

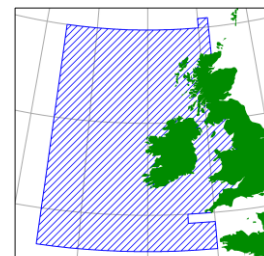
CELTIC SEA AND WEST OF SCOTLAND SPRAT

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



ADVICE FOR 2024

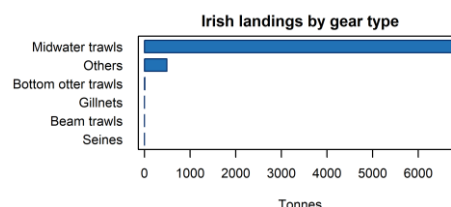
ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, catches should be no more than 2 240 tonnes in each of the years 2024 and 2025.



■ TAC/Management area
▨ Assessment area

KEY POINTS

ICES Assessment Category	5 (Landings only)	
Management Plan	No	
Advice basis	ICES PA approach	Catch =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 2023

- 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 targeting small pelagic species (Pelagic Technical Conservation Measures for ICES sub-areas 5, 6 and 7).
- 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 a policy to exclude trawlers and seiners >18 m LOA from the 6 nm zone, including inside the baselines, was challenged in the courts and vessels >18 m were able to operate in this fishery in 2022 and 2023.

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. Stock structure is unknown and it is not clear whether there should be one or several management units.
- Irish landings of sprat in this area were 7,204 t in 2022, a significant reduction from the highs of c. 14,500 t of the previous three years.
- On average 20-25 vessels over 10 m participate in the Irish sprat fishery annually. Catches vary considerably from year to year as well as between vessel size classes. 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 2022 38% was taken in 7j, 27% in 7a South, and 25% in 6a.
- Marine Institute research to improve the knowledge, assessment and advice for sprat populations in Irish waters is ongoing. The Marine Institute hosted an ICES workshop that developed a research road-map for sprat assessments and advice in the Celtic Seas (WKRRCCSS, 2023¹). The Marine Institute has also contracted Marine Research Assessment Group (MRAG) to carry out a project on management strategy evaluations (MSEs) for sprat in the Celtic Sea (research paper in review). Collection of tissue samples for genetic stock identification has also begun.

¹ ICES. 2023. Workshop to develop a research roadmap for channel and celtic seas sprat (WKRRCCSS). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:79. 65 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23790900>

- The Marine Institute have undertaken sampler-at-sea trips on the Irish sprat fishery since 2007. This has resumed in 2023 following disruption due to COVID restrictions.

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.f–k (West of Scotland, southern Celtic Seas)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

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.

ICES advice on conservation aspects

ICES has not identified any conservation aspects.

Stock development over time

ICES cannot assess the stock and exploitation status relative to maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and precautionary approach (PA) reference points because information to define reference points is not available.

Catches

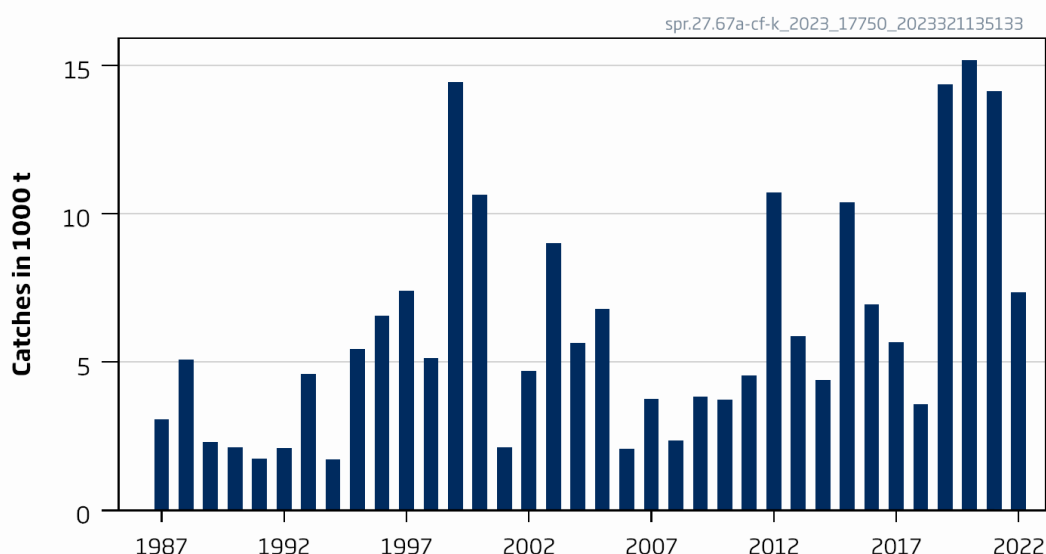


Figure 1 Sprat in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.f–k. Summary of catches.

Conservation status

ICES is not aware of any information on stock-/species-specific conservation status.

Catch scenarios

ICES framework for category 5 stocks was applied (ICES, 2012). For stocks without information on abundance or exploitation rate, ICES considers that a precautionary reduction of catches should be implemented where there is no