

Ms Charlina Vitcheva  
Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries  
European Commission  
Jozef II-straat 99  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire, Zoetermeer, 20 June 2025

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

**Subject: Joint Recommendation NWWAC/PelAC - Sprat in the English Channel (ICES divisions 7.d and 7.e)**

ICES published its scientific advice on sprat in areas 7.d and 7.e (English Channel) on 24 April 2025, advising catches of no more than 5 944 tonnes for the period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026, following the MSY approach. This advice is based on a category 3 assessment using a biomass index derived from the PELTIC survey.

In line with the [Gentlemen's Agreement](#) between the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) and the Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC), adopted on 31 March 2022, both ACs acknowledge that any recommendation on sprat in areas 7.d and 7.e falls under the direct competence of the NWWAC, in accordance with Annex III of the CFP.

The NWWAC puts forward the following joint recommendation, which is fully endorsed by the PelAC. This is the result of a collaborative effort where the NWWAC advises on bycatch considerations and the PelAC on the directed fishery.

Proposed recommendation for NWWAC (supported by the PelAC):

The NWWAC and PelAC recommend that the TAC for sprat in the English Channel be set according to the latest ICES advice, i.e., no more than 5 944 tonnes for the period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

The ACs take note of the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the stock structure of sprat in the Celtic Seas ecoregion, which ICES again highlighted in its 2025 advice. We fully support the continuation and expansion of genetic stock identification work aimed at clarifying stock boundaries in this ecoregion.

The PelAC reiterates its intention to develop a management strategy for sprat in the Celtic Seas once stock identity has been clarified and robust delineation is available. This will help ensure appropriate and precautionary management, particularly in the context of a potential directed fishery.

Given the ecological importance of sprat as a forage species for many predators in the North Western Waters, the ACs underline the necessity of incorporating ecosystem-based management considerations in both the scientific assessments and the management frameworks. We therefore urge the European Commission and Member States to develop a roadmap for implementing ecosystem-based approaches for this stock.

Furthermore, we recommend that any spatial or seasonal measures envisaged for sprat be developed by managers in close cooperation with ICES, ensuring a robust evaluation of their biological and ecological impacts—both on the sprat stock itself and on associated fisheries.

Finally, the ACs stress that the current management units for sprat, particularly those used in the ICES advice for subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.f–k, should be re-evaluated. The scientific basis for treating these as a single stock remains weak, and the lack of clarity may compromise both sustainability and socio-economic stability. We urge ICES and the European Commission to prioritise stock-ID work in this area before the next advice is issued for these western divisions.

Yours sincerely,



Alexandra Philippe  
NWWAC Chair



Esben Sverdrup-Jensen  
PelAC Chair



Co-Funded by the  
European Union

North Western Waters Advisory Council  
C/o Bord Iascaigh Mhara  
Crofton Road  
Dun Laoghaire A96 E5A0  
Ireland

**Email:** [mo.mathies@nwwac.ie](mailto:mo.mathies@nwwac.ie)  
**Email:** [info@nwwac.ie](mailto:info@nwwac.ie)  
**Web:** [www.nwwac.org](http://www.nwwac.org)  
**Tel:** +353 (0) 1 2144 43  
**Co. Reg. No:** 403877