

Joint-Recommendation NWWAC-PelAC Sprat in English Channel (areas 7d and 7e)

Date: 01 June 2022

Background

ICES published advice on sprat in areas 7d and 7e (English Channel) on 9 May 2022, advising catches of no more than 9200 tonnes from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 following the MSY-approach. The advice follows the ICES framework for category 3 data-limited stocks where acoustic biomass estimates were used as an index for stock development.

The bilateral Agreement between the EU and the UK, finalised in 2021, has amended the TAC year for sprat in the English Channel (SPR/7DE). From 2022 onwards, the TAC year will run annually from July to July, instead of January to January. While it is anticipated this change will lead to a shift in the release of ICES advice of both North Sea and English Channel sprat annually to April moving forward, the current developments regarding the war in Ukraine have led to a slight delay in the advice publication this year.

Following the newly established [Gentlemen's Agreement between the NWW and Pelagic ACs](#) agreed on March 31 2022, both ACs acknowledge that any recommendation on sprat in areas 7d and 7e fall under the direct competence of the NWWAC in accordance with Annex III of the CFP.

The NWWAC proposes the following recommendation for this stock, which is endorsed by the Pelagic AC and the result of a joint exercise, whereby the NWWAC advises on bycatch issues and the PelAC advises on the directed fishery.

Recommendations from the NWWAC (supported by the PelAC)

The NWWAC and PelAC recommend that the TAC for sprat in the English Channel should not exceed the ICES MSY advice.

The advice mentions the stock structure of sprat populations in the Celtic Seas ecoregion is unknown. The ACs recommend that a genetics stock identification project should be undertaken to better understand the stock structure of the sprat populations in the Celtic Seas ecoregion. The ACs are aware that some work in this area is already planned.

In addition, in the context of improved management of the directed fishery, the PelAC will be examining the possibility of developing a management strategy for sprat in the Celtic Sea ecoregion. Given the key role that the stock has in the NWW ecosystems, we believe it would be important to incorporate ecosystem-based considerations in its management and assessment, and therefore encourage all the concerned parties to develop a roadmap for this purpose.

Additionally, we consider that the development of future spatial measures on sprat should be proposed by managers and evaluated by ICES, focusing on their impact on the health of this critical species as well as on the impacts of the fishery on other targeted species.

Finally, we suggest that the current sprat management units should be evaluated by ICES.



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