

CELTIC SEA AND WEST OF SCOTLAND SPRAT

Sub-area 6 and Divisions 7.a-c and f-k (West of Scotland, southern Celtic Seas)

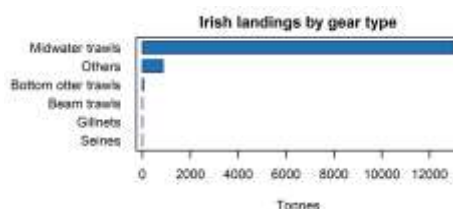


ADVICE FOR 2023

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, catches should be no more than 2,240 t in each of the years 2022 and 2023.

KEY POINTS

ICES Assessment Category	5 (Landings only)	
Management Plan	No	
Advice basis	ICES PA approach	Catch \leq 2,240 t
Ranges	F _{MSY} Range Lower	Not appropriate
	F _{MSY}	Not available
	F _{MSY} Range Upper	Not appropriate
Landing Obligation	Does not apply (Not a TAC species)	



MANAGEMENT IN 2022

- There is no TAC for sprat in Irish waters. TACs are in place in the English Channel and in the North Sea.
- EU vessels are restricted in the gear they can use to target sprat. Mesh sizes of 16 mm and above are permitted when sprat is the target species.
- Irish vessels are not subject to any quota for sprat. Vessels >36.58 m (120 ft) are excluded from the 12 nautical mile zone. Vessels >27.43 m and <36.58 m (90 – 120 ft) are excluded from the 3 nm zone.
- In recent years DAFM have sought to introduce a policy to excluded trawlers and seiners >18 m LOA from the 6 nm zone, including inside the baselines. However, this policy has been challenged in the courts and vessels >18 m were able to operate in this fishery in 2022.

KEY STOCK CONSIDERATIONS

- No TAC is set for this stock. Although ICES provides a catch advice, there is insufficient information to evaluate stock trends and exploitation status. MSY and PA reference points have not been defined.
- Irish landings of sprat in this area were 14,145 t in 2021, remaining at an elevated level following an increase in 2019.
- On average 23 vessels over 10 m participated in the Irish sprat fishery annually from 2016-2021. The fishery is primarily prosecuted in Q4. The majority of the catch is taken in 7j (Kerry bays), 7aS (off Dunmore East) and 6aS (Donegal Bay), with smaller fisheries taking place in 7g and 7b. The proportion of catch taken in each area varies between years. In 2021 57% was taken in 7aS.
- Marine Institute research to improve the knowledge, assessment and advice for sprat populations in Irish waters is on-going. The MI hosted an ICES workshop that developed a research road-map for sprat assessments and advice in the Celtic Seas (report in preparation). The MI has also contracted Marine Research Assessment Group (MRAG) to carry out a project on management strategy evaluations (MSEs) for sprat in the Celtic Sea.
- The Marine Institute have undertaken sampler-at-sea trips on the Irish sprat fishery since 2007, averaging 2 trips per year until 2016. The number of trips was increased in 2017–2019 to 12–15 per year; it is hoped this enhanced level of sampling-at-sea will resume shortly following disruption due to COVID restrictions of 2020/2021. The sprat fishery is among the métiers that the Marine Institute plans to target for enhanced bycatch sampling.