

WEST OF SCOTLAND, WEST OF IRELAND SEA BASS



Divisions 6.a, 7.b, and 7.j

ADVICE FOR 2024

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, commercial landings should be no more than 2 tonnes in each of the years 2024, 2025, and 2026. ICES cannot quantify total catches.



■ TAC/Management area
▨ Assessment area

KEY POINTS

ICES Assessment Category	6	
Management Plan	WWMAP(target)	
Advice Basis:	ICES PA approach	Catch=2 t
Ranges	F _{MSY} Range Lower	Not available
	F _{MSY}	Not available
	F _{MSY} Range Upper	Not available
Landing Obligation	Does not apply (Not a TAC species)	

MANAGEMENT IN 2023

- There is no agreed TAC for sea bass in Divisions 6.a, 7.b, and 7.j.
- A series of measures have been introduced because of the low stock size. The most recent measures on sea bass fisheries are set out in Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2023/94. Only catch and release recreational fisheries are allowed from February 1st to March 31st. A bag limit of two fish per day was put in place for January and between April 1st to December 31st.
- The minimum size of European seabass retained by recreational fisheries is 42 cm.
- A prohibition on landings of sea bass by Irish commercial vessels has been in place in Ireland since 1990 (under Irish statute).
- Nationally, the Sea Fisheries Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 set out fishing restrictions under two statutory instruments:
 - S.I. No. 230 of 2006, prohibits the fishing, landing, transshipping or retaining of sea bass on board an Irish commercial fishing boat; the use of nets; and prescribes an MCRS of 40 cm.
 - S.I. No. 367 of 2007 prohibits sale or offer for sale of sea bass (other than those imported).

KEY STOCK CONSIDERATIONS

- New ICES advice was provided this year for 2024-2026. The advice is based on a precautionary reduction of 20% but due to rounding this results in a 33.3% reduction relative to the previously advised catch.
- Official reported landings are extremely low and caught solely by French fishing vessels in Division 7.j.
- Sea bass stock identity is poorly understood. There are ongoing tagging programs which aim to investigate movement and migration within the region.
- Previous tag/recapture studies on sea bass on the western Irish coastline have shown evidence of interconnectivity with the Celtic Sea.