SUMMARY OF 2023 ICES ADVICE TO DATE FOR PELAGIC SPECIES

	Date of advice	Status of key stocks (dates as indicated) (more detail in the following pages)	ICES Catch advice	TAC for previous year	SSB Compared with previous yr	Pg
Blue whiting combined stock I-IX, XII & XIV	Sept 2023	This year's assessment shows a substantial revision of the recruitment estimate for 2022. Both the 2020 and 2021 year classes are among the highest in the time-series, and are expected to be largely recruited to the fishery in 2024. Notably, 44% and 31% of the catch in 2024 is predicted to consist of fish from the 2020 and 2021 year class, respectively.	**1,529,754 (2024)**	**1,359,629 (2023)**		**4**
Barents Sea capelin	Oct 2021	Spawning-stock biomass (SSB) has been declining since 2018. The advice for 2022 has increased from zero in 2021 because the maturing stock is estimated to be larger.	**70,000 (2022)**	**Zero (2021)**		**5**
Capelin Iceland East Greenland Jan Mayen	Nov 2022	The initial advice for 2023/2024 of zero catch is because of the low estimate of immature fish.	**Zero (2023/24)**	**400,000 (2022/23)**		**5**
Herring N Sea autumn spawners	June 2023	Recruitment for the stock was low over the period 2015– 2021, 2022 recruitment (2021 year class) is substantially higher and will contribute positively to SSB levels from 2024 onwards.	**532,166 (2024)**	**414 886 (2023)**		**6**
Herring Icelandic summer spawners	June 2023	The advice is higher than last year due to a larger reference biomass estimate. Infection of Ichthyophonus still persist in the stock, but at lower rates.	**92,633 (2023/24)**	**66,195 (2022/23)**		**6**
Norwegian spring spawning herring	Sept 2023	The advice for 2024 is 24% lower than for 2023 because the adult stock size is declining due to low recruitment since the large 2016 year class.	**390,010 (2024)**	**511,171 (2023)**		**7**
Mackerel in the Northeast Atlantic	Sept 2023	The recent assessments have systematically revised the estimates of SSB upwards and F downwards for the years prior to 2018. The abundance estimates at ages 0 and 1 are highly uncertain, and year-class strength only becomes apparent when fish enter the fishery at age 2 to 3. Therefore, recruitment is presented at age 2.	**739,386 (2024)**	**782,066 (2023)**		**8**

	Date of advice	Status of key stocks (dates as indicated) (more detail in the following pages)	ICES Catch advice	TAC for previous year	SSB Compared with previous yr	Pg
Norway pout in the North Sea	**Oct 2023**	The change in advice (−82%) is due to below-average recruitment in 2021 and 2023, around-average recruitment in 2022, and a downward revision in recruitment in 2022.	**20,583 (2024)**	**116,823 (2023)**	↓	**9**
Sandeel in the Dogger Bank (1r)	**Feb 2023**	Although recruitment has been below average between 2020 and 2022, the low fishing mortality in 2021 and 2022 has allowed the stock to rebuild sufficiently to allow a fishery in 2023 that should result in the SSB 2024 being at the MSY Bescapement.	**120.428 (2023)**	**Zero (2022}**	↑	**10**
Sandeel in central and southern N Sea (2r)	**Feb 2023**	The update assessment has revised estimates of SSB upwards, and estimates of fishing mortality downwards, for several recent years; the reasons for this are not fully understood.	**40,997 (2023)**	**71,859 (2022)**	↓	**10**
Sandeel in north/central N Sea (3r)	**Feb 2023**	The large decrease in advice from 2022 is due to a decrease in recent recruitments. Estimated recruitment in 2021 and 2022 (1 and 2 years old in 2023) being less than half of the long-term average.	**30,570 (2023)**	**85,559 (2022)**	↓	**10**
Sandeel in north/central N Sea (4)	**Feb 2023**	Upward revision of the 2022 year class (30% higher than historical average) and a higher SSB at the start of the advice year (2023).make it possible to have a non-zero catch advice.	**35,020 (2023)**	**Zero (2022)**	↑	**11**
Sandeel 6.a West of Scotland	**Feb 2021**	The available information on sandeel in Division 6.a is inadequate to evaluate stock status	**Zero (2021)**	**No TAC (2020)**	→	**11**
Sandeel in Viking and Bergen Banks (5r)	**Feb 2023**	ICES advice for this stock has been for zero catch since 2011. Available information is inadequate to evaluate stock status or trends so status is unknown.	**Zero (2023)**	**Zero (2022)**	→	**11**
Sandeel in the Kattegat (6)	**Feb 2023**	Available information is inadequate to evaluate stock status or trends. The state of the stock is therefore unknown.	**140 (2023)**	**140 (2022)**	→	**11**
Sandeel in Shetland (7r)	**Feb 2023**	ICES advice for this stock has been for zero catch since 2013, and advice remains at zero catch for 2023 and 2024	**Zero (2023)**	**Zero (2022)**	→	**11**
Sprat in the Baltic	**May 2023**	The advised catches for 2024 are similar to those for 2023. Although the new Fmsy reference point derived in the benchmark is higher, the catch advice decreased slightly mainly due to a large decline in the stock size	**191,075 – 247,704 2024**	**183,749 – 317,905 (2023)**	→	**12**

	Date of advice	Status of key stocks (dates as indicated) (more detail in the following pages)	ICES Catch advice	TAC for previous year	SSB Compared with previous yr	Pg
Sprat in the Skaggerak/ Kattegat/ North Sea	April 2023	The large increase of 109% in advised catch this year is predominantly due to stronger recruitment in 2022 compared to recent years, mainly due to an upwards revision on the estimated SSB for 2022.	**143 598 (2023/24)**	**68,690 (2022-23)**		**12**
Sprat in the West of Scotland/S. Celtic Sea	June 2023	Adult stock size and fishing pressure are unknown.	**2,240 (2024/25)**	**2,240 (2022/23)**		**13**
Sprat in the English Channel	July 2023	The large decrease in advice for 2023–2024 in relation to the 2022–2023 advice is due to a 73.5% decrease in survey biomass	**2,437 (2024)**	**9,200 (2023)**		**13**

KEY

Fishing mortality – Removals from a stock by fishing.
Spawning Stock Biomass – total weight of all sexually mature fish in the stock.
MSY – Maximum Sustainable Yield.

- **F_{MSY}** fishing at levels that catch the maximum proportion of a fish stock that can safely be removed on a continuous basis.
- **B_{MSY}** spawning stock biomass that results from fishing at F_{MSY} for a long time.
- **MSY $B_{trigger}$** value of spawning stock biomass that triggers a specific management action.

PA – Precautionary Approach

- **F_{pa}** precautionary reference point for fishing mortality.
- **F_{lim}** minimum limit (fishing limit reference point).
- **B_{pa}** precautionary reference point for spawning stock biomass (SSB)
- **B_{lim}** limit reference point for spawning stock biomass (SSB)
- **$B_{escapement}$** biomass reference point for short-lived species. Target is to leave reference SSB to spawn the next year

Mg'ment – Management Plan – agreed by all parties to maintain/rebuild stocks.

- **F_{MGT}** fishing mortality reference point as defined in management plans.
- **B_{MGT}** fishing mortality reference point as defined in management plans.

Cpue – Catch per unit effort. **Lpue** – Landing per unit effort.

In the following tables a very simple statement has been included on the status of the spawning stock biomass in comparison with the previous year. This is an estimate based on ICES stock status information and is not necessarily definitive.

BLUE WHITING

Stock	TAC for 2023 Tonnes	Status of stock in September 2023	*Fishing mortality	TAC advice for 2024	*Stock status
Inside safe biological limits					
Blue whiting combined stock Sub-areas I-IX, XII and XIV **September 2023**	1,359,629 (2023) 752,736 (2022)	This year's assessment shows a substantial revision of the recruitment estimate for 2022 (Figure 2). The 2021 year class (recruitment-at-age 1 in 2022) is now estimated to be 68.9 billion, while last year's estimate was 43.2 billion. This is due to a high survey index value in 2023 and is corroborated by high commercial catch-at-age of the same year class in 2022 and 2023. Other surveys, which are not currently used in the assessment, confirm very large 2020 and 2021 year classes. Both the 2020 and 2021 year classes are among the highest in the time-series, and are expected to be largely recruited to the fishery in 2024. Notably, 44% and 31% of the catch in 2024 is predicted to consist of fish from the 2020 and 2021 year class, respectively.	Fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY and Fpa, but below Flim.	ICES advises that when the long-term management strategy agreed by Norway, the European Union, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and the United Kingdom is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 1,529,754 tonnes. The advice is 12.5% higher than that for 2023 because of the strong year classes of 2020 and 2021 that now contribute to the exploitable stock (from age 2). There have been consistent deviations from the long-term management strategy since 2018 as evident from the sum of unilateral quotas. Failing to adhere to the advised catches as derived from the application of the MSY approach or the long-term management strategy may not be precautionary. Specifically, this may result in an increased risk for the stock to fall below Blim and loss of catch in the long-term.	**IMPROVING** **Spawning stock biomass** is above MSY Btrigger, Bpa, and Blim

CAPELIN

Stock	TAC Tonnes	Status of stock	*Fishing mortality	TAC advice	*Stock status
Reference points not fully defined					
Advice in October 2021					
Barents Sea capelin Subareas I and II, excluding Division IIa west of 5°W. **October 2021.**	Zero (2021)	In Oct 2021. Spawning-stock biomass (SSB) has been declining since 2018. The advice for 2022 has increased from zero in 2021 because the maturing stock is estimated to be larger.	No reference points for fishing pressure have been defined for this stock	ICES advises that when the management plan of the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission (JNRFC) is applied, catches in 2022 should be no more than 70,000 tonnes.	**INCREASING** **Spawning stock biomass size** is above Blim.
Advice in November 2022					
Capelin in the Iceland East Greenland Jan Mayen area Subareas V and XIV and Division IIa west of 5°W **November 2022**	400,000 (2022/23)	The initial advice for 2023/2024 of zero catch is because of the low estimate of immature fish.	No reference points for fishing pressure have been defined for this stock.	ICES advises that when the harvest control rule agreed in 2015 by the Coastal States is applied, the initial TAC for the fishing season 15 October 2023–15 April 2024 should be 0 tonnes. The initial TAC is expected to be revised based on acoustic survey information in autumn 2023 (intermediate TAC) and with the final TAC being set based on the results of the winter survey in 2024.	**DECREASING** **Spawning stock** biomass is above Blim and Bmgt.

HERRING

Stock	TAC advice Tonnes	Status of stock in 2023	*Fishing mortality	TAC advice for 2024	*SSB Status
Inside safe biological limits					
Herring in IV and VIId North Sea, Eastern English channel - autumn spawners **June 2023**	414,886 in 2023	The basis for the 28.3% increase of catch advice is: SSB in 2022 is estimated to be 32.5% larger than predicted in the previous advice. Recruitment in 2022 (2021 year class) is now estimated to be 87.3% larger than estimated in the previous advice. Contribution of this year class to the SSB in the advice year is 32.6%. SSB is forecast to be above MSY Btrigger, so fishing advice in 2024 is at FMSY (was below FMSY in 2023).	Fishing pressure on the stock is below FMSY.	ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 532,166 tonnes. Catches of Western Baltic Spring-Spawning (WBSS) herring in the fishery for North Sea autumn-spawning herring in the east of 4.a and 4.b should be kept as low as possible. .	**INCREASING** **Spawning stock biomass** is above MSY Btrigger, Bpa, and Blim
Inside safe biological limits					
Herring Icelandic summer spawners Va **June 2023**	66,195 (2022/2023)	Estimation of recruitment in the last 3 years has been highly variable. This has had a large impact on the estimate of harvestable biomass. Advice is higher than last year due to a larger reference biomass estimate. Partly due to recent recruitments being stronger than previously estimated.	Fishing pressure on the stock is below Harvest rate management. HRMSY is undefined	ICES advises that when the Icelandic management plan is applied, catches in the fishing year 2023/2024 should be no more than 92, 633 tonnes. Infection of *Ichthyophonus* still persist in the stock, but at lower rates. This is considered in both the assessment and the management plan	**SAME** **Spawning stock biomass** 1. Above MSY Btrigger 2. Above Bpa 3. Above Blim

HERRING contd

Stock	TAC for 2022 Tonnes	Status of stock in September 2023	*Fishing mortality	TAC advice for 2024	*SSB Status
Inside safe biological limits					
Norwegian spring spawners (Atlanto-Scandian) herring. ICES sub area I, divisions IIa, Va, Vb. **September 2023**	511,171 (2023) 598,588 (2022)	The advice for 2024 is 24% lower than for 2023 because the adult stock size is declining due to low recruitment since the large 2016 year class; and fishing mortality is reduced compared to last year since the SSB in 2024 is predicted to be below SSBmgt (= MSY Btrigger) The estimated SSB and fishing mortality are consistent with the estimates from last year's assessment. The 2016 year class has been revised upward over the last year and is expected to dominate the catches in 2024 (45%). Subsequent year classes recruiting to the fishery are estimated to be weak. SSB is predicted to be below SSBmgt in 2025 even if the management plan is applied in 2024.	Fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY and between Fpa and Flim.	ICES advises that when the long-term management strategy agreed by the European Union, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, and the Russian Federation is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 390,010 tonnes. There has been an overshoot of the catches in relation to the advised TAC since 2013. The advice is based on the target fishing mortality in the long-term management strategy agreed by the European Union, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, and the Russian Federation. .	**DECLINING** **Spawning stock biomass** size is above MSY Btrigger, Bpa, and Blim

MACKEREL

Stock	TAC for 2023 Tonnes	Status of stock in Sept 2023	*Fishing mortality.	TAC advice for 2024	*SSB Status
Inside safe biological limits					
Mackerel in the Northeast Atlantic (NEA) (combines Southern, Western and North Sea spawning components). **September 2023** **August 2020 ICES was asked to advise on long-term management strategies for NEA mackerel. Their response was published on 3 Aug. Their Management Evaluation Strategy (MSE) tool provides a useful instrument to explore a wider range of uncertainties associated with NEA mackerel stock assessment.**	782,066 (2023) 794, 920 (2022) No internationally agreed quotas. Values presented are the sum of unilateral quotas (including quotas and transfers).	The recent assessments have systematically revised the estimates of SSB upwards and F downwards for the years prior to 2018 (Figure 2). Such systematic revisions do not happen for estimates of the most recent years in the assessment period, and the assessment results are more consistent. The stock assessment and the short-term forecast include ages from 0 to 12. The abundance estimates at ages 0 and 1 are highly uncertain, and year-class strength only becomes apparent when fish enter the fishery at age 2 to 3. Therefore, recruitment is presented at age 2.	Fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY but below Fpa and Flim.	ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 739,386 tonnes. There is no long-term management strategy for Northeast Atlantic (NEA) mackerel agreed by all parties involved in the mackerel fishery. In 2019 Coastal State delegations from Norway, the EU, and the Faroes requested ICES to review new harvest control rule (HCR) options for a management strategy. ICES delivered the advice from this evaluation in August 2020. The sum of the unilateral quotas for mackerel and the resulting catches have exceeded the scientific advice by on average 44% since 2010.	**Spawning stock biomass** **SAME** Spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger, Bpa, and Blim.

NORWAY POUT

Stock	TAC for 2023 Tonnes	Status of stock in October 2023	*Fishing mortality	TAC advice for 2024	*SSB Status
Inside safe biological limits					
Norway pout in the North Sea and Skagerrak & Kattegat Subarea IV and Division IIIa October 2023	116,823 (2023)	The directed fishery for Norway pout was closed in 2005, the first half of 2006, and in 2007, as well as in the first half of 2011 and 2012. Historically, the fisheries have resulted in bycatches of other species, particularly whiting, blue whiting, haddock, saithe, and herring. Bycatches of these species have been low in the recent decade. The change in advice (−82%) is due to below-average recruitment in 2021 and 2023, around-average recruitment in 2022, and a downward revision in recruitment in 2022. The assessment shows a tendency in recent years to overestimate SSB and to underestimate fishing mortality. The TAC is not fully taken, likely due to targeting of other, more profitable species and bycatch regulations in place – mainly in relation to herring and whiting bycatch.	No reference points for fishing pressure or for MSY Btrigger have been defined for this stock	Due to the short-lived nature of this species a preliminary TAC is set every year, which is updated on the basis of advice in the first half of the year. ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024 should be no more than 20,583 tonnes. The catch forecast is for the period 1 October to 30 September. ICES considers that this forecast sufficiently approximates the TAC period and that it can be used directly for management purposes for the period 1 November 2023 – 31 October 2024.	**SAME** **Spawning stock biomass** is above Bpa and Blim.

SANDEEL

Stock	TAC for 2022 Tonnes	Status of stock in February 2023	*Fishing mortality	TAC advice for 2023	*SSB Status
Sandeel in North Sea IV and IIIa – divided into sub areas 1r, 2r, 3r, 4, 5r, 6 and 7r.					
Reference points not fully defined					
1r Sandeel Central and southern North Sea, Dogger Bank **Feb 2023**	Zero (2022)	**1r.** Although recruitment has been below average between 2020 and 2022, low fishing mortality in 2021 and 2022 has allowed the stock to rebuild sufficiently to allow a fishery in 2023.	**1r** No fishing pressure reference points defined	**1r** – ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches should be no more than 120,428 tonnes in 2023.	**INCREASING** Above MSY $B_{escapement}$, B_{pa} and B_{lim}.
2r Sandeel Central and South North Sea **Feb 2023**	71,859 (2022)	**2r**. The decrease in advice from 2022 is due to a lower recruitment in 2022 than in 2021.	**2r** No fishing reference points defined	**2r** - ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2023 should be no more than 40,997 tonnes.	**DECREASING** Below MSY $B_{escapement}$, and between B_{pa} and B_{lim}.
3r Sandeel North and Central North Sea, Skaggerak **Feb 2023**	85,559 (2022)	**3r.** The large decrease in advice from 2022 is due to a decrease in recent recruitments. Estimated recruitment in 2021 and 2022 (1 and 2 years old in 2023) being less than half of the long-term average. A decrease in SSB and a lower fishing mortality is needed to achieve MSY Btrigger at the end of the fishing year	**3r** No fishing reference points defined	**3r** – ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2023 should be no more than 30,570 tonnes.	**DECREASING** Above MSY $Be_{scapement}$, B_{pa} and B_{lim}.

SANDEEL contd

Stock	TAC for 2022 Tonnes	Status of stock in February 2023	*Fishing	TAC advice for 2023	*SSB Status
Sandeel in North Sea IV and IIIa –divided into sub areas 1r, 2r, 3r, 4, 5r, 6 and 7r.					
Reference points not fully defined					
Area 4 Sandeel North and Central North Sea **Feb 2023**	Zero (2022)	**4**. Upward revision of the 2022 year class (30% higher than historical average) and a higher SSB at the start of the advice year (2023).	**Area 4** No fishing reference points defined	**Area 4** – ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2023 should be no more than 35,020 tonnes.	**INCREASING** Below MSY $Be_{scapement,}$ and between B_{pa} and B_{lim}.
5r Sandeel North North Sea Viking and Bergen Bank **Feb 2023**	Zero (2022)	**5r.** ICES advice for this stock has been for zero catch since 2011. Available information is inadequate to evaluate stock status or trends so status is unknown..	**5r** No fishing reference points defined	**5r** - ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, there should be zero catches in each of the years 2023 and 2024	**SAME** No biomass reference points defined
Area 6 Sandeel Skagerrak, Kattegat and Belt Sea **Feb 2023**	140 (2022)	**6.** Available information is inadequate to evaluate stock status or trends. The state of the stock is therefore unknown.	**Area 6** No fishing reference points defined	**Area 6** - ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, catches should be no more than 140 tonnes in 2023 and 2024.	**SAME** No biomass reference points defined
7r Sandeel Shetland area **Feb 2023**	Zero (2022)	**7r.** ICES advice for this stock has been for zero catch since 2013, and advice remains at zero catch for 2023 and 2024	**7r** No fishing reference points defined	**7r** - ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, there should be zero catches in 2023 and 2024.	**SAME** No biomass reference points defined
Sandeel in 6a West of Scotland **Feb 2021**	No TAC (2020)	The available information on sandeel in Division 6.a is inadequate to evaluate stock status	No fishing reference points defined	ICES advises that when the precautionary approach (PA) is applied, there should be zero catches in each of the years 2021, 2022, and 2023.	**SAME** No biomass reference points defined

SPRAT

Stock	TAC for 2022/2023 Tonnes	Status of stock in May 2023	*Fishing mortality	TAC advice for 2023/2024	*SSB Status
Inside safe biological limits					
Sprat in the Baltic Subdivisions 22 – 32 **May 2023**	Between 183,749 – 317,905 (2023)	The advised catches for 2024 are similar to those for 2023. Although the new Fmsy reference point derived in the benchmark is higher, the catch advice decreased slightly mainly due to a large decline in the stock size	Fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY and between Fpa and Flim	ICES advises that when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for the Baltic Sea is applied, catches in 2024 that correspond to the F ranges in the plan are between 191,075 tonnes and 247,704 tonnes. According to MAP, catches higher than those corresponding to FMSY (241,604 tonnes) can only be taken under conditions specified in the plan. The entire range is considered precautionary when applying ICES advice rule.	**SAME** Spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger, Bpa, and Blim
Sprat in the Skagerrak & Kattegat Division IIIa and North Sea Subarea IV **May 2023**	68,690 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	The large increase of 109% in advised catch is mostly due to stronger recruitment in 2022 compared to recent years, coupled with an upwards revision on estimated SSB for 2022, an estimated recruitment for 2022 higher than that assumed last year, and increases in mean weights for all age-groups.	No fishing reference points defined	ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 should be no more than 143, 598 tonnes	**INCREASING** Above MSY $Be_{scapement}$, B_{pa} and B_{lim}.

SPRAT contd

Stock	TAC for 2022/2023 Tonnes	Status of stock in June 2023	*Fishing mortality - 1. MSY 2. PA 3. Mg'ment Plan	TAC advice for 2024	*SSB Status 1. MSY 2. PA 3. Mg'ment plan
Reference points not fully defined					
Sprat in Subarea VI and Divisions VIIa-c and f-k (West of Scotland and southern Celtic Sea) **June 2023**	<2,240 (2022/23)	For stocks without information on abundance or exploitation rate, ICES considers that a precautionary reduction of catches should be implemented there there is no ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate for the stock.	No fishing reference points defined	ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, catches should be no more than 2,240 tonnes in each of the years 2024 and 2025.	**SAME** No biomass reference points defined
Sprat in Divisions VIId,e (English Channel) **July 2023**	9,200 (1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023)	The large decrease in advice for 2023–2024 in relation to the 2022–2023 advice is due to a 73.5% decrease in survey biomass	Below MSY proxy	ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 should be no more than 2,437 tonnes	**INCREASING** Above MSY $B_{trigger}$

For further information:
ICES advice https://www.ices.dk/advice/Pages/Latest-Advice.aspx

For further information contact: Karen Green. **T:** 07515 993499 **E:** karen.green@seafish.co.uk **16 October 2023**