



MarinTrust Standard V2

Whole fish Fishery Assessment

WF36

Herring (*Clupea harengus*)

and Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)

in ICES Subdivisions 25-29 and 32,

excluding the Gulf of Riga

MarinTrust Programme

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Table 1 Application details and summary of the assessment outcome

Application details and summary of the assessment outcome			
Name(s):	Eesti Kalatootjate Keskühistu - Paldiski Fishmeal Plant		
Country:	Estonia		
Email address:	kristjan@fishoil.ee	Applicant Code	
Certification Body Details			
Name of Certification Body:		NSF / Global Trust Certification Ltd.	
Assessor Name	CB Peer Reviewer	Assessment Days	Initial/Surveillance/ Re-approval
Sam Peacock	Léa Lebechnech	3	Initial
Assessment Period		June 2024 – June 2025	
Scope Details			
Management Authority (Country/State)	EU, Estonia		
Main Species	Herring, <i>Clupea harengus</i> Sprat, <i>Sprattus sprattus</i>		
Fishery Location	ICES Subdivisions 25-29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga		
Gear Type(s)	Pelagic trawl		
Outcome of Assessment			
Overall Outcome	APPROVED		
Clauses Failed	[Herring] A3, A4; re-assessed under Category B, where the stock Passed		
CB Peer Review Evaluation	APPROVED – Agree with the assessor’s determination		
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Group Evaluation	APPROVED – See report in Appendix B		
Recommendation	APPROVED		

Table 2 Assessment Determination

Assessment Determination
<p>Catch composition data for the Estonian component of the Baltic Sea herring and sprat fishery indicates that the fishery is highly selective, with only herring and sprat present in the catch in significant quantities. Both species have been categorised by the IUCN as Least Concern, and neither appear in the CITES appendices. Both stocks are managed relative to established reference points using annual quotas, and were therefore initially assessed under Category A.</p> <p>The fishery is managed under the EU Common Fisheries Policy and the Estonian Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture. The management and control and enforcement frameworks meet the requirements of Section M. The fishery is thought to have minimal impact on ETP species, and due to the pelagic gears used is highly unlikely to have significant impact on seabed habitats. The potential ecosystem impacts of the fishery are included in the management process.</p> <p>Baltic sprat is subject to annual stock assessment by ICES. The most recent stock assessment, conducted in 2024, concluded that sprat SSB is above the target reference point level. Total international TAC is generally within the range recommended by ICES, and catches have not substantially exceeded the TAC. Although catch in excess of the recommendation is a concern, the sprat stock meets the Category A MT requirements because (i) catch has only exceeded the advice by more than 10% in one of the last 6 years; (ii) SSB is well above the limit reference point; and (iii) quotas and catches have been increasingly close to the ICES advice in recent years.</p> <p>As a result of the revision of the Central Baltic herring reference points in 2023, the 2023 stock assessment concluded that stock biomass was substantially below the limit reference point (LRP). While the 2024 stock assessment and catch advice indicates the stock is now above the LRP, the total international TAC for 2024 is substantially larger than the level recommended by ICES. This means that A3.2 is not met, as catches are not in line with the scientific advice. Further, the fishery remained open in 2024 despite biomass being below the LRP in 2023 stock assessment, means that A3.3 is also not met. Finally, while biomass is between the LRP and target reference point levels, clause A4.1 requires that when biomass is above LRP or proxy, there must be evidence that the fishery would be closed should the biomass fall below the LRP. As this has conclusively been demonstrated not to be the case in 2023 when biomass was below LRP and the fishery remained open in 2024, with a total international TAC of 67,368t, nearly 30% more than the maximum recommended by the ICES advice (52,549t): A4.1 is also not met.</p> <p>As per the MT whole fish assessment guidance, upon failing the Category A assessment, the herring stock was subsequently assessed under Category B. As the stock is managed relative to biomass and fishing mortality reference points, it was assessed using Table B(a). Biomass is estimated in the most recent assessment to be above the limit reference point, and fishing mortality is estimated to be below the target reference point level. This leads to an outcome of Pass on Table B(a), and therefore the stock meets the MT requirements.</p> <p>As the fishery meets the MT requirements, it should be approved for use as a source of raw material.</p>
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Comments
<p>CB Peer Review Comments:</p> <p>The internal peer reviewer agrees with the assessor’s determination of PASS for this fishery, noting that the management framework and surveillance, control and enforcement systems continue to meet the requirements of the MarinTrust Standard.</p> <p>The main target species in this report are herring and sprat. They have been firstly assessed under Category A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sprat passed Category A, as the stock is healthy and catches globally respect ICES advices.

- Herring failed Category A for several reasons: the 2023 stock assessment concluded that stock biomass was substantially below the limit reference point (LRP) but fishery remained open in 2024; while the 2024 stock assessment and catch advice indicates the stock is now slightly above the LRP, the total international TAC for 2024 is substantially larger than the level recommended by ICES. This means that A3.2 is not met, as catches are not in line with the scientific advice. Consequently and as per MT whole fish assessment guidance, the internal peer reviewer agrees with the Baltic herring stock being assessed under Category B, using Table B(a). Biomass is estimated in the most recent assessment to be above the limit reference point, and fishing mortality is estimated to be below the target reference point level. This leads to an outcome of Pass on Table B(a), and therefore the stock meets the MT requirements

The fishery being highly selective, there are no category C and D species.

The peer reviewer notes that further impacts on ETP, habitats and ecosystem have been evaluated and there is no evidence of significant impact of the fishery on these 3 components. They meet MT requirements.

Overall, the internal peer reviewer agrees that the fishery just about meets the requirements of Category B, and it is consequently recommended for approval for use in the assessment area under the current Marin Trust Standard v 2.0 for whole fish.

Fishery Assessment Peer Review Comments:

The report is well-written and follows the MT guidance.

Of the two main species, only Herring A3 and A4 failed the MT assessment, however, this species was re-assessed under Category B, where the stock Passed. Further, the catch profile has been verified by multiple data sources.

Minor findings:

The opening table is missing the client, email and application code.

Recommendation:

None

Notes for On-site Auditor

Table 3 General Results

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

Table 4 Species- Specific Results

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

Category	Species	% landings	Outcome (Pass/Fail)	
Category A	Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	60-85%	A1	PASS
			A2	PASS
			A3	PASS
			A4	PASS
	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)	15-40%	A1	PASS
			A2	PASS
			A3	FAIL
			A4	FAIL
Category B	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) [Assessed due to failing Category A]	15-40%	PASS	
Category C	No Category C Species			
Category D	No Category D Species			

Table 5 Species Categorisation Table

Common name	Latin name	Stock	IUCN Redlist Category ¹	% of landings	Management	Category
Sprat	<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>	Baltic sprat	Least Concern ²	60-85%	Yes	A
Herring	<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Central Baltic herring	Least Concern ³	15-40%	Yes	A

Species categorisation rationale

Catch data from the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) Fishery Dependent Information (FDI) database⁴ was sourced for vessels landing to Estonia using midwater trawls, targeting small pelagic fish, and operating in the central Baltic region covered by this MarinTrust assessment in 2022 (the most recent available year). This data indicates that the fishery is extremely selective, with only herring and sprat caught. A summary of the output data is provided in the table below:

Species	Total catch	Percentage of catch
Herring	791.56t	13.5%
Sprat	5,080.46t	86.5%

This catch composition is also indicated by other sources. For example, the March 2023 MSC Second Surveillance Report⁵ for the Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Sweden Baltic Herring and Sprat fishery includes the following table for Estonian catches in 2021:

Species	Tonnes	%
Sprat	25540	61.0%
Baltic-Herring	16343	39.0%
Smelt	5	0.0%
Fourhorn sculpin	1	0.0%
Eel pout	1	0.0%
Stickleback	1	0.0%
Flounder	0	0.0%
Cod	0	0.0%
Total	41890	100.0%

Finally, this catch composition also matches those described in previous MarinTrust assessments of the Danish component of this fishery⁶.

Sprat and herring are both subject to annual stock assessment by ICES, and are managed under TACs set relative to established reference points. For this reason, both species were assessed under Category A.

¹ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

² <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/155123/45074983>

³ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/198583/45077260>

⁴ https://stecf.ec.europa.eu/data-dissemination/fdi_en; Filters used were Country: Estonia; Year: 2022; Subregion 27.3.d.25 & 27.3.d.28.2 (the only locations where Estonian vessels were operating); Target assemblage: SPF (small pelagic fish); Gear Type: OTM (midwater otter trawls).

⁵ <https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/denmark-estonia-germany-sweden-baltic-herring-and-sprat/@assessments>

⁶ See, for example, the June 2023 MT Surveillance Assessment for WF09, Herring and Sprat in ICES Subdivisions 25-29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga: <https://www.marin-trust.com/sites/marintrust/files/approved-raw-materials/WF09%20Herring%20%20Sprat%20ICES%203d%2025-29%2032%20Denmark%20Surveillance%20Assessment%20June%202023.%20Final.pdf>

MANAGEMENT

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

M1	Management Framework – Minimum Requirements	
	M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.	PASS
	M1.2 There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.	PASS
	M1.3 Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability.	PASS
	M1.4 Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.	PASS
	M1.5 There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making.	PASS
	M1.6 The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available.	PASS
Clause outcome:		PASS

M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.

Fisheries in Estonia 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 CFP therefore sets out the policies and procedures by which member states manage their fisheries (EC 2018). Within Estonia, the management of fisheries is conducted by three bodies: the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture, the Environmental Board, and the Agriculture and Food Board (MRFA 2024).

At the regional level, management of the fishery is based on input from the Regional Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum (BALTFISH) and the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC). A significant proportion of the catch is taken by Russian vessels, and a binding agreement has been in place since 2009 between the EU and Russia regarding fisheries management in the Baltic Sea.

There are organisations responsible for managing the fishery, and M1.1 is met.

M1.2 There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.

The primary organisation responsible for coordinating and analysing the data relevant to the management of the Baltic herring and sprat fishery is the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). ICES is an intergovernmental marine science organisation which provides frequent analytical and advisory services for the management of fisheries, primarily in the Atlantic but also in the Arctic, Mediterranean, Black Sea and North Pacific (ICES 2024). Within Estonia, the MRFA is responsible for the implementation of EU fishery data collection requirements; in practical terms, data collection and scientific surveys are carried out by the Estonian Marine Institute of the University of Tartu (EMI-UT) (MoE 2022).

ICES carries out an annual stock assessment of the Baltic herring and sprat stocks, along with periodic benchmarking exercises to ensure the stock assessment processes and their underpinning assumptions remain appropriate. As a key output of the stock assessment process, ICES produces a recommendation for the appropriate level of fishery removals of both species in the coming fishing season (ICES 2024a).

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

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

Implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries management has been set as one of the objectives of the CFP:

“...to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimized and that aquaculture and fisheries activities avoid degradation of the marine environment.” (Regulation (EU) No. 1380/2013).

Similarly, the objectives of the Baltic Sea Multiannual Plan (MAP) as set out in Article 3, refers to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP, *“in particular by applying the precautionary approach to fisheries management and shall aim to ensure*

that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce MSY" (Baltic Sea MAP).

The Estonian Fishing Act (2015) states in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1 that "The purpose of this Act is to:

- 1) ensure conservation and economic use of fish and aquatic plant resources on the basis of internationally recognized principles of responsible fisheries;
- 2) ensure reproduction capacity of fish and aquatic plant resources and productivity of bodies of water;
- 3) avoid undesirable changes in the ecosystem of bodies of water."

Management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability, and M1.3 is met.

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

In EU member states fisheries management is generally carried out under the national legislation arising from the implementation and/or transposing of EU regulations, in particular but not limited to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013. In Estonia the primary legislation is the Fishing Act 2015, which regulates fishing activity within the Estonian EEZ and activity carried out by Estonian-flagged vessels.

Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions, and M1.4 is met.

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

The BSAC is a stakeholder-led organization, established in 2006, which provides advice on the management of Baltic fisheries to the European Commission and member states and consists of organisations representing fisheries and other interest groups affected by the CFP (e.g. environmental, organisations, and sports and recreational fisheries organisations). Following CFP reform, a new regulation was adopted at the end of 2013 in which the role and function of Advisory Councils has been included - Advisory Councils are consulted in the context of regionalisation and should also contribute to data for fisheries management and conservation measures. There is evidence of this, in the form of consultation responses and advice provided to the European Commission and others, on the BSAC website (BSAC 2024).

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

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

ICES provide annual stock assessment and management advice in relation to central Baltic herring and Baltic sprat via its Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). The advice is published annually on the ICES website (ICES 2024). Quotas for the EU fleet in the assessment area are set annually through the AGRIFISH Council meeting of EU Fisheries Ministers and are published annually in the Baltic Sea Fishing Opportunities Regulation.

The decision-making process is transparent, and M1.6 is met.

References

Baltic Sea Multi-Annual Plan (MAP) https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/multi_annual_plans_en

BSAC (2024). About the Baltic Sea Advisory Council. <https://www.bsac.dk/about/>

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

Estonian Fishing Act 2015, English translation. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/514012016001/consolide>

ICES (2024). Who we are. <https://www.ices.dk/about-ICES/who-we-are/Pages/Who-we-are.aspx>

ICES (2024a). Latest Advice. <https://www.ices.dk/advice/Pages/Latest-Advice.aspx>

MoE (2022). Estonian Work Plan for data collection in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors 2022-2027. https://kliimaministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2022-02/Estonia_WP_2022-2027_Text_20211104_v4.docx

MRFA (2024). Fishing industry and commercial fishing. <https://www.agri.ee/en/objectives-and-activities/fishing-industry-and-commercial-fishing>

Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2013/1380/contents#>

Links

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

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

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

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

National websites contain information on:

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

Member States are required to apply “effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions” against those engaged in IUU or other illegal activities. The European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) coordinates national control and inspection activities within the EU, with the mission to promote the highest common standards for control, inspection and surveillance under the CFP (EFCA 2024).

Joint Deployment Plans (JDP’s) are established for fisheries/areas considered a priority by the Commission and the Member States concerned. They can refer either to European Union waters for which a Specific Control and Inspection Programme (SCIP) has been adopted or to international waters under the competence of a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO), where EFCA is requested to coordinate the implementation of the European obligations under an International Control and Inspection Scheme. The Baltic Sea JDP has been in place since 2007 (EFCA 2024a).

There are organisations responsible for monitoring compliance, and M2.1 is met.

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

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

In Estonian fisheries, sanctions are set out in Chapter 6 of the Fisheries Act 2015, and include fines and confiscation.

There is a framework of sanctions, and M2.2 is met.

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

The Joint Deployment Plan (JDP) for the Baltic involved competent authorities for fisheries control and protection vessels from Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. Reports on the control and enforcement activities of the JDP are published regularly on the EFCA website (EFCA 2024a). The most recent available report covers the period January 2023 – September 2023. During this period, there were 2,175 inspections conducted ashore, with 68 suspected infringements, and 640 inspections carried out at sea, detecting 14 suspected infringements. Of the infringements detected, the most common types related to misreporting of catch quantities or not reporting in time. Infringements were detected in around 2% of at-sea inspections and 3% of on-land inspections, suggesting low levels of non-compliance (EFCA 2023).

There is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance, and M2.3 is met.

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

Compliance with laws and regulations is monitored through the use of at-sea and portside inspections, e-logbooks, landings certificates, sales notes, VMS, designated ports, and inspections throughout the supply chain. Control efforts are targeted using a risk-based model, which ensures that inspections and other enforcement activity is focussed in areas where low levels of compliance have been detected in the past. Control and enforcement activities carried out through the JDP are described in M2.3, above.

Compliance is actively monitored, and M2.4 is met.

References

EFCA (2023). Baltic Sea JDF control activities, Q3 report 2023. https://www.efca.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-01/9M-report_BS_Q2_WEB.pdf

EFCA (2024). European Fisheries Control Agency Objectives and Strategy. <https://www.efca.europa.eu/en/content/objectives-and-strategy>

EFCA (2024a). Baltic Sea JDF reports, 2023. <https://www.efca.europa.eu/en/content/reports-2023-1>

Estonian Fishing Act 2015, English translation. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/514012016001/consolide>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.1.3
FAO CCRF	7.7.2
GSSI	D1.09

CATEGORY A SPECIES

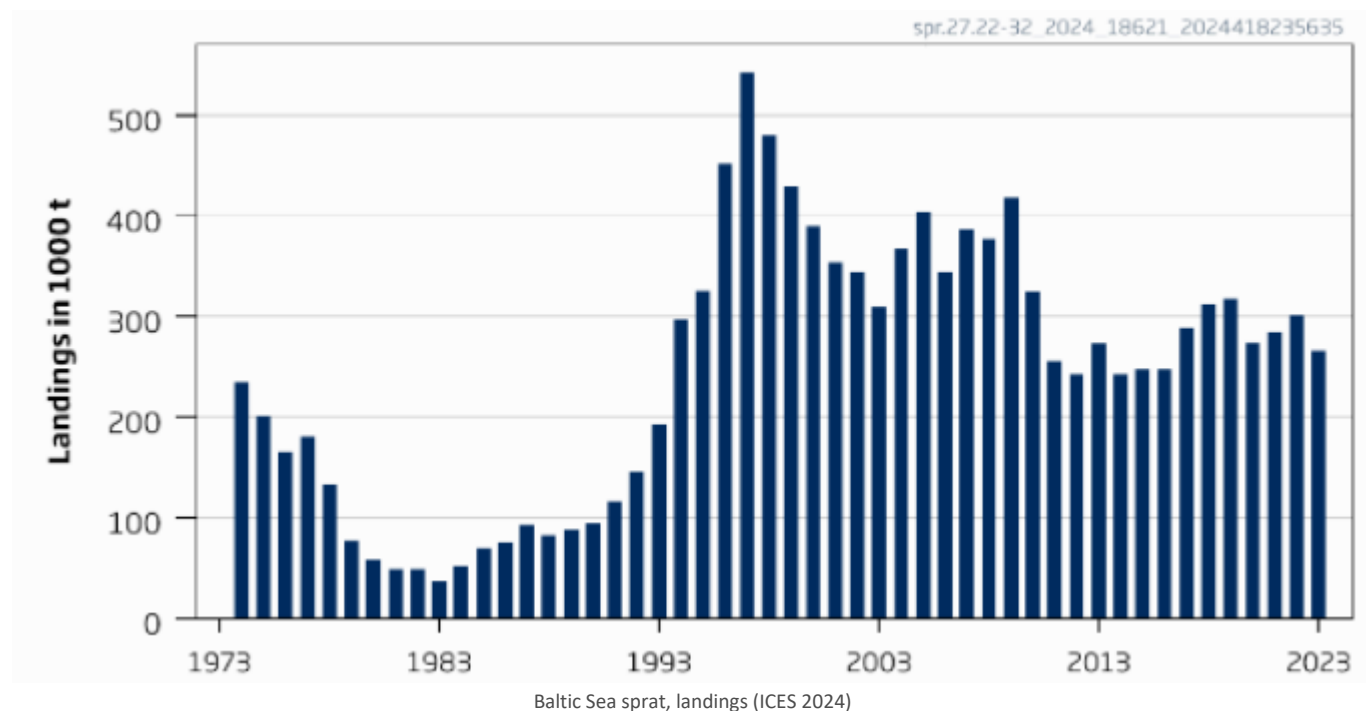
The four clauses in this section apply to Category A species. Clauses A1 - A4 should be completed for **each** Category A species. If there are no Category A species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted. A Category A species must meet the minimum requirements of all four clauses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

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

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

The EU Fisheries Control System, through the Fisheries Control Regulation (EC Regulation No 1224/2009) requires that data on catches (target species and bycatch) are recorded in logbooks by vessel captains and transmitted to the competent authority of each member state who then provide it to the Commission. Landings data collected in this fashion are incorporated into the annual stock assessment conducted by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). Discards and bycatch are considered negligible (ICES 2024).

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



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

In addition to commercial catch data, the stock assessment carried out annually by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS) utilises two acoustic survey indices (the Baltic Acoustic Spring Survey (BASS) and the Baltic International Acoustic Survey (BIAS)); and natural mortalities from the ICES multispecies model (ICES 2024). The model assumes discards and bycatch are negligible. The 2024 catch advice includes a section covering the quality of the assessment, which notes that

misreporting of herring and sprat is an ongoing problem which is challenging to quantify, and which introduces an unquantifiable level of uncertainty into the assessment. However, efforts are underway to estimate the levels of misreporting (ICES 2024). Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated, and A2.1 is met.

References

Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1224/oj/eng>

ICES (2024). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

Links

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

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

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

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

A stock assessment is conducted annually, and A2.1 is met.

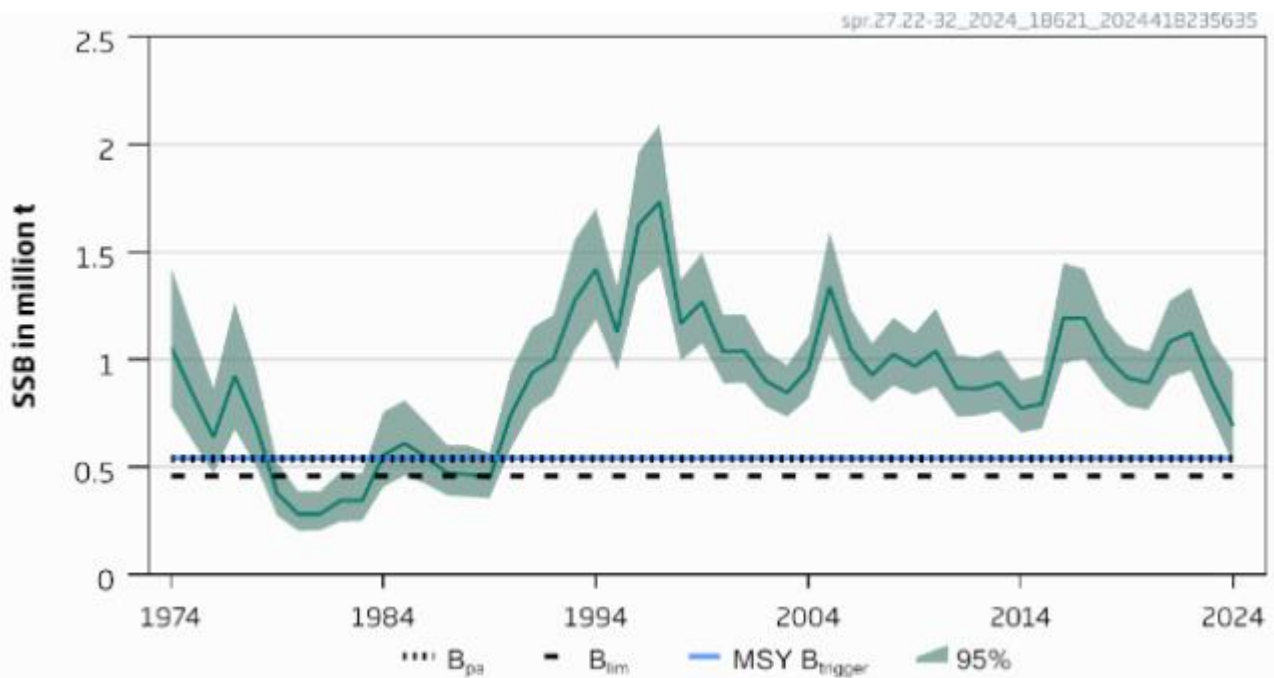
A2.2 The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.

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

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

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

The 2024 stock assessment predicted that SSB at spawning time in 2024 would be 692,126t, and the 2024 catch advice states that “Spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} ” (ICES 2024).



Sprat in Subdivisions 22-32, estimated SSB relative to current reference points (established in 2023). SSB shown for 2024 is the predicted value (ICES 2024).

The assessment provides an indication of stock status relative to reference points, and A2.2 is met.

A2.3 The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.

The results of the WGBFAS stock assessment are summarised in catch and effort advice published by ICES annually. The 2024 advice states that “when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for the Baltic Sea is applied, catches in 2 025 that correspond to the F ranges in the plan are between 130 195 tonnes and 169 131 tonnes. According to the MAP, catches higher than those corresponding to F_{MSY} (164 947 tonnes) can only be taken under conditions specified in the plan, whilst the entire range is considered precautionary when applying ICES advice rule.” (ICES 2024).

The stock assessment provides an indication of an appropriate level of fishery removals, and A2.3 is met.

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

The Guide to ICES Advisory Framework and Principles (ICES 2020) sets out the process by which ICES carries out scientific activities and provides fishery management advice. The process is designed to be transparent, independent and produce peer-reviewed recommendations. Advice is provided based on ten key Principles, of which Principle seven states that “To ensure that the best available, credible science has been used and to confirm that the analysis provides a sound basis for advice, all analyses and methods are peer reviewed by at least two independent reviewers. For recurrent advice, the review is conducted through a benchmark process; for special requests through one-off reviews”.

The sprat stock assessment was most recently benchmarked in 2023. The assessment is peer reviewed, and A2.4 is met.

A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.

All the stock assessment information used to produce this MarinTrust assessment report was publicly available. Specifically, information is published in the WGBFAS report (ICES 2022b) and the catch advice (ICES 2024). Additionally, the publication of methodologies, data, deliberations, and outcomes is a core part of the ICES process, as set out by the ICES Advisory Framework and Principles, particularly Principles 4, 5 and 6 (ICES 2020). The stock assessment is publicly available, and A2.5 is met.

References

ICES (2020) Guide to ICES advisory framework and principles. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2020. ICES Advice 2020, Guide to ICES Advice. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.7648>

ICES (2024). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

ICES. (2023a) Benchmark Workshop on Baltic Pelagic stocks (WKBALTPEL). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:47. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23216492>

ICES (2023b) Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:58. 606 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23123768>

Links

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

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

Clause outcome: PASS

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

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

There is a mechanism in place to restrict total fishing mortality, and A3.1 is met.

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

Since 2018, ICES has provided a range of potential catch recommendations to reflect the specifics of the Baltic Sea MAP (see A2.3). The total international quota – i.e. the sum of the EU TAC and the Russian autonomous quota – is generally within the boundaries of the ICES advice, although it exceeded the upper boundary of the advice by a small amount in 2018 and 2019, and by a larger amount in 2020. Total catch estimates also exceeded the upper boundary of the advice in these three years, by around 3% (2018), 2% (2019), and 17% (2020). The catch advice has not been exceeded since 2020, and total catches have been substantially lower than the upper boundary of the advice. Throughout this period, estimated SSB has been substantially larger than the current target and limit reference points.

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

- Catch has only exceeded the advice by more than 10% in one of the past 6 years since advice has been based on the MAP.
- In years when catch has exceeded the advice by less than 10%, and in all other recent years, SSB has been estimated to be well above the limit reference point.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Catches rarely exceed the advice by more than 10%, and SSB has been above the current target reference point for over 30 years. A3.2 is met.

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

The MAP requires that fishing opportunities are fixed in such a way that there is a less than 5% probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below B_{lim} . When scientific advice indicates that the spawning stock biomass of the stock is below B_{lim} , further remedial measures shall be taken to ensure rapid return of the stock to levels above the level capable of producing MSY. Those

remedial measures may include suspending the targeted fishery for the stock and the adequate reduction of fishing opportunities.

Evidence suggests that the fishery would be closed should biomass fall below the limit reference point, and A3.3 is met.

References

ICES (2024). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

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

Standard clause 1.3.2.1.3

Links

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

A4	Stock Status - Minimum Requirements	
	A4.1	The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT: The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT: The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.
		Clause outcome:
		PASS
<p>A4.1 The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT:</p> <p>The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT:</p> <p>The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.</p> <p>The most recent ICES catch advice states that “Spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa}, and B_{lim}” (ICES 2024); see also A2.2.</p> <p>The stock meets the first statement of this clause, and A4.1 is met.</p>		
References		
ICES (2024). Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1		
Links		
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.4	
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.2.2 (e)	
GSSI	D6 01	

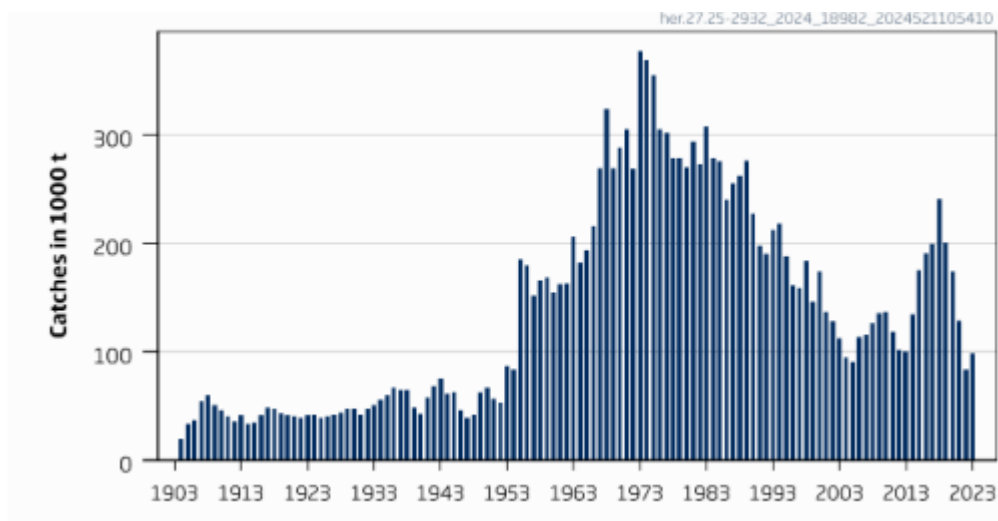
Species Name	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)
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A1	Data Collection - Minimum Requirements		
	A1.1	Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.	PASS
	A1.2	Sufficient additional information is collected to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

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

The EU Fisheries Control System, through the Fisheries Control Regulation (EC Regulation No 1224/2009) requires that data on catches (target species and bycatch) are recorded in logbooks by vessel captains and transmitted to the competent authority of each member state who then provide it to the Commission. Landings data collected in this fashion are incorporated into the annual stock assessment conducted by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). Discards and bycatch are considered negligible (ICES 2024).

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



Central Baltic herring, catches (ICES 2024)

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

In addition to commercial catch data, the stock assessment carried out annually by the WGBFAS utilises one acoustic survey indices (the Baltic International Acoustic Survey (BIAS)); and natural mortalities from the ICES multispecies model (ICES 2024). The model assumes discards and bycatch are negligible. The 2024 catch advice includes a section covering the quality of the assessment, which notes that misreporting of herring and sprat is an ongoing problem which is challenging to quantify, and which introduces an unquantifiable level of uncertainty into the assessment. However, efforts are underway to estimate the levels of misreporting (ICES 2024).

Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated, and A2.1 is met.

References

Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1224/oj/eng>

ICES (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276.v1>

Links

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

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

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

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

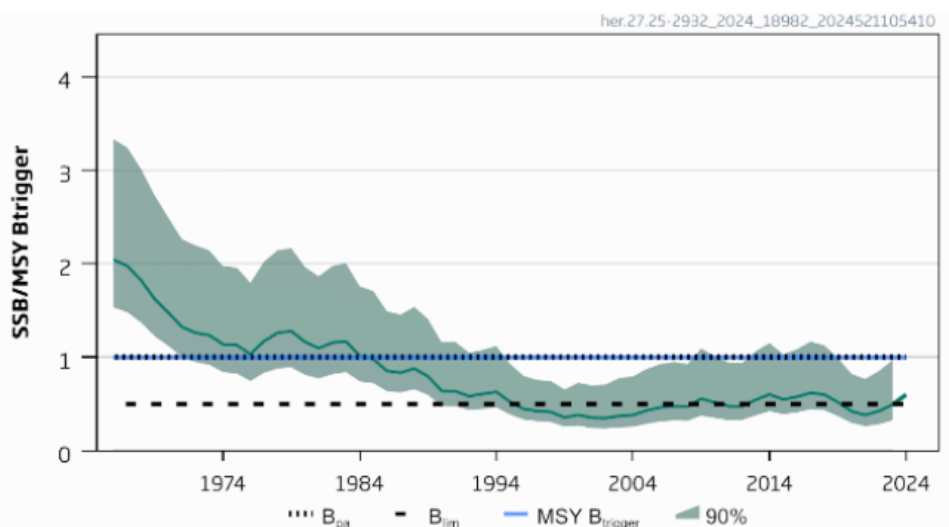
A stock assessment is conducted annually, and A2.1 is met.

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

The WGBFAS stock assessment provides an indication of the status of the stock relative to target and limit reference points. These reference points were updated in 2023 as a result of a full benchmarking of the stock. The new reference points are listed in the table below; key amongst these for the purpose of this MT assessment are the management plan target reference point MAP MSY $B_{trigger}$, set at $B_{30\%}$ (i.e. 30% of the estimated unexploited biomass); and limit reference point MAP B_{lim} , set at $0.15 * B_0$ (i.e. 15% of the estimated unexploited biomass) (ICES 2023). Prior to 2023, reference points were expressed as absolute values, but these were updated to relative values in the 2023 benchmarking.

The 2024 stock assessment projected that SSB in 2025 would be 73% of the target reference point level, and stated, “spawning-stock size is below MSY $B_{trigger}$, and between B_{pa} , and B_{lim} ” (ICES 2024).

The assessment provides an indication of stock status relative to reference points, and A2.2 is met.



Central Baltic herring, relative spawning biomass and current reference points (ICES 2024)

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

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
MSY approach	MSY $B_{trigger}$	$B_{30\%}$	Relative value. Set at 30% of B_0^* . Determined through management strategy evaluation with the objective to achieve high sustainable yields without exceeding a 5% probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} in any single year.	ICES (2023a)
	F_{MSY}	$F_{B30\%}$	Relative value. Set as the F which will achieve 30% of B_0 . Determined through management strategy evaluation with the objective to achieve high sustainable yields without exceeding a 5% probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} in any single year.	ICES (2023a)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	$0.15 \times B_0$	Relative value. Set at 15% of B_0 .	ICES (2023b)
	$B_{pa}=MSY B_{trigger}$	$B_{30\%}$	Relative value. Set at 30% of B_0 . Determined through management strategy evaluation with the objective to achieve high sustainable yields without exceeding a 5% probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} in any single year.	ICES (2023a)
	F_{pa}	$F_{B25\%}^{**} = F_{MSY} * 1.21$	F_{P05} . Relative value. Determined through management strategy evaluation. The F that leads to $SSB \geq B_{lim}$ with 95% probability.	ICES (2023a)
Management plan	MAP MSY $B_{trigger}$	$B_{30\%}$	MSY $B_{trigger}$	ICES (2023a)
	MAP B_{lim}	$0.15 \times B_0$	B_{lim}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP F_{MSY}	$F_{B30\%}$	F_{MSY}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F_{lower}	$F_{B40\%} = F_{MSY} * 0.75$	Relative value. Determined through management strategy evaluation, consistent with the ranges that result in no more than a 5% reduction in long-term yield compared to MSY.	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F_{upper}	$F_{B25\%}^{**} = F_{MSY} * 1.21$	Relative value. Determined through management strategy evaluation, consistent with the ranges that result in no more than a 5% reduction in long-term yield compared to MSY. Capped to F_{P05} .	ICES (2023a)

* B_0 is the estimated unexploited spawning biomass at current conditions (average biological parameters for the last 10 years).

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

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

The results of the WGBFAS stock assessment are summarised in catch and effort advice published by ICES annually. The 2024 advice states that “when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for the Baltic Sea is applied, catches in 2025 that correspond to the F ranges in the plan are between 95 340 (corresponding to $F_{MSY lower} \times SSB_{2025}/MSY B_{trigger}$) and 125 344 tonnes (corresponding to $F_{MSY} \times SSB_{2025}/MSY B_{trigger}$)” (ICES 2024).

The stock assessment provides an indication of an appropriate level of fishery removals, and A2.3 is met.

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

The Guide to ICES Advisory Framework and Principles (ICES 2020) sets out the process by which ICES carries out scientific activities and provides fishery management advice. The process is designed to be transparent, independent and produce peer-reviewed recommendations. Advice is provided based on ten key Principles, of which Principle seven states that “To ensure that the best available, credible science has been used and to confirm that the analysis provides a sound basis for advice, all analyses and methods are peer reviewed by at least two independent reviewers. For recurrent advice, the review is conducted through a benchmark process; for special requests through one-off reviews”.

The herring stock assessment was most recently benchmarked in 2023. The assessment is peer reviewed, and A2.4 is met.

A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.

All the stock assessment information used to produce this MarinTrust assessment report was publicly available. Specifically, information is published in the WGBFAS report (ICES 2022b) and the catch advice (ICES 2024). Additionally, the publication of methodologies, data, deliberations, and outcomes is a core part of the ICES process, as set out by the ICES Advisory Framework and Principles, particularly Principles 4, 5 and 6 (ICES 2020).

The stock assessment is publicly available, and A2.5 is met.

References

ICES (2020) Guide to ICES advisory framework and principles. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2020. ICES Advice 2020, Guide to ICES Advice. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.7648>

ICES (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276.v1>

ICES. (2023a) Benchmark Workshop on Baltic Pelagic stocks (WKBBALPEL). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:47. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23216492>

ICES (2023b) Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:58. 606 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23123768>

Links

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

A3	Harvest Strategy - Minimum Requirements		
	A3.1	There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.	PASS
	A3.2	Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.	FAIL
	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).	FAIL

Clause outcome: FAIL

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

Total fishing mortality is restricted through the implementation of catch quotas. In EU waters a TAC is set, and is generally based on the ICES advice which in turn is guided by the EU Baltic Sea MAP (Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 as amended). Total removals by the Russian fleet are restricted by a Russian autonomous quota. Note that this clause considers only whether there is a mechanism in place to restrict fishing mortality; the extent to which the mechanism is effective at restricting removals to the level advised by scientific organisations is covered in A3.2, below.

There is a mechanism in place to restrict total fishing mortality, and A3.1 is met.

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

Since 2018, ICES has provided a range of potential catch recommendations to reflect the specifics of the Baltic Sea MAP (see A2.3). The total international quota – i.e. the sum of the EU TAC and the Russian autonomous quota – has historically been broadly within the boundaries of the ICES advice. However, while the headline 2023 ICES catch advice called for maximum catches within the range of 41,706t – 52,549t, the total international TAC was set at 67,368t, nearly 30% greater than the maximum recommended level.

An argument could be made that this excess TAC has only occurred in one year, and therefore does not represent removals which “regularly exceed” the level stated in the stock assessment. However, the severity of the excess TAC in 2024 is exacerbated by the conclusion of the 2023 stock assessment that this quota was set at a time when stock biomass was below the limit reference point. Some scientists and management stakeholders – including, originally, the European Commission (EC 2023) – argued that the TAC should be set to zero.

Total fishery removals in 2024 are likely to substantially exceed the range of catch recommendations provided by ICES, and A3.2 is not met.

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

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

* 1988–2003 including Gulf of Riga herring.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 2023 ICES advice stated that the stock was substantially below the LRP; noted that the MAP requires fishing pressure to be set at a level which reduces the chance of SSB falling below LRP to less than 5%; and stated that the stock will likely remain under LRP even with zero fishing in 2024. However, despite this, the ICES headline catch advice recommended a quota of between 41,706t and 52,549t (ICES 2023), although text included within the advice also noted that “The EU MAP states, “Fishing

opportunities shall in any event be fixed in such a way as to ensure that there is less than a 5% probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below B_{lim}''' (ICES 2023).

Due to the state of the stock, in August 2023 the European Commission proposed the closure of the targeted central Baltic herring fishery (EC 2023). However, this proposal was not implemented, and the 2024 TAC was eventually set at 40,368t (EC 2023a). The 2024 ICES advice indicates that when combined with the Russian Federation autonomous quota, the total international TAC in 2024 was 67,368t.

In conclusion, despite biomass being below the LRP in 2023, the 2024 TAC was set substantially higher than the level recommended by ICES. A3.3 is not met. As per the MT whole fish assessment guidance, the stock has been further assessed under Category B.

References

EC (2023). Commission proposes fishing opportunities for 2024 in the Baltic Sea https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_4287

EC (2023a). Baltic Sea: Agreement reached on 2024 fishing opportunities https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/baltic-sea-agreement-reached-2024-fishing-opportunities-2023-10-24_en

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ICES (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276.v1>

Standard clause 1.3.2.1.3

Links

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

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

Clause outcome: FAIL

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

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

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

The stock is currently estimated to be slightly above the limit reference point (B_{lim}) but below the target reference points B_{pa} and $MSY B_{trigger}$ (ICES 2024), therefore the first and third statements of this clause are not met.

In order to meet the second statement, there must be evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure. The 2023 stock assessment concluded that stock biomass was below the limit reference point level (ICES 2023). However, the fishery remained open in 2024, with a total international TAC of 67,368t, nearly 30% more than the maximum

recommended by the ICES advice (52,549t). There is conclusive evidence that the fishery is not closed when biomass falls below the limit reference point, and the second statement is not met.

A4.1 is not met. As per the MT whole fish assessment guidance, the stock has been further assessed under Category B.

References

ICES (2023). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). Replacing advice provided in May 2023. ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.23310368.v1>

ICES (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276.v1>

Links

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

CATEGORY B SPECIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

If the biomass / fishing pressure risk assessment is not possible

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

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

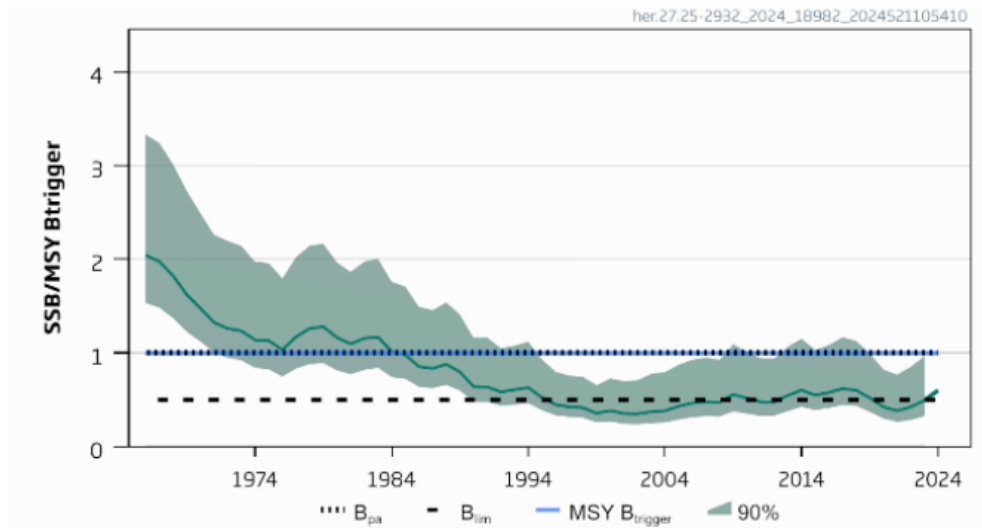
B > B_{av} and F < F_{av}	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail
B > B_{av} and F or F_{av} unknown	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
B = B_{av} and F < F_{av}	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
B = B_{av} and F or F_{av} unknown	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
B > B_{av} and F > F_{av}	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
B < B_{av}	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
B unknown	Fail	Fail	Fail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

Assessment Results

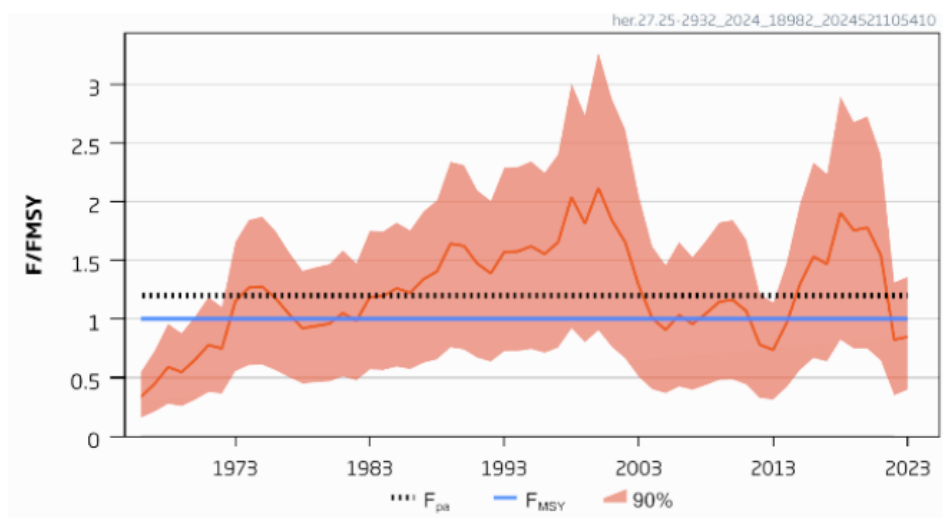
Species Name		Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>)
B1	Species Name	
	Table used (Ba, Bb)	B(a)
	Outcome	PASS

Central Baltic herring is managed relative to established target and limit reference points, and can therefore be assessed against Table B(a). In the most recent stock assessment biomass was estimated to be above the limit reference point. Fishing mortality in 2023 was below the F_{MSY} level, and if the TAC set for 2024 is fully taken then fishing mortality will be about 48% of the F_{MSY} level (ICES 2024). The 2024 ICES catch advice states that “Fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY} , and spawning-stock size is below $MSY B_{trigger}$ and between B_{pa} and B_{lim} ” (ICES 2024).

Taking into account current estimates of biomass and fishing mortality relative to reference points, and reading off Table B(a), the outcome is that the stock Passes the Category B assessment.



Central Baltic herring, relative spawning biomass and current reference points (ICES 2024)



Central Baltic herring, relative fishing pressure (ICES 2024)

References

ICES (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276.v1>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2, 4.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.5.1
GSSI	D.5.01

FURTHER IMPACTS

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

F1	Impacts on ETP Species - Minimum Requirements		
	F1.1	Interactions with ETP species are recorded.	PASS
	F1.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species.	PASS
	F1.3	If the fishery is known to interact with ETP species, measures are in place to minimise mortality.	PASS
			Clause outcome: PASS
F1.1 Interactions with ETP species are recorded.			
<p>There is a requirement for EU member states to record ETP bycatch initially through Council Regulation (EC) 812/2004 (which was focused on cetaceans, although member states also provided information on other species) and from 2019 through the technical Conservation Measures Regulation (EU Regulation 2019/1241) (Annex XIII sets out monitoring requirements for marine mammals, reptiles and seabirds) and the Habitats and Birds Directives (1992/43/EC and 2009/47/EC) also require monitoring of bycatch of species protected under the Directives. Information collected through these mechanisms is collated and assessed by the ICES WGBYC (ICES 2023).</p> <p>Interactions with ETP species are recorded, and F1.1 is met.</p>			
F1.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species.			
<p>Interactions with ETP species are considered very rare. The most recent WGBYC report indicates that pelagic gears in the Baltic Sea reported no interactions with sharks, seabirds or turtles in 2022 (ICES 2023). Previously, the WGBYC has assessed the bycatch risk posed by different fishing gears to protected species in the Baltic Seas using expert judgement. Each combination of protected species and gear type was assigned a simple 1 to 3 (lower-higher risk) score. Pelagic trawls were scored at '1', except for seals and harbour porpoise which were scored at '2' based on a record from Poland of one porpoise bycatch from a pelagic trawl (ICES 2018).</p> <p>The available evidence suggests that the fishery has minimal interaction with ETP species, and F1.2 is met.</p>			
F1.3 If the fishery is known to interact with ETP species, measures are in place to minimise mortality.			
<p>Pelagic trawlers are not thought to produce significant bycatch of ETP in the offshore fishery in the Baltic Sea, but there is some evidence of occasional interaction. Measures are in place to minimise mortality including area closures (e.g. offshore from the mouth of the Oder), ban on fishing in inshore areas in certain locations, monitoring requirements, marine protected areas designated for ETP species, and ban on capture of ETP and, where this occurs, their prompt release.</p> <p>Even though the fishery is thought unlikely to interact with ETP species, general measures to protect such species are in place and F1.3 is met.</p>			
References			
<p>ICES, 2018. Report from the Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC), 1–4 May 2018, Reykjavik, Iceland. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:25. 128 pp</p> <p>ICES (2023). Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.24659484.v2</p>			
Links			
MarinTrust Standard clause		1.3.3.1	
FAO CCRF		7.2.2 (d)	
GSSI		D4.04, D.3.08	

F2 Impacts on Habitats - Minimum Requirements		
F2.1	Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management decision-making process.	PASS
F2.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats.	PASS
F2.3	If the fishery is known to interact with physical habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.	PASS
Clause outcome:		PASS
<p>F2.1 Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management decision-making process.</p> <p>The pelagic trawl gears used in this fishery are not intended to make contact with the sea bed, and in order to avoid damage vessels will attempt to avoid such interactions wherever possible. The assessment guidance for this clause states that “good practice requires there to be a strategy in place that is designed to ensure the fishery does not pose a risk of serious or irreversible harm to habitat types”. For fisheries in the region which interact with seabed habitats, measures are in place to manage and mitigate impacts via mechanisms such as the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the requirements associated with Natura 2000 sites, and the technical measures set out in EU regulation.</p> <p>Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management process, and F2.1 is met.</p> <p>F2.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats.</p> <p>Pelagic trawl gears are not designed to make contact with the seabed. Such contact is likely to be minimal and consequently the impact of this gear on benthic habitats and seabed structures is considered minimal, if any.</p> <p>There is no substantial evidence that the pelagic trawls used in this fishery make significant contact with the sea floor, and F2.2 is met.</p> <p>F2.3 If the fishery is known to interact with physical habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.</p> <p>Pelagic gears such as those used in this fishery are highly unlikely to cause significant habitat disruption. However, within the broader fisheries management structures present in the Baltic, measures are in place to protect habitats. Habitats are provided protection through the Natura 2000 network established under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (2009/147/EC; 92/43/EEC). This is a network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types which are protected in their own right. Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, Member States are required to establish the necessary conservation measures, including, if necessary, management plans for these sites and the impact of any ‘plans or projects’ likely to have a significant effect on the sites subject to assessment. The Technical Measures Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1241) also sets out technical measures which can protect habitats including regional measures under Article 15 and powers to introduce real-time closures and moving-on provisions.</p> <p>Even though the fishery is thought very unlikely to interact with seabed habitats, habitat protection measures applied to fisheries in general are in place, and F2.3 is met.</p>		
<p>References</p> <p>Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:01992L0043-20130701</p> <p>Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009L0147</p> <p>HELCOM (2023). Baltic Sea Action Plan 2021 update. https://helcom.fi/baltic-sea-action-plan/</p>		
Links		
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.2	
FAO CCRF	6.8	
GSSI	D.2.07, D.6.07, D3.09	

F3 Ecosystem Impacts - Minimum Requirements								
F3.1	The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process.	PASS						
F3.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.	PASS						
F3.3	If one or more of the species identified during species categorisation plays a key role in the marine ecosystem, additional precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals.	PASS						
Clause outcome:		PASS						
<p>F3.1 The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process.</p> <p>Commercial fisheries in the Baltic Sea are managed according to a Multi-Annual Plan (MAP), EU Regulation 2016/1139. The objectives of the MAP include implementing the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, the precautionary approach, and EU legislation including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Directive 2008/56/EC. The regular management advice published by ICES includes an ecoregion overview for the Baltic Sea (ICES, 2022), which summarises the most up to date understanding of the Baltic ecosystem and the ways in which this knowledge influences the management advice. These include noting the likely current and future impacts of climate change, and the shifts in the food web which have occurred since the late 1980s.</p> <p>The broader ecosystem is considered in the management process, and F3.1 is met.</p>								
<p>F3.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.</p> <p>The most significant potential ecosystem impacts of the fishery arise from the removal of herring and sprat biomass. The ICES ecosystem overview (ICES, 2022) states that since the late 1980's "the open-sea system has been dominated by small pelagic fish, such as sprat", and that "in general, those seabird species eating sprat and herring have increased in number". Prey depletion is not considered to be a determining factor in the health of populations of porpoise, seal or cod populations, all of which predate sprat and herring.</p> <p>There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem, and F3.2 is met.</p>								
<p>F3.3 If one or more of the species identified during species categorisation plays a key role in the marine ecosystem, additional precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals.</p> <p>Herring and sprat are both considered to be important prey species in the Baltic Sea ecosystem. Predation of sprat is considered in the EU MAP, and factored in when establishing reference points and management regulations such as quotas, area and seasonal restrictions, gear limitations, and controls on the number of vessels in the fishery. Natural mortality levels are estimated for the stock as part of the stock assessment process, using a multispecies assessment model (ICES 2023). This ensures that catch recommendations recognise the likely quantity of herring and sprat which will be removed by predators over the coming year, and are lower than they would be otherwise.</p>								
<p>References</p> <p>ICES (2022). Baltic Sea Ecoregion – Ecosystem overview. ICES Advice: Ecosystem Overviews. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21725438.v1</p> <p>ICES (2023) Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). Replacing advice provided in May 2023. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2023. ICES Advice 2023, her.27.25–2932. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.23310368</p>								
<p>Links</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>MarinTrust Standard clause</td> <td>1.3.3.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FAO CCRF</td> <td>7.2.2 (d)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GSSI</td> <td>D.2.09, D3.10, D.6.09</td> </tr> </table>			MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.3	FAO CCRF	7.2.2 (d)	GSSI	D.2.09, D3.10, D.6.09
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.3							
FAO CCRF	7.2.2 (d)							
GSSI	D.2.09, D3.10, D.6.09							

SOCIAL CRITERION

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

Appendix A - Determining Resilience Ratings

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

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

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

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

Appendix A - MarinTrust Fishery Assessment Peer Review Template

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

Fishery under assessment	WF36_Estonia_Herring_Sprat Whole fish Fishery Assessment WF36 – Herring and Sprat in ICES Subdivisions 25-29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga
Management authority (Country/State)	European Commission (EC), Estonia
Main species	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)
Fishery location	FAO 27, ICES 25-29 and 32 (excluding Gulf of Riga)
Gear type(s)	Pelagic trawls
Overall recommendation. (Approve/ Fail)	Approve

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

The report is well-written and follows the MT guidance. Of the two main species, only Herring A3 and A4 failed the MT assessment, however, this species was re-assessed under Category B, where the stock Passed. Further, the catch profile has been verified by multiple data sources.

General Comments on the Draft Report provided to the peer reviewer

Minor findings:

The opening table is missing the client, email and application code.

Recommendation: None

Summary of Peer Review Outcomes

Peer reviewers should review the fishery assessment report with the primary objective of answering the key questions listed in the table below.

Where the situation is more complicated, reviewers may instead answer “See Notes”.

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

Detailed Peer Review Justification

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

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

Boxes may be extended if more space is required.

1. Is the scoring of the fishery consistent with the MarinTrust standard, and clearly based on the evidence presented in the assessment report?
The peer reviewer agrees with all of the scoring which has been evidenced throughout, references all appear to be up-to-date, with working links. Recommendation: Regarding scoring herring against B1 Table B(a); it would be good to see where the assessors place the species on the scoring table. i.e., <i>Biomass is below MSY / target reference point, but above limit reference point & Fishing mortality is below MSY or target reference point</i> . Although it is clear from the scoring rationale, it could be better presented to the client that this fishery is very close to failing.
Certification body response
Colours have been added to Table B(a) to attempt to illustrate the assessment outcome.

2. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MARINTRUST fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?
All sections of the report have been completed with sufficient information and evidence to justify the scoring given.
Certification body response
n/a

3. Does the Species Categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?
The species categorisation looks accurate and based on the available evidence, the reference links provided are up-to-date and working.
Certification body response
n/a

3M. Are the scores in “Section M – Management” clearly justified?	YES
Scoring is detailed and covers both the EU and Estonian management systems, in most scoring rationales. i.e., under M1.2 it would be pertinent to confirm which organisation within Estonia collects and reports data to ICES.	
Certification body response	
Information on fishery data collection in Estonia added to M1.2.	

3A. Are the “Category A Species” scores clearly justified?	YES
All sections of the report have been completed with sufficient information and evidence to justify the scoring given.	
Certification body response	
n/a	

3B. Are the “Category B Species” scores clearly justified?	YES
The use of Table Ba is appropriate given information on stock biomass and fishing mortality is available. The only minor recommendation is above.	
Certification body response	
Table B(a) adjusted as noted above.	

3C. Are the “Category C Species” scores clearly justified?	N/A
Certification body response	

3D. Are the “Category D Species” scores clearly justified?	YES
All sections of the report have been completed with sufficient information and evidence to justify the scoring given.	
Certification body response	
n/a	

3F. Are the scores in “Section F – Further Impacts” clearly justified?	YES
All sections of the report have been completed with sufficient information and evidence to justify the scoring given.	
Certification body response	
n/a	

Optional: General comments on the Peer Review Draft Report
Certification body response

Glossary

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

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