3 [G2829], HERAS [A5092]), constant maturity based on long-term average from IBTS Q1 survey (ICES, 2018a), and natural mortalities from the multispecies model (ICES, 2025a). Discards are not included. Discarding is known to have taken place prior to 2016, but the amount has not been quantified. Discarding has been assumed negligible since 2016. Figure 1 shows the catches of sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a dating back to 2003.	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

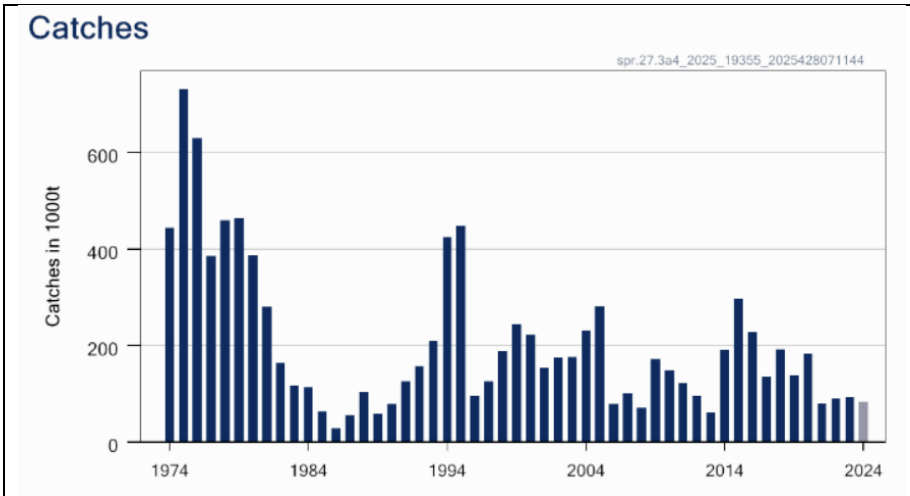
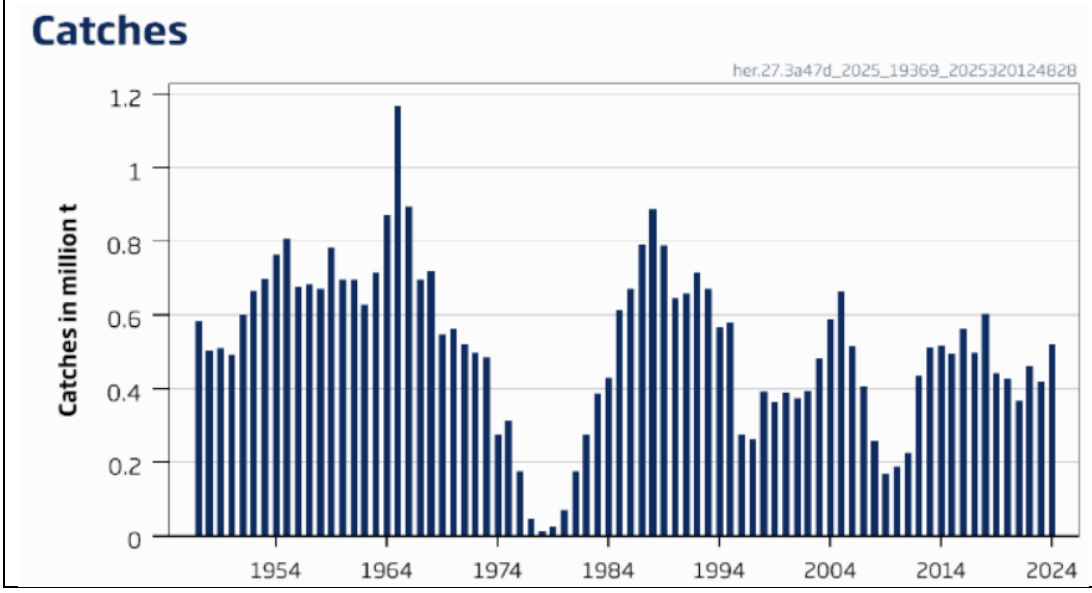


FIGURE 1. CATCHES OF SPRAT IN SUBAREA 4 AND DIVISION 3.A FROM 1974 TO 2023. SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT. YEARS REFER TO THE MODEL YEAR, JULY TO JUNE. THE 2024 CATCH (SHADED GREY) ARE PRELIMINARY AND ONLY INCLUDE CATCHES UP TO 01 OF MARCH 2025. SOURCE: ICES, 2025A.

Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known. Clause A1.1 is met for sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

The assessment for this stock is an age-based analytical assessment (SAM), that uses catches in the model and in the forecast (ICES, 2025b). It incorporates data from various sources, including commercial catches disaggregated by fleets and split for NSAS/WBSS. Five survey indices: IBTS-Q1 1-ringer (G1022); IBTS0 (I8304); LAI as SSB index (I2359, I9086, I2687); HERAS 1–8-ringers (includes split for NSAS/WBSS, A5092); IBTS-Q3 0–5-ringers (G2829). Annual maturity data from HERAS survey; natural mortalities from SMS North Sea multispecies model (ICES, 2025b). Discarding is considered to be negligible for this stock. Figure 2 shows the catches of autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d dating back to 1947.



© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

FIGURE 2. CATCHES OF AUTUMN SPAWN HERRING IN SUBAREA 4 AND DIVISIONS 3.A AND 7.D FROM 1947 TO 2024. SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT. SOURCE: ICES, 2025B.

Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known. Clause A1.1 is met for autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d.

References

ICES. 2025a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

ICES. 2025b. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668

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

Rationale

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)

The assessment for this stock is an age-based analytical assessment (SMS), quarterly time-steps that uses catches in the model (ICES, 2025a). It incorporates data from various sources, including commercial catches (international catches, ages and length frequencies from catch sampling), three survey indices (IBTS Q1 [G1022], IBTS Q3 [G2829], HERAS [A5092]), constant maturity based on long-term average from IBTS Q1 survey (ICES, 2018a), and natural mortalities from the multispecies model (ICES, 2025a). Discards are not included. Discarding is known to have taken place prior to 2016, but the amount has not been quantified. Discarding has been assumed negligible since 2016.

Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated. Clause A1.2 is met for sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

The assessment for this stock is an age-based analytical assessment (SAM), that uses catches in the model and in the forecast (ICES, 2025b). It incorporates data from various sources, including commercial catches disaggregated by fleets and split for NSAS/WBSS. Five survey indices: IBTS-Q1 1-ringer (G1022); IBTS0 (I8304); LAI as SSB index (I2359, I9086, I2687); HERAS 1–8-ringers (includes split for NSAS/WBSS, A5092); IBTS-Q3 0–5-ringers (G2829). Annual maturity data from HERAS survey; natural mortalities from SMS North Sea multispecies model (ICES, 2025b). Discarding is considered to be negligible for this stock.

Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated. Clause A1.2 is met for autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d.

References

ICES. 2025a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

ICES. 2025b. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668

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

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)

The stock was benchmarked in 2018 (ICES, 2018). During this assessment workshop, the members determined the continued use of the SMS model was appropriate and that the formerly disjoint stocks from subarea 4 and division 3.a were to be assessed under one assessment due to the strong biological and data connections (ICES, 2018). Sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a are assessed using an Age-based analytical assessment (SMS) with quarterly time-steps that uses catches in the model) and are categorized an ICES category 1 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 for sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

The stock was interbenchmarked in 2021 (ICES, 2021). The basis of the advice is determined from an age-based analytical assessment (SAM) that uses catches in the model and the forecast (ICES, 2025c). The stock is categorized an ICES category 1 stock (ICES, 2025c). 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).

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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 for autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d.

References

ICES. 2018. Benchmark Workshop on Sprat (WKSPRAT 2018). ICES WKSPRAT Report 2018, 5–9 November 2018. ICES HQ, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:35. 60 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.19291145

ICES. 2021. Inter-Benchmark Protocol of North Sea Herring (IBPNSHerring). ICES Scientific Reports. 3:98. 168 pp. http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.8398

ICES. 2025a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

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

ICES. 2025c. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668

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

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)

The stock was benchmarked in 2018 (ICES, 2018). During this assessment workshop, the members determined the continued use of the SMS model was appropriate and that the formerly disjoint stocks from subarea 4 and division 3.a were to be assessed under one assessment due to the strong biological and data connections (ICES, 2018). ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches (ICES, 2025a). MSY $B_{escapement}$ and B_{PA} are set at 135,952 tonnes and B_{lim} is set at 107,598 tonnes. Fishing mortality reference points are defined as F_{cap} equal to 1.01.

The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy. Clause A2.2 is met for sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

The stock was interbenchmarked in 2021 (ICES, 2021). The basis of the advice is determined from am age-based analytical assessment (SAM) that uses catches in the model and the forecast (ICES, 2025b). ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches (ICES, 2025b). MSY $B_{trigger}$ is set at 1,100,000 tonnes, B_{pa} is set at 1,049,521

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

tonnes, and B_{lim} is set at 828,874 tonnes. Fishing mortality reference points are defined as: F_{MSY} and F_{PA} are 0.23. Long-term management strategy reference points are set at B_{mgt} is equal to 1,000,000 and F_{mgt} is equal to 0.23.

The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy. Clause A2.2 is met for autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d.

References

ICES. 2018. Benchmark Workshop on Sprat (WKSPRAT 2018). ICES WKSPRAT Report 2018, 5–9 November 2018. ICES HQ, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:35. 60 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.19291145

ICES. 2021. Inter-Benchmark Protocol of North Sea Herring (IBPNSHerring). ICES Scientific Reports. 3:98. 168 pp. http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.8398

ICES. 2025a. Sprat (Sprattus sprattus) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

ICES. 2025b. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668

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

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)

ICES advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches in the period from 01 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 should be no more than 236 114 tonnes (ICES 2025a). This value is set to be the equivalent of F_{cap}=1.01.

The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status. Clause A2.3 is met for sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status. Clause A2.3 is met for autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d.

References

ICES. 2025a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

ICES. 2025b. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668

A2.4	**A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.**
Outcome	*Pass*
Rationale **Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea) & Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)** 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 for both species.	
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 **Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea) & Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)** All ICES advice and stock assessments are available on the ICES website. The assessment is made publicly available. Clause A2.5 is met for both species.	
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.**

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)

The stock was benchmarked in 2018 (ICES, 2018). During this assessment workshop, the members determined the continued use of the SMS model was appropriate and that the formerly disjoint stocks from subarea 4 and division 3.a were to be assessed under one assessment due to the strong biological and data connections (ICES, 2018). ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches (ICES, 2025a). MSY $B_{escapement}$ and B_{PA} are set at 135,952 tonnes and B_{lim} is set at 107,598 tonnes. Fishing mortality reference points are defined as F_{cap} equal to 1.01.

Advice for this stock is derived from the stock assessment and reference points. Advise for this stock began in 2019, however TAC was established above this level due to quota allocation agreements already being in place for the split stock. Beginning in 2020, TAC quota allocations aligned with the combined stock advice. Total fishing mortality for the species is restricted through the implementation of this TAC. Once the TAC is established, agreements in place appropriate quotas to individual states. Since 2020, TAC has aligned with the advised catch (Table 3).

TABLE 3. SPRAT IN DIVISION 3.A AND SUBAREA 4. ICES ADVICE AS WELL AS THE OFFICIAL AND ICES CATCHES. ALL WEIGHTS ARE IN TONNES. IN THE LAST BENCHMARK, THE SUBAREA 4 AND DIVISION 3.A STOCKS WERE MERGED INTO ONE STOCK. HENCE, THIS TABLE CONTAINS NO VALUES PRIOR TO 2019. SOURCE: ICES, 2025A.

Year	ICES advice	Predicted catch corresponding to advice*	Agreed total allowable catch (TAC)*	Official catches^	ICES catches*
2019	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 138 726	151 940***	151 492	154534
2020	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 207 807	207 807	183 401	162461
2021	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 106 715	106 715	82 134	99569
2022	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 68 690	68 690	91 051	70792
2023	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 143 598	143 598	96 188**	98615
2024	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 75 321	75 321	83 290**	77125^^
2025	MSY approach, F_{cap} (catch)	≤ 236 114			

There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted. Clause A3.1 is met for sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

The stock was interbenchmarked in 2021 (ICES, 2021). The basis of the advice is determined from an age-based analytical assessment (SAM) that uses catches in the model and the forecast (ICES, 2025b). ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches (ICES, 2025b). MSY $B_{trigger}$ is set at 1,100,000 tonnes, B_{pa} is set at 1,049,521 tonnes, and B_{lim} is set at 828,874 tonnes. Fishing mortality reference points are defined as: F_{MSY} and F_{PA} are 0.23. Long-term management strategy reference points are set at B_{mgt} is equal to 1,000,000 and F_{mgt} is equal to 0.23.

Advice for this stock is derived from the stock assessment and reference points. Total fishing mortality for the species is restricted through the implementation of this TAC. Once the TAC is established, agreements in place appropriate quotas to individual states. In 2019, ICES switch from the previous 2014 management strategy to managing the stock based on the ICES MSY approach. In 2019, the TAC exceeded the advised catch. However, since 2020, TAC has aligned with the advised

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

catch (Table 4).

TABLE 4. HERRING IN SUBAREA 4 AND DIVISIONS 3.A AND 7.D, AUTUMN SPAWNERS. ICES ADVICE, TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCHES (TACS), OFFICIAL LANDINGS, AND ICES CATCH ESTIMATES. ALL WEIGHTS ARE IN TONNES. SOURCE: ICES, 2025B.

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
2008	F(adult) = 0.17, F(juv) = 0.08 (management plan [MP])	See scenarios	201 000	19 000	228 000	245 000	258 000
2009	Adopt one of the new proposed HCRs	See scenarios	171 000	16 000	167 000	166 000	168 000
2010	F(adult) = 0.15, F(juv) = 0.05 (MP)	See scenarios	164 000	14 000	175 000	175 000	188 000
2011	See scenarios	See scenarios	200 000	16 000	218 000	218 000	226 000
2012	2008 management plan	See scenarios	405 000	18 000	425 000	425 000	435 000
2013	2008 management plan	See scenarios	478 000	14 000	498 000	498 000	511 000
2014	2008 management plan	See scenarios	470 000	13 000	504 000	508 000	517 000
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	520 609
2025	ICES MSY approach	410 707	388 542	7 716			
2026	ICES MSY approach	287 772					

There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted. Clause A3.1 is met for autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d.

References

ICES. 2018. Benchmark Workshop on Sprat (WKSPRAT 2018). ICES WKSPRAT Report 2018, 5–9 November 2018. ICES HQ, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:35. 60 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.19291145

ICES. 2021. Inter-Benchmark Protocol of North Sea Herring (IBPNSHerring). ICES Scientific Reports. 3:98. 168 pp. http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.8398

ICES. 2025a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

ICES. 2025b. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)

Advice for this stock is derived from the stock assessment and reference points. Advise for this stock began in 2019, however TAC was established above this level due to quota allocation agreements already being in place for the split stock. Beginning in 2020, TAC quota allocations aligned with the combined stock advice. Total fishing mortality for the species is restricted through the implementation of this TAC. Once the TAC is established, agreements in place appropriate quotas to individual states. Since 2020, TAC has aligned with the advised catch (Table 3).

Since this point in 2020, total ICES catch has remained below the advised catch levels (Table 3).

Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Clause A3.2 is met for sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

Advice for this stock is derived from the stock assessment and reference points. Total fishing mortality for the species is restricted through the implementation of this TAC. Once the TAC is established, agreements in place appropriate quotas to individual states. In 2019, ICES switch from the previous 2014 management strategy to managing the stock based on the ICES MSY approach. In 2019, the TAC exceeded the advised catch. However, since 2020, TAC has aligned with the advised catch (Table 4).

Since this point in 2020, total ICES catch has remained below the advised catch levels (Table 4).

Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Clause A3.2 is met for autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d.

References

ICES. 2025a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

ICES. 2025b. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668

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**

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

	permissible).
Outcome	*Pass*

Rationale

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)

During last year MarinTrust surveillance audit, there was conversations between the assessment team and MarinTrust as the status of Sprat in subarea 4 and Division 3.a was not above LRP and the fishery was not closed. Please note, that the ICES (2025a) stock assessment currently shows biomass above the LRP.

In setting the advice, ICES states that the procedure is as follows: "The advice is based on the MSY escapement strategy with an F_{cap} that relies on a prediction of SSB after the fishery has taken place. A high proportion of the predicted SSB consists of recruits from the previous year for which the abundance and proportion of mature fish at spawning time are unknown. This contributes to the uncertainty in the forecast, which is mitigated by the F_{cap}" (ICES 2024a). ICES estimates that if the full TAC is taken in the 2024/25 season, SSB in 2025 will be 158,851t, which is above the target reference point level (MSY Bescapement = 135,952t). The current prediction of status is 274,902 tonnes (ICES, 2025a).

Taking into account the biology of the species, the escapement management strategy is an appropriate approach for a stock which consists primarily of recruits from the previous year. The MT guidance states that "Management measures should specify the actions to be taken in the event that the status of the stock under consideration drops below levels consistent with achieving management objectives that allow for the restoration of the stock to such levels within a reasonable timeframe". Given that the recommended catch levels will allow for the restoration of the stock to levels consistent with management objectives within one year, the assessor considers that the fishery meets the requirements of this clause.

Although the stock was estimated to be below the limit reference point and the fishery was not closed, the biology of the species and the projected recovery of biomass under the recommended catch level meets the requirements of this scoring clause.

Clause A3.3 is met for sprat in subarea 4 and division 3.a.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

The stock was interbenchmarked in 2021 (ICES, 2021) and a full set of reference points were defined for the stock (ICES, 2025b). The last time the stock fell below current LRP was in 1995 which was over two decades before the implementation of the ICES MSY approach. There is no indication whether reference points for this stock were implemented at that time and ICES (2025b) reports that the fishery was not closed at that time. Given the amount of time between that instance and present time, the assessor does not find that to be sufficient evidence for the current state and management of the fishery. Although the stock has never been below LRP since reference points have been defined, there is not conclusive evidence to determine that the herring fishery would be closed in that scenario. 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

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

LRP, and the fishery has recommended zero directed removals (ICES, 2025c). While there is no evidence in place for the herring 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 for autumn spawn herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d.
References ICES. 2018. Benchmark Workshop on Sprat (WKSPRAT 2018). ICES WKSPRAT Report 2018, 5–9 November 2018. ICES HQ, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:35. 60 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.19291145 ICES. 2021. Inter-Benchmark Protocol of North Sea Herring (IBPNSHerring). ICES Scientific Reports. 3:98. 168 pp. http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.8398 ICES. 2024a. 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.25019690.v1 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. 2025a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896 ICES. 2025b. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668 ICES. 2025c. 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 **Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea)** The 2025 ICES stock assessment (ICES, 2025a) and advice states that spawning-stock size is above		

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

MSY $B_{escapement}$, B_{PA}, and B_{lim}. No reference points for fishing pressure have been defined for this stock (Figure 4).

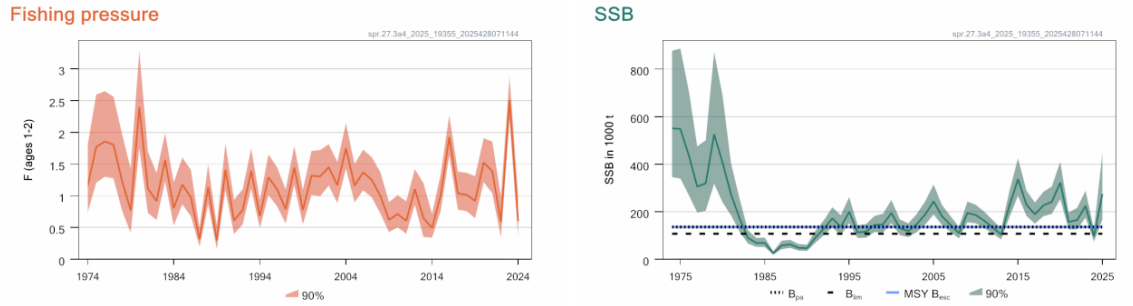


FIGURE 3. STOCK ASSESSMENT SUMMARY FOR SPRAT IN SUBAREA 4 AND DIVISION 3.A. SOURCE: ICES, 2025A.

Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)

The 2025 ICES stock assessment (ICES, 2025b) and advice states that fishing pressure on the stock is above F_{MSY} and F_{PA}, and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{PA}, and B_{lim} (Figure 4).

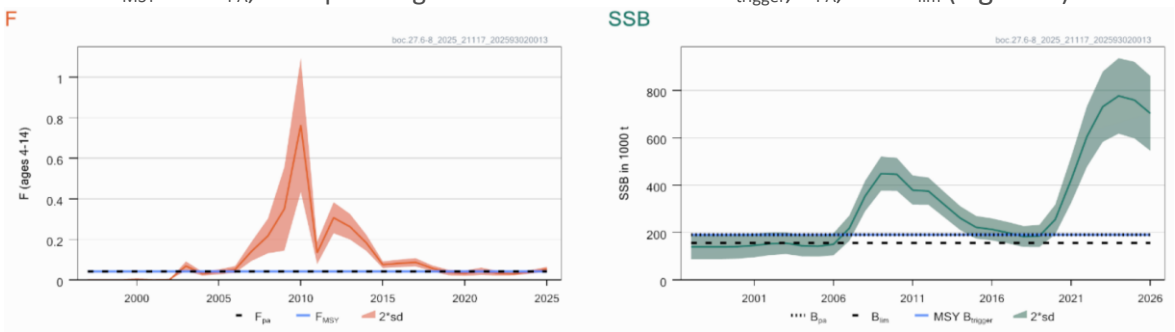


FIGURE 4. STOCK ASSESSMENT SUMMARY FOR AUTUMN SPAWN HERRING IN SUBAREA 4 AND DIVISIONS 3.A AND 7.D. SOURCE: ICES, 2025B.

Conclusion

Both stocks are at or above the target reference point for both stocks. Clause A4.1 is met for both species.

References

ICES. 2025a. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

ICES. 2025b. EU, Norway, and UK joint request to incorporate the Long-Term Management Strategy option MS3 (ICES, 2025a) in the advice for herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). Replacing advice provided in April 2025. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, sr.2025.09. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30305668

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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 There are no Category B species included in this assessment.	
References	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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 (*Scomber scombrus*)

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

Atlantic Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) in subareas 1-8 and 14 and in divisions 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters)

Mackerel in the northeast Atlantic is subject to annual stock assessment by the ICES Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE). The assessment type used is an Age-based analytical model (SAM). Input data include catch data , steel tagging data ([L3182] 1998–2006), and three survey indices: SSB index from the triennial egg survey ([I4189] 1992–2025), abundance indices from the RFID tagging data ([L5543] age 2- 11, 2013-2023), and from the IESSNS survey ([A7806] ages 3–11, 2010, 2012–2025 and age 2, 2018- 2025). Catches prior to 2000 are given a very low weight in the assessment. Weight-at-age updated annually from samples. Maturity ogive and age-varying natural mortality constant over years. Discarding is known to take place (0.3% of the total catch in weight in 2024) but is only quantified for part of the fisheries; the proportion of the landings covered cannot be calculated. Partial discard estimates are included in the assessment and overall discarding in recent years is assumed negligible.

ICES (2025) advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 739,386 tonnes. Historical catches of mackerel are shown in Figure 5.

Therefore, Atlantic mackerel in in subareas 1-8 and 14 and in divisions 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b passes Clause C1.1.

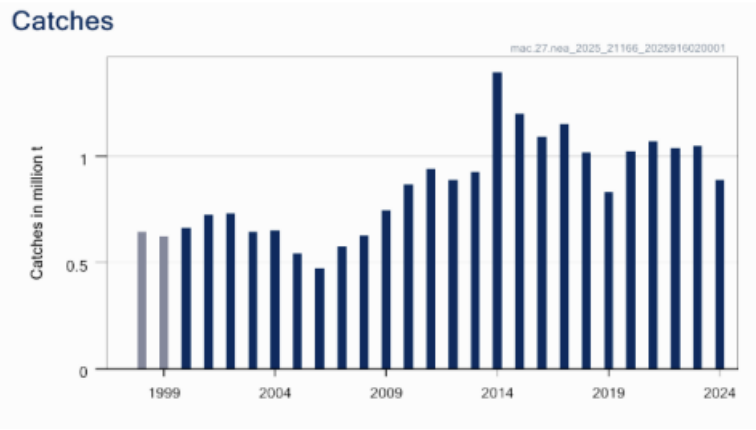


Figure 5. Catches of Mackerel in subareas 1–8 and 14, and in Division 9.a. Summary of the stock assessment. Catches prior to 2000 have been down-weighted in the assessment

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

because of the considerable underreporting suspected to have taken place in this period. Source: 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). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, mac.27.nea, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202689

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

Atlantic 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 defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches. MSY $B_{trigger}$ and B_{pa} are set at 4,119,337 tonnes, B_{lim} is set at 3,067,017 tonnes, F_{MSY} is 0.191, and F_{pa} is 0.191 (ICES 2025a).

Fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY and FPA; spawning-stock size is below MSY Btrigger, BPA, and Blim. Below is the fishing and biomass trends and reference points in Figure 6.

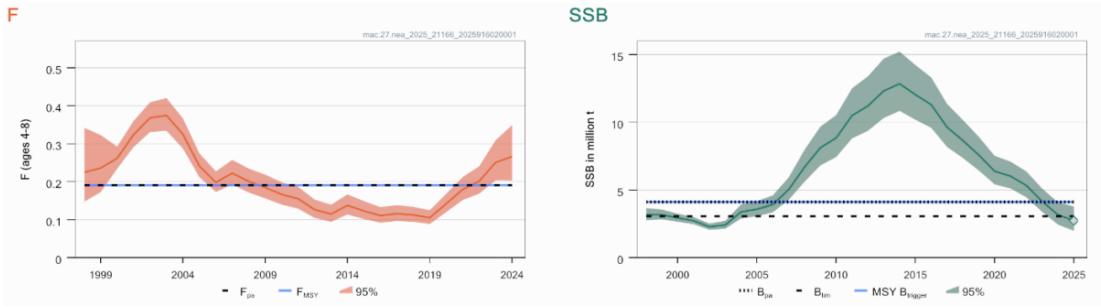


Figure 6. Summary of the stock assessment for mackerel in ICES 1-8, 14, 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b. Source: ICES, 2025a.

As the stock is below the limit reference point, in order to pass this clause, the scientific authority must determine that removals from the fishery under assessment are negligible. ICES does not provide a statement to support this in any of the related stock assessments (ICES 2025a; ICES, 2025 b), applicable working group reports (ICES, 2024; ICES 2025c), and sprat stock annex (ICES, 2019). In the guidance for the v2.0 wholefish standard, MT states that "stock assessments rarely specify if fishery removals are negligible." In the absence of this information, the assessor should seek total removals from the client to determine if the fishery under assessment was likely hindering the recovery of the mackerel in ICES 1-8, 14 , 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b.

Previously shared in Table 1 and Table 2 above, are the description of catches in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 across all vessels targeting sprat and herring in the North Sea. These removals over the five year span account for small percentages of the ICES advice catch (between 0.05% and 0.13%) and TAC (between 0.03% and 0.11%) (summary statistics derived from ICES, 2025a and ICES, 2025c).

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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.

The level of mackerel removals from the sprat/herring fishery in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 are so low that the effects from this fishery are highly likely to not impact the status of the overall stock for mackerel in the northeast Atlantic Ocean.

Therefore, it has been determined that the removals of mackerel by the sprat fishery in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 are negligible to the total removals of the stock of mackerel in ICES 1-8, 14 , 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b. **Clause C2.1 is met.**

References

ICES (2019). Stock Annex: Sprat (Sprattus sprattus) 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

ICES. 2024. Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:81. 913 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.26993227

MarinTrust. 2024. MarinTrust whole fish fishery assessment criteria guidance: Version 3.0. Issued April 2024, Effective 01 May 2025. MarinTrust. https://www.marin-trust.com/sites/marintrust/files/2024-04/STG-004%20-MarinTrust%20Whole%20fish%20fishery%20assessment%20guidance%20V3.0.pdf

ICES. 2025a. Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) in subareas 1-8 and 14 and in divisions 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, mac.27.nea, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202689

ICES. 2025b. Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, spr.27.3a4. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202896

ICES. 2025c. Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62° North (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. 7:20. xx pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28389008

Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*)

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

Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel)

Whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d is subject to regular stock assessment protocols conducted by the ICES Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

(WGNSSK). The 2025 assessment (ICES, 2025) continued the use of an age-based analytical model (SAM) that uses catches and surveys in the model and a Multi-Fleet Deterministic Projection (MFDP) is used for the forecast. Input data include commercial catches (international catches, ages from catch sampling by métier, since 1978), two survey indices (NS-IBTS Q1 [G1022] & Q3 [G2829]; ages 0 to 5; since 1983); time-varying maturity estimated from NS-IBTS Q1 data; time-varying natural mortalities from the North Sea SMS multispecies model (ICES, 2024b). Annual varying stock/catch weight-at-age data from 1978-2024. Discard estimates from most fleets are available and included in the assessment. BMS landings, where reported to ICES since 2015, are included with discards in the assessment and forecast (ICES, 2025).

ICES (2025)advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches in 2026 should be no more than 198,609 tonnes. Historical catches are shown in Figure 7.

Therefore, whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d passes Clause C1.1.

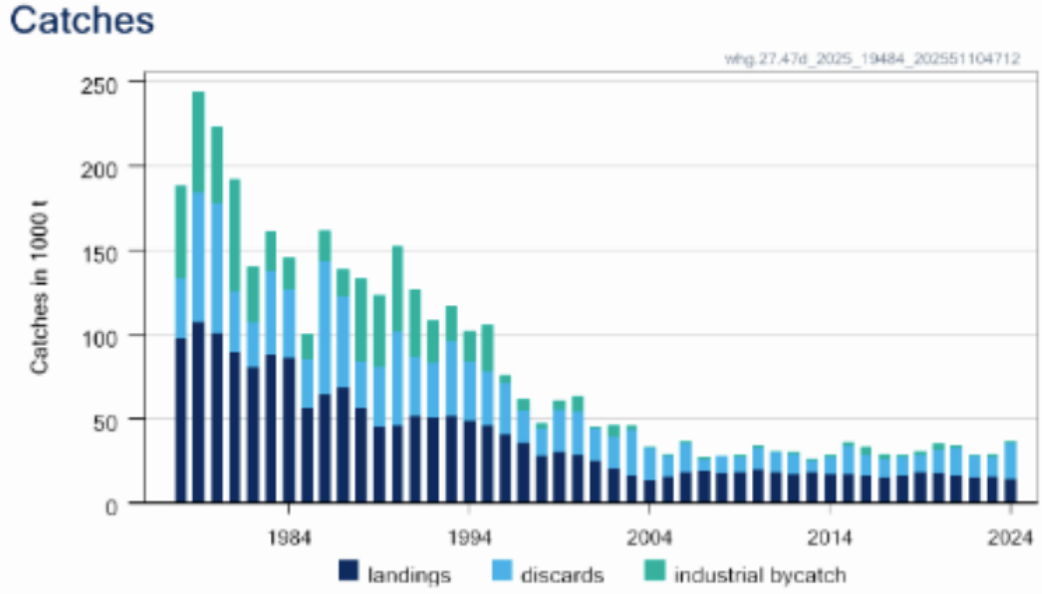


FIGURE 7. CATCHES OF WHITING IN SUBAREA 4 AND DIVISION 7.D. SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT. SOURCE: ICES, 2025.

References

ICES. 2025. Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, whg.27.47d, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202941

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*

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

Rationale

Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel)

ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches. MSY $B_{trigger}$ and B_{pa} (and EU MAP $B_{trigger}$) are set at 167,419 tonnes, B_{lim} (and EU MAP B_{lim}) is set at 119,585 tonnes, F_{MSY} and F_{pa} is 0.68, and EU MAP range is 0.46-0.68.

Fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY}, and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{PA}, and B_{lim} (Figure 8).

Therefore, whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d passes Clause C1.2.

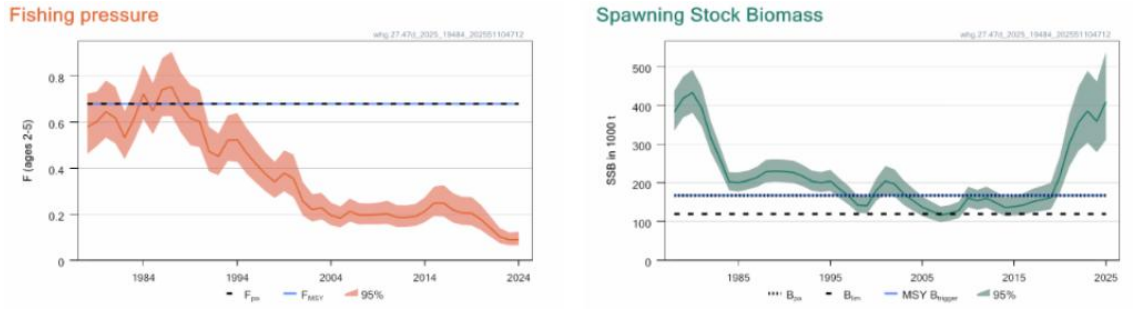


FIGURE 8. SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT FOR WHITING IN SUBAREA 4 AND DIVISION 7.D. SOURCE: ICES, 2025.

References

ICES. 2025. Whiting (Merlangius merlangus) in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, whg.27.47d, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202941

Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*)

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

Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak)

Haddock in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 is subject to regular stock assessment protocols conducted by the ICES Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). The 2025 assessment (ICES, 2025) continued the use of an age-based analytical model (SAM) that uses catches in the model and in the forecast. Input data include commercial catches (international catches, ages from catch sampling), two survey indices derived through a delta-GAM approach: "Q1" (combining NS-IBTS [G1022], SWC-IBTS [G1179], SCOWCGFS [G4748]), "Q3+Q4" (combining NS-IBTS Q3 [G2829], Q4 SWC-IBTS [G4299], Q4 SCOWCGFS [G4815], and Q4 IGFS [G7212]). Annually varying maturity data from Q1 NS-IBTS [G1022], Q1 SWC-IBTS [G1179], and Q1 SCOWCGFS [G4748] (1991–2025). Annually varying natural mortalities from the North Sea multispecies model (1974–2022). Values from 2022 onward are set equal to 2022 values

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

until the next SMS key run is available (ICES, 2024). Annual varying stock/catch weight-at-age data from 1972-2024. Included in the assessment. BMS landings (reported 2016 onwards) and industrial bycatch, are included with discards in the assessment and forecast. (ICES, 2025).

The stock was last benchmarked in 2022. Reference points were updated in 2024 following a revision to natural mortality estimates. Reference points were updated in 2025 following a revision to the survey indices.

ICES (2025) advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, total catches in 2026 should be no more than 108,301 tonnes. Historical catches are shown in Figure 9.

Therefore, haddock in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 passes Clause C1.1.

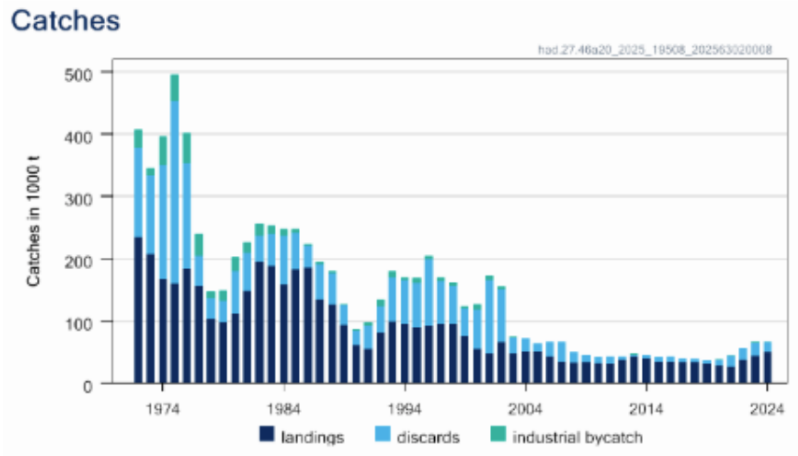


FIGURE 9. CATCHES OF HADDOCK IN SUBAREA 4, DIVISION 6.A, AND SUBDIVISION 20. SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT. SOURCE: ICES, 2025.

References

ICES. 2025. Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, had.27.46a20, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202596

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

Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak)

ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches. MSY $B_{trigger}$ and B_{pa} (and EU MAP $B_{trigger}$) are set at 192,109 tonnes, B_{lim}

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

(and EU MAP B_{lim}) is set at 138,250 tonnes, F_{MSY} and F_{pa} is 0.167, and EU MAP range is 0.155-167.

Fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY}, and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{PA}, and B_{lim} (Figure 10).

Therefore, haddock in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 passes Clause C1.2.

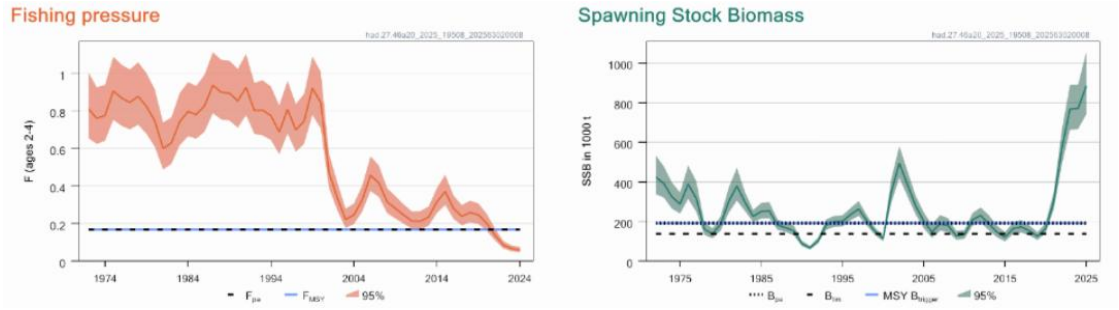


FIGURE 10. SUMMARY OF THE STOCK ASSESSMENT FOR HADDOCK IN SUBAREA 4, DIVISION 6.A, AND SUBDIVISION 20. SOURCE: ICES, 2025.

References

ICES. 2025. Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2025. ICES Advice 2025, had.27.46a20, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27202596

Category D species

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

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

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

1.3. 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		

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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.**

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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.

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

2.1.1. 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.** *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 Interactions with ETP species are recorded as required by EU and Danish legislation (CFP and EU	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

2019) and are submitted to the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) for analysis. The most recent WGBYC report was published in 2024 (ICES 2024) and contains detailed information on the data sources used to inform the activities of the group. The bycatch data are used by the WGBYC to estimate bycatch rates and overall impacts of fisheries on ETP species in the waters covered by ICES.

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

References

ICES.2024. Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:103. 237 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.27762723

EU. 2019. Regulation 2019/1241, Article 6(8), OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 110.

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

The WGBYC report does not mention potential ETP impacts from the sprat fishery specifically (ICES, 2024).

An MSC Public Certification Report for the "DFPO, DPPO and SPFPO North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat sandeel, sprat, and Norway pout" fishery, published in 2025 (Wilson et al., 2025), states that "for marine mammals and seabirds, the nature of the gear type and fishery methods means that there are rarely any direct interactions between these fisheries and these ETP species groups", but also that for "rays and skates, there is no information on how many are encountered in the gear, and when encountered and discarded (as required by regulation) how many are released alive and survive." Also, "Data on ray and skate stocks sizes from ICES show generally positive population trends" (Wilson et al., 2025).

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

References

ICES.2024. Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:103. 237 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.27762723

Wilson, E., Tingley, G., Stern-Pirlot, A., & Andersen, K. H. (2025). DFPO, DPPO and SPFPO North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat Sandeel, Sprat and Norway Pout: Public Certification Report (PCR). MRAG Americas, Inc. https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/dfpo-dppo-and-spfpo-north-sea-skagerrak-and-kattegat-sandeel-sprat-and-norway-pout/@@assessments?assessments=

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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

The EU Habitats Directive states, "Member States shall establish a system to monitor the incidental capture and killing of the animal species listed in Annex IV (a). In the light of the information gathered, Member States shall take further research or conservation measures as required to ensure that incidental capture and killing does not have a significant negative impact on the species concerned."

As there is considered to be low impact on ETP species given the gear deployment methodology, there are less measures/strategies in place specifically for the sprat/herring fishery (ICES, 2019). The measures that are in place are expected to achieve national (an EU) objectives of minimizing bycatch of protected species.

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

References

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, Article 12(4), Official Journal of the European Communities, L 206, 22 July 1992, pp. 7–50.

ICES (2019). Stock Annex: Sprat (Sprattus sprattus) 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.** *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.

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

	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

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 Denmark as a member state of ICES.

The pelagic gears used in the sprat fishery under assessment here do not interact with the seabed and are therefore considered unlikely to have a significant negative impact on seabed habitats. No evidence was encountered during the completion of this assessment report to indicate that the fishery impacts physical habitats.

There is no interaction, thus no need to collect information on the interaction between the fishery and marine habitats. Clause E2.1 is met.

References

ICES (2019). Stock Annex: Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) 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

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

This information has not changed from the previous assessment cycle.

The pelagic gears used in the sprat fishery under assessment here do not interact with the seabed and are therefore considered unlikely to have a significant negative impact on seabed habitats. No

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

evidence was encountered during the completion of this assessment report to indicate that the fishery impacts physical habitats. 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 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 Sprat is a forage fish species in the greater North Sea Ecoregion, along with herring, sandeel, and Norway pout (ICES, 2019). The stock annex (ICES, 2019) describes the level of influence from the		

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

sprat fishery on foraging fish and seabird to not be substantial.

The main potential impact that this fishery has on the ecosystem is a bottom-up effect by limiting the supply of a low trophic level species. ICES has conducted Stochastic Multispecies Model (SMS) that is used in assessments and it includes estimates of sprat consumption by predatory fish stocks (ICES, 2024). Impacts to the food web from changes in zooplankton communities, which can affect changes in food density for sprat, are not included in the SMS (ICES, 2024). This will be explored in the future. The model introduces a factor to the sprat assessments to guide the advised level of catch to ensure that higher trophic level stocks are not affected by the level of effort on the sprat stock.

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

References

ICES (2019). Stock Annex: Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) 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

ICES. 2024. Greater North Sea ecoregion – Ecosystem overview. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, Section 7.1, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.27888621

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

Sprat and herring are important prey species within the North Sea ecosystem this role is considered throughout the stock assessment and catch advice process. The HAWG report states that "Sprat is an important prey species in the North Sea ecosystem. The influence of the sprat fishery on other fish species and seabirds are at present not documented to be substantial" (ICES 2025). No other evidence was encountered during this assessment to contradict this conclusion. In terms of the potential impact of the herring bycatch taken in the sprat fishery, it is clear that the relatively small quantities taken as bycatch compared to the directed herring fishery mean that the sprat fishery is very unlikely in itself to have a direct negative impact on the availability of herring as prey.

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

References

ICES. 2025. Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62° North (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. 7:20. xx pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28389008

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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.

There is an ecosystem management strategy in place for the fishery. Clause E3.3 is met.

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. Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62° North (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. 7:20. xx pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28389008

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

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

Annex 1: External Peer Review report

Assessment and determination summary

Fishery name	**Denmark - Clupea harengus Herring and Sprattus sprattus - Sprat - FAO 27, ICES 3 a. 4**
MarinTrust report code	**WF31**
Type 1 species (common name, Latin name)	*Herring (Clupea harengus), Sprat (Sprattus sprattus)*
Fishery location	*FAO 27, ICES Division 3.a & Subarea 4*
Gear type(s)	*Small-meshed pelagic trawl*
Management authority (country/state)	*EU Denmark*
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.*
The peer reviewer agrees with the CB determination. The assessment utilises the available information to the most. Sprat in Division 3a and Subarea 4 continues to be managed relative to established reference points and is subjected to a robust annual stock assessment. The assessor refers to last year, the stock was below the LRP, and now the 2025 advice has shown that the stock is now above the MSY Bescapement, Bpa and Blim reference points assigned by ICES. The 2025 advice for herring states that fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY and FPA, and spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger, BPA, and Blim. Catch composition places both species as Type 1 species and sprat continues to be the dominant species at >91%, herring <6%, the majority of which is taken in subarea 4 Type 2 species remain as previous, mackerel, whiting and haddock. Other species (horse mackerel, cod and sandeel are encountered in very minor quantities, which individually remain <0.1%. The FAPRG makes some suggestions on potential other evidence that may be considered in support of the approval. Overall, the peer reviewer is in agreement with the determination to re-approve the fishery.
General comments on the draft report provided to the peer reviewer
The report is concise and with appropriate references to substantiate the evidence presented.

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

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
The assessment has been fully completed and uses the recognised MarinTrust fishery methodology and MarinTrust Wholefish fishery Criteria Guidance.	
Certification Body response	
N/A	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

2. Does the species categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?	Yes
The fishery categorisation section reflects the best current understandung of the catch composition of the fishery. The composition is based on ICES report 2025; ICES. 2025. Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62° North (HAWG). ICES Scientific Reports. 7:20. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.28389008. The assessor provides a catch composition breakdown for both Subarea 4 and Division 3.a. Noting that herring appears in relatively the same proportion (albeit in far less quantity) in 3.a. (5.4%) as Subarea 4. The assessor also refers to the Herring bycatch in the sprat fishery in the North Sea (ICES Subarea 4) is thought to be exclusively NSAS herring, whereas bycatch in ICES Division 3a is a mixture of NSAS and minor quantities of WBSS herring can be encountered (ICES, 2024). This is not further divided by spawning stock although considered almost entirely NSAS herring. Sprat and herring are considered type 1 species assessed as A species and mackerel, whiting and haddock (collectively representing 2.48%) are assessed as type 2 species under category C, since all species have species specific management regimes in place. Additionally, Table 7 has been completed in accordance with MarinTrust methodology and CITES/IUCN reviews have been conducting confirming that none of the species are listed as endangered or vulnearbale.	
Certification Body response	
Thank you. CB agrees with the comment and no further action has been taken.	

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 scoring of the fishery is consistent with the MarinTrust requirements and provides sufficient evidence presented in concise summarises with appropriate references that justifies the pass outcome. Minor comments are made as suggestions of other evidence which although not specific to this fishery, substantiates Danish track record in pursuing effective and sustainable fisheries management.	
Certification Body response	
Thank you. CB agrees with the comment and no further action has been taken.	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

3a. Are the “Category A Species” scores clearly justified?	Yes

Scores for Sprat (Sprattus sprattus) in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 (Skagerrak, Kattegat, and North Sea) and Herring (Clupea harengus) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel) are justified with sufficient evidence and extracted graphs from ICES reports provided.
The assessor has documented evidence including that; fishery removals are known and incoporporated along with other biological data into stock assessments; stock assessments are conducted and reviewed regularly (annually); for both stocks, ICES defines the reference points in accordance with the MSY (target) and precautionary (target/limit) approaches. There is evidence to demonstrate that for both fisheries; an indication of the removals appropriate to stock status is provided through the stock assessment and that the assessments are peer reviewed and publically available. The FAPRG assessor has routinely checked the weblinks to ICES stock assessments (and related reports on bycatch, ecosystems and are all working. Both fisheries have TAC based harvest strategies and the assessor describes the mechansims for establishing these. Fishery removals are inline with TAC's which in turn are in line with scientific advice (since 2020 for herring in subarea 4 and divisions 3.a. and 7.d.
The assessor provides a note referencing the previous stock status of sprat in subarea 4 and Division 3.a. below LRP which did not lead to a fishery closure. Whilst the stock is currently >LRP the assessor also provides substantiation to the approach ICES takes to the advice; that “The advice is based on the MSY escapement strategy with an Fcap (to manage uncertainty) that relies on a prediction of SSB after the fishery has taken place. A high proportion of the predicted SSB consists of recruits from the previous year for which the abundance and proportion of mature fish at spawning time are unknown. The FAPRG assessor is in agreement and this would appear an appropriate way to implement MarinTrust guidance on clause A3.3.
The assessor notes that for Herrin in subarea 4 and division 3.a. and 7.d; the last recorded time the stock was below LRP was 1995 and whilst the fishery was not prohibited; there is ample evidence since then where commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock is below LRP.from other EU fisheries. The FAPRG reviewer concurs that this would appear to be an appropriate conclusion to make based on this evidence.

Certification Body response

Thank you. CB agrees with the comment and no further action has been taken.

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

3b. Are the “Category B Species” scores clearly justified?	n/a
There are no Cat B species	
Certification Body response	
N/A	

3c. Are the “Category C Species” scores clearly justified?	Yes
Three cateogory C species are identified; Atlantic mackerel, Whiting and Haddock, representing 0.73, 1.22 and 0.53% of the catch composition. Catch composition occasionally (previously) contains other species (incl. but not limited to sandeel, horse mackerel, cod), collectively representing circa. 0.48%. Atlantic mackerel is the NE Atlantic stock and currently below Blim but fishing pressure is above Fmsy. However, the assessor has substantiated the catches in the North sprat/herring fleet at 0.06% TAC and 0.08% of ICES Advised Catch, and concerning the fishery under assessment for 3.a and Sub Area 4, only accounts for 0.02% of overall mackerel TAC and 0.03% of ICES asvised carch over the 2022-2024 period. The FAPRG reviewer agrees with the assessor determination that the removals of mackerel by the sprat fishery in Division 3.a and Subarea 4 are negligible to the total removals of the stock of mackerel in ICES 1-8, 14 , 9.a, 12.a, and 12.b. Clause C2.1 is met. Regarding Whiting; the assessor identifies that Whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d is subject to regular stock assessment protocols conducted by the ICES Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). The assessment uses catches and surveys in the model and a Multi-Fleet Deterministic Projection (MFDP) is used for the forecast. Input data include commercial catches (international catches, ages from catch sampling by métier, since 1978). The assessor identifies that Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger , BPA, and Blim and provides ICES charts for F and spawning stock biomass. Similarly, for haddock (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak), the assessor has provided the evidence of stock assessments that uses input data including commercial catches (international catches, ages from catch sampling and identifies that BMS landings (reported 2016 onwards) and industrial bycatch, are included with discards in the assessment and forecast. (ICES, 2025). Similarly, the assessor has provided evidence confirming stock status, noting that fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY, and spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger , BPA, and Blim (Figure 10). This confirms that the stock is not at risk and not from removals associated with the Danish Herring and Sprat fishery in ICES Division 3 a. and Sub Area 4. Although self evident, for whiting and haddock, the assessor may wish to add confirming	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

statements at C1.1 and C1.2 clauses stating the applicant fishery meets the requirement in that 'fishery removals of the C species are included in the stock assessment process' and biomass is above Blim'.
Certification Body response
Thank you. CB agrees with the comment and confirming statements have been added to all six Category C scoring clauses.

3d. Are the “Category D Species” scores clearly justified?	n/a
There are no Cat D species (FAPRG peer reviewer in agreement).	
Certification Body response	
N/A	

Are the scores in “Section M – Management Requirements” clearly justified?	Yes
The assessor refers to the Danish Fisheries Act (MEFD, 2019) and also to the EU Common Fisheries Policy and to ICES as the agency providing scientific evaluation. The assessor may wish to add that the management authority for Denmark is the Danish Fisheries Agency which is part of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. There is also further details that may be useful to substantiate the sub clauses M1.1.2 and M1.1.3 from the Agencies website (https://lfst.dk/erhvervsfiskeri/regler-for-erhvervsfiskeri/saadan-bliver-du-erhvervsfisker); including information for stakeholders; how to become a fishermen, enforcement, compliance, disputes, appeals and also a repprting function for anyone who suspects IUU activity is occuring. Regarding scientific data collection and evaluation, the assessor may wish to clarify that the Danish Fisheries Agency that collects fishery data (landings etc.) and that DTU Aqua (National Institute of Aquatic Resources at the Technical University of Denmark undertakes Danish fishery survey and scientific assignments as well as the European wide assessments conducted by ICES. Referring to M1.5 stakeholder engagement; the assessor may also wish to note that both the Danish Fisheries Act and the Danish Public Administration Act provides mechansims for fishermen to access the government decision making processes for fisheries management. The assessor may wish to add the EU IUU Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008) to the references.	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

Certification Body response
Thank you for your comment. The CB agrees with the suggestions. -Specific reference to the Danish Fisheries Agency has been added to the rationale for M1.1. However, reference to the scope of information provided by DFA (licensing, enforcemant, compliance ,etc) was not included as the the clasue is intended to verify that the organization to manage the fishery exists and is implemented. -The assessor added clarity in clause M1.3 regarding the collection ion information pertaiing to the fishery-dependent statistics. The assessor recognizes that DTU Aqua is involved in the survey process, but as he understands it, it is a multinational effort under the auspices of ICES (eg. ITBS, HERAS, etc.). Therefore the information currently contained in the report was not changed as the surveys are conducted under the purview of ICES. -A full paragrpah describing the transparency of the Danish governmental fishery process was added. -Lastly, reference to EU 1005/2008 was made in M2.1.

Are the scores in “Section E – Ecosystem Impacts” clearly justified?	Yes
Scores are justified and referenced for the Section E clauses. Regarding ETP's the assessor cites the comprehensive ICES 2024 working group report on bycatch and protected species. A comprehensive list of bycatch and ETP species specific to this fishery is not described although provides evidence that for these gears (small meshed trawls) there is rarely any direct interactions between these fisheries and these ETP species groups”. The ICES evidence substantiates the active assessment (monitoring, review and mitigations) regarding ETP's that is in place in the Greater North Sea. Also noted by the assessorthat for “rays and skates, there is no information on how many are encountered in the gear, and when encountered and discarded (as required by regulation) how many are released alive and survive.” The assessor provides evidence from an MSC assessment report for Sandeel Sprat and Norway Pout (same gears) which also notes the low impact on ETP species. Regardining ETP management strategy the assesor identifies that 'As there is considered to be low impact on ETP species given the gear deployment methodology, there are less measures/strategies in place specifically for the sprat/herring fishery (ICES, 2019 Sprat stock annex for this region). The assessor identifies that pelagic gears used in the sprat fishery under assessment here do not interact with the seabed and are therefore considered unlikely to have a significant negative impact on seabed habitats and that no evidence was encountered during the completion of this assessment report to indicate that the fishery impacts physical habitats. Evidence of other activities generally occuring (in-trawl cameras) is noted to substantiate that where impacts are likely, Denmark pursues monitoring and takes mitigation actions. For future assessments, the DTU website may provide reports on fishery/ecosystem related projects (https://www.aqua.dtu.dk/english_.) Also noting (although again, not specific to small pelagic meshed gears); The Working Group on Fisheries Benthic Impact and Trade-offs (WGFBIT) develops methods and assessments to evaluate fisheries’ benthic impact at a regional scale while considering trade-offs between	

© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only

fisheries and seabed health. https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Working_Group_on_Fisheries_Benthic_Impact_and_Trade-offs_WGFBIT_outputs_from_2024_meeting_/28351412?file=52277681.
Regarding the fishery ecosystem interactions, the assessor notes that The stock annex (ICES, 2019) describes the level of influence from the sprat fishery on foraging fish and seabird to not be substantial and that the role of sprat and herring as prey species in the North Sea ecosystem are considered within the stock assessment and catch advice processes of ICES and cites evidence to substantiate that 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.
The FAPRG peer reviewer is in agreement with the pass outcomes of Section E.

Certification Body response
Thank you. CB agrees with the comment and no further action has been taken.

Optional: General peer reviewer comments on the draft report
The report provides sufficient evidenced and references to justify the pass outcome.

Certification Body response
Thank you. CB agrees with the comment and no further action has been taken.

Controlled Copy- No unauthorised copying or alteration permitted.
© Marine Ingredients Certifications Ltd., for authorised use only