MarinTrust Standard V2

By-product Fishery Assessment

FRO01 – Blue whiting (Micromesistius poutassou), FAO 27, ICES Subareas 1-9, 12 & 14

MarinTrust Programme
Unit C, Printworks
22 Amelia Street
London
SE17 3BZ
E: standards@marin-trust.com
T: +44 2039 780 819

Table 1 Application details and summary of the assessment outcome

Fishery Under Assessment	Species:	Blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*)
	Geographical area:	FAO 27, ICES Subareas 1-9, 12 & 14
	Country of origin of the product:	Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, Norway
	Stock:	Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters
Date	June 2024	
Report Code	FARO01	
Assessor	Vineetha Aravind	
Country of origin of the product - PASS	Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, Norway	
Country of origin of the product - FAIL	NA	

Application details and summary of the assessment outcome			
Company Name(s): Faroe Marine Products, Havsbrún			
Country: Faroe Islands			
Email address:		Applicant Code:	
Certification Body Details			
Name of Certification Body: LRQA			
Assessor	Peer Reviewer	Assessment Days	Initial/Surveillance/ Re-approval
Vineetha Aravind	Sam Peacock	0.2	Re-approval
Assessment Period	June 2024-June 2025		

Scope Details	
Main Species	Blue whiting (Micromesistius poutassou)
Stock	Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters
Fishery Location	ICES Subareas 1-9, 12 & 14
Management Authority (Country/ State)	North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), Faroe Islands, Greenland, Norway, Iceland, UK
Gear Type(s)	Pelagic trawl, bottom trawl
Outcome of Assessment	
Peer Review Evaluation	Agree with assessment outcome
Recommendation	PASS

Table 2. Assessment Determination

Assessment Determination
To be approved as Marin Trust raw material, the species should not appear as Endangered or Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red list and should not appear in CITES appendices. Blue Whiting in the North east Atlantic does not appear as Endangered or Critically Endangered on IUCN's Red List, nor does it appear in CITES appendices; therefore, it is eligible for approval for use as Marin Trust by-product raw material. ICES conducts regular stock assessments and the stock is managed by target and limit reference points. Therefore, the stock is assessed under Category C. The most recent stock assessment was published in 2023. The strong year classes of 2020 and 2021 now contribute to exploitable stock and the advice for 2024 is 12.5% higher than that of 2023. Fishing pressure on the stock is above FMSY and Fpa but below Flim; spawning-stock size is above MSY Btrigger, B pa, and Blim. The stock is at full reproductive capacity and Sub-clauses C1.1. and C.1.2 are met. Therefore, blue whiting from ICES subareas 1–9, 12, and 14 (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters) passes this assessment.
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Comments
The peer reviewer agrees that this species is eligible for assessment under the MarinTrust byproduct assessment methodology, and that the stock falls into Category C. The most recent stock assessment was adequate to meet the requirements of C1.1, and biomass is currently estimated to be above the target reference point level, meeting the requirements of C1.2. Overall, the peer reviewer agrees that this stock should be approved as a source of byproduct raw material for MarinTrust certified facilities.
Notes for On-site Auditor

Species Categorisation

NB: If any species is categorised as Endangered or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, or if it appears in CITES Appendix 1, it **cannot** be approved for use as an MarinTrust raw material.

IUCN Red list Category

By-product material from a species listed by IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Nature) under the Red List for the following categories shall immediately fail the assessment;

- EXTINCT (E) AND EXTINCT IN THE WILD (EW)
- CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (CR) facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.
- ENDANGERED (EN) facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild.

By-product material may be used from the following categories provided that all clauses in the MarinTrust standard are passed.

- VULNERABLE (VU) facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.
- NEAR THREATENED (NT) does not qualify for above now, but is close or is likely to qualify for, a threatened category in the near future.
- LEAST CONCERN (LC) Widespread and abundant.
- DATA DEFICIENT (DD) and NOT EVALUATED (NE)

Table 3 Species Categorisation Table

Common name	Latin name	Stock	Management	Category	IUCN Red List Category[1]	CITES Appendix 1[2]
Blue whiting	*Micromesistius poutassou*	ICES subareas 1–9, 12, and 14 (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters)	A long-term management strategy was agreed by the European Union, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Norway in 2016 and subsequently by the UK in 2021	C	Least concern	Not listed

[1] https://www.iucnredlist.org/
[2] https://cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php

CATEGORY C SPECIES

In a by-product assessment, Category C species are those which are subject to a species-specific management regime and are usually targeted species in fisheries for human consumption.

Clause C1 should be completed for each Category C species. If there are no Category C species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted. Where a species fails this Clause, it should be assessed as a Category D species instead.

Species Name		**Blue whiting**	
C1	**Category C Stock Status - Minimum Requirements**		
	C1.1	Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
	C1.2	The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

ICES is conducting regular stock assessments of Blue Whiting stock in the Northeast Atlantic. The most recent assessment was for 2023 and an advice for 2024 released on September 2023.

All fishery removals including discard data (since 2014) are considered. Assessment type was Age based analytical assessment with inputs from commercial catches and a survey index.

No major concerns are raised by ICES and the fishery meets C1.1

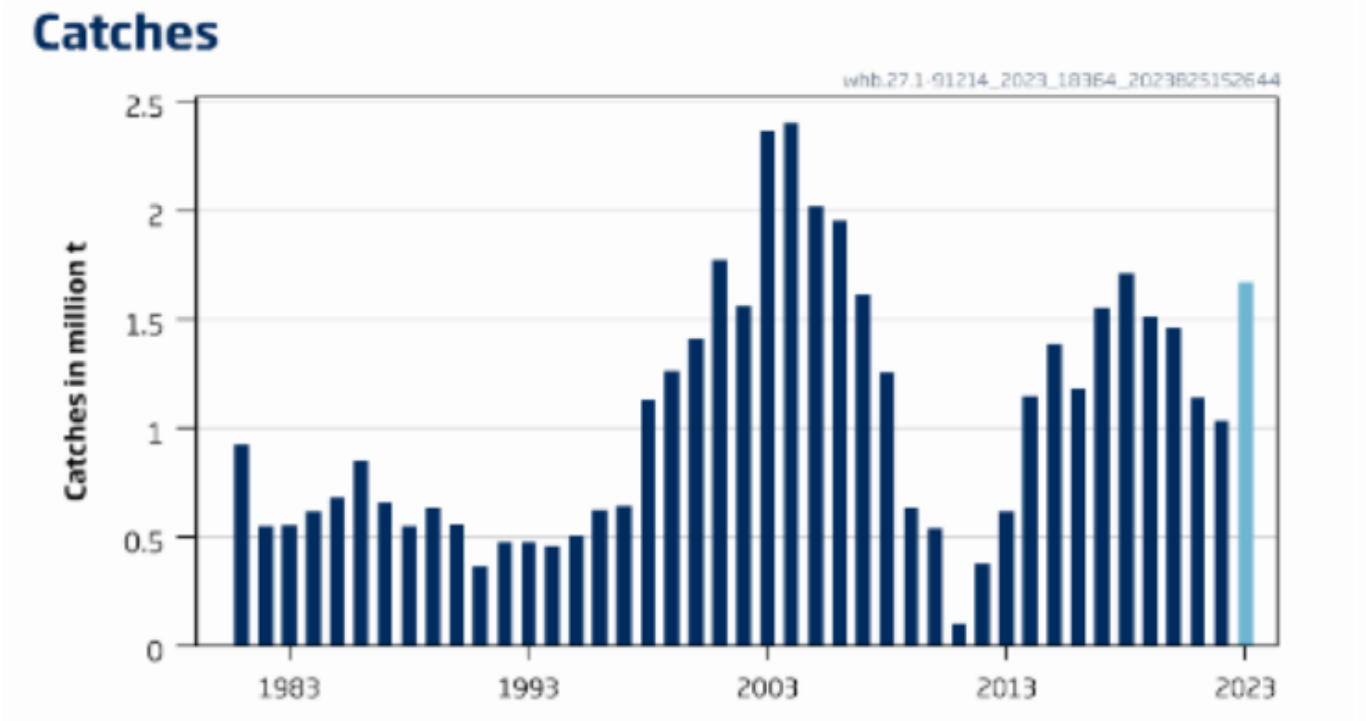

Figure 1: Catches of blue whiting in subareas 1-9, 12 and 14, from 1981 – 2023 (ICES 2023)

C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

ICES advice, 2023 gives the stock status in relation to reference points. The target reference point MSY $B_{trigger}$ = B_{pa} = SSB_{mgmt} is set at 2250000t and limit reference point B_{lim} = $SSB_{mgmt.\_lower}$ at 1500000 t. projected SSB for 2024 is 6799985 t about three times higher than the target reference point.

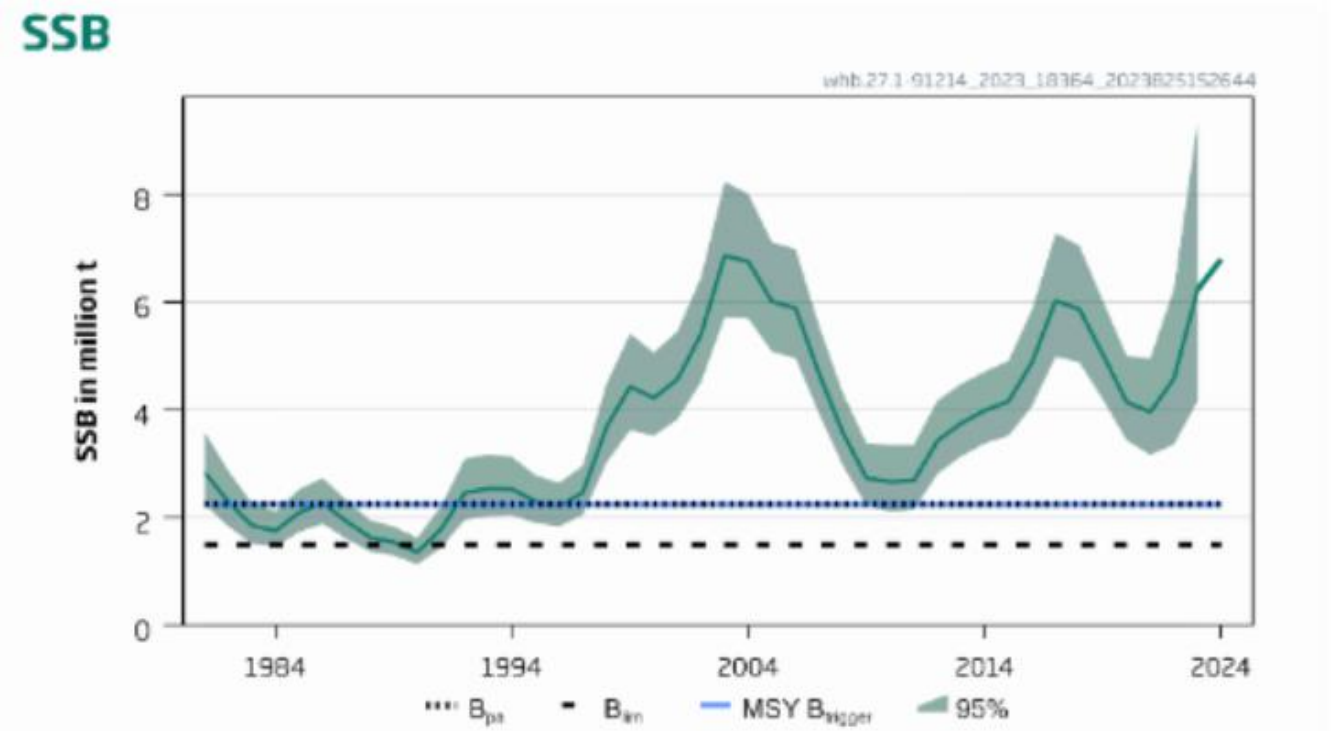

Figure 2: Estimated spawning stock biomass (SSB) of blue whiting in subareas 1-9, 12 and 14, from 1981 – 2023 (ICES 2023).

Catch is recommended based on the long-term management strategy agreed between the EU, Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway since 2018. There have been consistent deviations from the long-term management strategy since 2018 as evident from the sum of unilateral quotas. However, catch has decreased to reflect decreasing recommendations.

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. The fishery will depend on these two large year classes in the coming years. The history of the stock shows that subsequent years of low recruitment after a period of high recruitment may cause the SSB to quickly drop to lower levels and would lead to a reduction in future advice.

Stock biomass of blue whiting in the Northeast Atlantic is currently estimated to be above the limit reference point, therefore C1.2 is met.

References:

ICES. 2023. Blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*) in subareas 1–9, 12, and 14 (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2023. ICES Advice 2023, whb.27.1-91214, https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21856554

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2
FAO CCRF	7.5.3
GSSI	D.3.04, D5.01

CATEGORY D SPECIES

Category D species are those which are not subject to a species-specific management regime. In the case of mixed trawl fisheries, Category D species may make up the majority of landings. The comparative lack of scientific information on the status of the population of the species means that a risk-assessment style approach must be taken.

D1	**Species Name**	**NA**	
	Productivity Attribute	**Value**	**Score**
	Average age at maturity (years)		
	Average maximum age (years)		
	Fecundity (eggs/spawning)		
	Average maximum size (cm)		
	Average size at maturity (cm)		
	Reproductive strategy		
	Mean trophic level		
		Average Productivity Score	
	Susceptibility Attribute	**Value**	**Score**
	Availability (area overlap)		
	Encounterability (the position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear)		
	Selectivity of gear type		
	Post-capture mortality		
		Average Susceptibility Score	
		PSA Risk Rating (From Table D3)	
		Compliance rating	
	Further justification for susceptibility scoring (where relevant) *For susceptibility attributes, please provide a brief rationale for scoring of parameters where there may be uncertainty affecting your decision*		
References			
Standard clauses 1.3.2.2			

Table D2 - Productivity / Susceptibility attributes and scores.

Productivity attributes	High productivity (Low risk, score = 1)	Medium productivity (medium risk, score = 2)	Low productivity (high risk, score = 3)
Average age at maturity	<5 years	5-15 years	>15 years
Average maximum age	<10 years	10-25 years	>25 years
Fecundity	>20,000 eggs per year	100-20,000 eggs per year	<100 eggs per year
Average maximum size	<100 cm	100-300 cm	>300 cm
Average size at maturity	<40 cm	40-200 cm	>200 cm
Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner	Demersal egg layer	Live bearer
Mean Trophic Level	<2.75	2.75-3.25	>3.25

Susceptibility attributes	Low susceptibility (Low risk, score = 1)	Medium susceptibility (medium risk, score = 2)	High susceptibility (high risk, score = 3)
Areal overlap (availability) Overlap of the fishing effort with the species range	<10% overlap	10-30% overlap	>30% overlap
Encounterability The position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear, and the position of the stock/species within the habitat relative to the position of the gear	Low overlap with fishing gear (low encounterability).	Medium overlap with fishing gear.	High overlap with fishing gear (high encounterability). Default score for target species
Selectivity of gear type Potential of the gear to retain species	a Individuals < size at maturity are rarely caught	a Individuals < size at maturity are regularly caught.	a Individuals < size at maturity are frequently caught
	b Individuals < size at maturity can escape or avoid gear.	b Individuals < half the size at maturity can escape or avoid gear.	b Individuals < half the size at maturity are retained by gear.
Post-capture mortality (PCM) The chance that, if captured, a species would be released and that it would be in a condition permitting subsequent survival	Evidence of majority released post-capture and survival.	Evidence of some released post-capture and survival.	Retained species or majority dead when released.

D3		Average Susceptibility Score		
		1 - 1.75	1.76 - 2.24	2.25 - 3
Average Productivity Score	1 - 1.75	PASS	PASS	PASS
	1.76 - 2.24	PASS	PASS	TABLE D4
	2.25 - 3	PASS	TABLE D4	TABLE D4

D4	Species Name		
	Impacts On Species Categorised as Vulnerable by D1-D3 - Minimum Requirements		
	D4.1	The potential impacts of the fishery on this species are considered during the management process, and reasonable measures are taken to minimise these impacts.	
	D4.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the species.	
		Outcome:	

Evidence

D4.1: The potential impacts of the fishery on this species are considered during the management process, and reasonable measures are taken to minimise these impacts.

D4.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the species.

References

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2, 4.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.5.1
GSSI	D.5.01