



MarinTrust Standard V2

Whole fish Fishery Assessment Herring (*Clupea harengus*) and Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) FAO 27, ICES 3.d28.1 (Gulf of Riga)

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Table 1 Application details and summary of the assessment outcome

Application details and summary of the assessment outcome			
Name(s): FF Skagen A/S, Thyborøn			
Country: Denmark			
Email address:		Applicant Code	
Certification Body Details			
Name of Certification Body:		LRQA	
Assessor Name	CB Peer Reviewer	Assessment Days	Initial/Surveillance/ Re-approval
Blanca Gonzalez	Sam Peacock	5	Surveillance 1
Assessment Period	July 2024 – July 2025		
Scope Details			
Management Authority (Country/State)		EU, Estonian government, Latvian government	
Main Species		Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) and Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	
Fishery Location		FAO 27, ICES 3.d.28.1 – Gulf of Riga	
Gear Type(s)		Pelagic trawl	
Outcome of Assessment			
Overall Outcome		Approve	
Clauses Failed		None	
CB Peer Review Evaluation		Approve- Agree with assessor conclusions	
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Group Evaluation		Approve- see Appendix B	
Recommendation		Approve	

Table 2. Assessment Determination

Assessment Determination
<p>The pelagic trawl herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) and sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>) fishery in the Gulf of Riga represents 96% of the total catch. Both species are categorized by the IUCN as Least Concern, are not in any CITES appendix, and ICES establish reference point, a total allowance catch (TAC) and the stocks are assessed annually by the Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). Therefore, herring and sprat were assessed as Category A species. The Central Baltic herring is also caught in the fishery and represents around 2.6% of the total catch, hence this stock was assessed as Category C species. Smelt (<i>Osmerus eperlanus</i>) was included in the assessment as Category D species, since is also a Least Concern species for the IUCN, is not included in any CITES appendix, is t is not managed relative to reference points, and it had been caught regularly by this fishery representing around 1% of the total catch.</p> <p>The reviewed evidence about the herring and sprat stock management framework (M1) indicates that there is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery, collecting data and assessing the fishery; fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability and are legally empowered to take management actions, also, there is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making, process is transparent and results are publicly available; therefore all clauses were met. Regarding surveillance, control and Enforcement measures (M2), there is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations, there is a framework of sanctions which are applied when laws and regulations are discovered to have been broken, there is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing, and compliance with laws and regulations is actively monitored; thus, all clauses were also met.</p> <p>The Gulf of Riga herring landings data are collected, including those occurring outside the Gulf of Riga and additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status. The stock is assessed annually and last assessment was published in 2024. The spawning-stock size is above $MSY B_{trigger}$, B_{pa}, and B_{lim}, and the latest advice indicates that catches in 2025 should be between 30 394 tonnes and 45 235 tonnes. Sprat in the Baltic Sea landings area collected, including additional information to strengthened the stock assessment. The stock is assessed annually and last assessment was published in 2024. The spawning-stock size is above $MSY B_{trigger}$, B_{pa}, and B_{lim} and the latest advice indicates that catches in 2025 should be between 130 195 tonnes and 169 131 tonnes. Both species assessments are subject to internal and external peer review, and data and results are publicly available. Total fishing mortality is also restricted for both species through the use of a TAC and Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stocks have been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy. Both species passed all Category A Clauses.</p> <p>Herring from central Baltic Sea most recent stock assessment was published in May 2024, and it considers all catches from the central Baltic herring stock in all areas where it occurs. Fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY} and spawning-stock size is below $MSY B_{trigger}$, but between B_{pa}, and B_{lim}. Thus, Category C Clauses were met.</p> <p>In the Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) of category D species, smelt awarded an average productivity score of 1.57 and an average susceptibility score of 2.5, passing against Table D3 and indicating this stock is not vulnerable to the fishery under assessment.</p> <p>The fishery has a very low impact on ETP species, and does not affect the habitat either, since pelagic trawls generally do not interact with any physical habitat. Fishery management framework consider an ecosystem approach to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the resources while safeguarding the marine ecosystems.</p> <p>The herring and sprat fishery in the Gulf of Riga PASSED all the Marin Trust requirements in this assessment, therefore its approval is recommended to be used as a raw material in Marine Trust certified products.</p>
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Comments

The peer reviewer agrees with all aspects of the methodology and conclusions of the assessor in the drafting of this report. Updated catch composition information has been sourced from the MSC certification report for this fishery, and used to produce an accurate Species Categorisation section which reflect the categories in previous MT assessment reports.

Gulf of Riga herring and Baltic sprat, the two Type 1 species, have been correctly assessed as meeting the requirements of Category A, as they continue to be managed relative to established reference points using TACs which reflect the scientific advice. Central Baltic herring, assessed under Category C, was considered to have a biomass below the limit reference point level at the time of the 2023 MT assessment, and was only determined to meet the MT requirements after some debate. However, stock biomass has since seen a recovery to above the LRP level, and it now straightforwardly meets the MT requirements. The final stock, smelt, has been assessed under Category D and receives the same Productivity and Susceptibility scores as previously, thus is also approved.

There have been no substantial changes in the areas of the fishery relevant to Sections M and F, and therefore it continues to meet the requirements in those parts of the assessment.

Overall, the report has been completed accurately and with sufficient supporting evidence, and the peer reviewer agrees with the conclusion that this fishery should remain approved for use as a source of raw material for MarinTrust certified facilities.

Notes for On-site Auditor

The herring and sprat trawl fishery in the Gulf of Riga continues to meet applicable MSC requirements and the certification status of the fishery as certified remains unchanged. The 3rd surveillance revised report was published in November 2023.

<https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/nzro-gulf-of-riga-herring-and-sprat-trawl-fishery/@assessments>

Table 3 General Results

General Clause	Outcome (Pass/Fail)
M1 - Management Framework	Pass
M2 - Surveillance, Control and Enforcement	Pass
F1 - Impacts on ETP Species	Pass
F2 - Impacts on Habitats	Pass
F3 - Ecosystem Impacts	Pass

Table 4 Species- Specific Results

List all Category A and B species. List approximate total percentage (%) of landings which are Category C and D species; these do not need to be individually named here

Category	Species	% landings	Outcome (Pass/Fail)	
Category A	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) – Gulf of Riga	43%	A1	Pass
			A2	Pass
			A3	Pass
			A4	Pass
	Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	53%	A1	Pass
			A2	Pass
			A3	Pass
			A4	Pass
Category B	NA			
Category C	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) – Central Baltic	3%	Pass	
Category D	Smelt (<i>Osmerus aperlanus</i>)	1%	Pass	

Table 5 Species Categorisation Table

Common name	Latin name	Stock	IUCN Redlist Category ¹	% of landings	Management	Category
Herring	<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Gulf of Riga	Least Concern ²	43%	Yes	A
Herring	<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Central Baltic	Least Concern ²	3%	Yes	C
Sprat	<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>	Baltic Sea	Least Concern ³	53%	Yes	A
Smelt	<i>Osmerus eperlanus</i>	NA	Least Concern ⁴	1%	No	D

Species categorisation rationale

The most recent MSC surveillance report for this fishery (Bureau Veritas 2023) includes catch composition in the pelagic trawl fishery in the Gulf of Riga from 2015 to 2022 a summary of the last 5 years data are showed in table 1. The last 3 years were considered to estimate the average catch composition of the fishery for the assessment, since this is more representative of the actual state of the fishery.

This data showed that herring and sprat represent the 99% of the catch, both species are considered as Least Concern by the IUCN, are not included in any CITES appendix, and both are managed relative to reference points; therefore, they were assessed as Category A species. Smelt had been caught regularly by this fishery, is a Least Concern species for the IUCN, is not included in any CITES appendix, is not managed relative to reference points. In the past Smelt catches used to be >5% of the catch indicating that smelt could be assess as a Type 1 species, but given that the last three years the catch of this species represents only around 1% of the total catch, smelt was included in the assessment as Category D species. The other species included in the MSC report (cod, eelpout, flounder and fourhorn sculpin) were not considered in the assessment since they catches are less than 0.1%. or are not regularly caught species.

Table 1. Catch composition in Pelagic trawl fishery in the Gulf of Riga 2015-2022 (Bureau Veritas 2023).

Year	Herring %	Sprat %	Cod %	Eelpout %	Smelt %	Flounder %	Fourhorn sculpin %	Total Catch (t)
2022	59.61	39.87	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.01	0.17	15687.68
2021	43.04	54.96	0.00	0.00	1.84	0.16	0.00	22541.9
2020	34.76	63.81	0.01	0.00	1.40	0.01	0.00	18295.5
2019	40.93	52.45	0.02	0.00	6.59	0.00	0.00	23137.6
2018	76.88	10.74	0.00	0.00	12.38	0.00	0.00	8613.4
Average 2020-2022	46	53	0	0	1	0	0	100%

Regarding herring, in this fishery a mixture of central Baltic herring (subdivisions 25–27, 28.2, 29, and 32) and Gulf of Riga herring is caught in the Gulf of Riga (ICES 2024). This fishery holds a MSC certificate, and last surveillance report indicates that the catch of central Baltic Herring in the Gulf of Riga herring fishery is now considered as an IPI (inseparable or practicably inseparable) catch (Bureau Veritas 2023). However, Gulf of Riga herring is recognized as a separate population of the Baltic herring, since it has a slower growing and a lowest length and weight-at-age in contrast to the neighbouring herring stock in the Baltic (ICES 2024); since data of herring catch composition are available, both herring stocks were included in this assessment.

¹ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

² <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/155123/4717767>

³ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/198583/143833310>

⁴ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/15631/4924600>

Table 2 shows the estimation of the catch of the Gulf of Riga herring stock and the Central Baltic herring stock in the Gulf of Riga fishery (ICES 2024); also, the equivalent of this estimations in relation to the total catch of the fishery. Data indicate that Gulf of Riga Herring stocks from 2021 to 2022 represents an average of 94% of the herring catch and 43% of the total catch, thus this fish stock remains as a Category A species. The Central Baltic herring represents 6% of the herring catch and around 2.6% of the total catch, hence this stock was assessed as Category C species.

Table 2. Percentage of herring catches in the Gulf of Riga by stock (ICES 2024).

Year	Herring catches %		Herring total catch %	
	Gulf of Riga	Central Baltic	Gulf of Riga	Central Baltic
2022	93.9	6.1	56.0	3.4
2021	91.8	8.2	39.5	3.2
2020	96.2	3.8	33.4	1.3
2019	88.6	11.4	36.3	4.1
Average 2020-2022	94.0	6.0	43.0	2.6

Bureau Veritas, 2023. NZRO Gulf of Riga Herring and Sprat trawl fishery, 3rd Surveillance Report, November 2023.
<https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/nzro-gulf-of-riga-herring-and-sprat-trawl-fishery/@assessments>

ICES (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subdivision 28.1 (Gulf of Riga). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.
<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019279.v1>

MANAGEMENT

The two clauses in this section (M1, M2) relate to the general management regime applied to the fishery under assessment. The clauses should be completed by providing sufficient evidence to justify awarding each of the requirements a pass or fail rating. A fishery must meet all the minimum requirements in every clause before it can be recommended for approval.

M1	Management Framework – Minimum Requirements	
	M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.	Pass
	M1.2 There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.	Pass
	M1.3 Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability.	Pass
	M1.4 Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.	Pass
	M1.5 There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making.	Pass
	M1.6 The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Pass

There have been no substantial changes in the aspects of the fishery relevant to Section M1 since the 2023 re-approval. The references have been updated.

M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.

The clause is met considering that:

The herring and sprat fishery in the Gulf of Riga is carried out exclusively by Latvia and Estonia using pelagic trawls, mid-water trawls and trap-nets (ICES 2024); both countries are part of the EU. The European Commission through the Common fisheries policy (CFP) set of rules for sustainably managing European fishing fleets and conserving fish stocks in EU waters (EC 2024a) through the Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy, which sets out objectives for catch and fishing effort limits to ensure that EU fisheries are ecologically, economically and socially sustainable.

In Estonia fisheries management responsibility is divided between 5 offices: 1) Ministry of the Environment: prepares and implements policies on protection and use of fishery resources including reproduction of fish stocks and protection and restoration of spawning grounds and habitats. The ministry also provides permits for scientific research and special purpose fishing; 2) Ministry of Rural Affairs: develops market organisation systems, awards structural supports and state aid, manages aquaculture sector and is responsible for policy making regarding commercial fishing; 3) Veterinary and Food Board: manages commercial fishing by issuing permits for commercial fishing, managing the national registry of fishing vessels and catch accounting; 4) Environmental Board: provides fishing cards and collects recreational fishing data; and 5) Environmental Inspectorate: carries out monitoring of fishing activities. (Kliimaministerium 2024)

Fisheries management in Latvia falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, which is responsible for developing policy and management for the fisheries sector, including surveillance of sustainable use of fish resources, restocking and research, as well as managing of fishing rights in the territorial sea and high seas. (Zemkopības ministrija 2024).

M1.2 There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.

The clause is met considering that:

The EU's data collection framework outlines the EU countries' obligations to collect, manage and make available a wide range of fisheries and aquaculture data needed for scientific advice. This includes biological, environmental, economic, and social data. Member States' data collection activities are financially supported by the EU. Data collection needs to ensure accuracy, reliability and timeliness, safe storage and improved availability of data. (EC 2024b).

Also, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), through the Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS) assess each year the herring and sprat fisheries, providing advice on fishing opportunities, catch, and effort, including each year Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and an overview of the stock development over time (ICES 2024a). In 2023 the Gulf of Riga Herring stock was benchmarked (ICES 2023), and last assessment for herring and sprat was published in 2024 (ICES 2024a)

M1.3 Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability.

The clause is met considering that:

In EU, the European Commission through the Common Fishery Policy (CFP) marine action plan, aims to reinforce the CFP's contribution to the EU's environmental objectives: A healthy marine environment with healthy fish stocks and rich biodiversity is the only way to ensure a prosperous future for EU fisheries communities in the medium and long-term (EC 2024a). The marine action plan contributes to delivering on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and its commitment to legally and effectively protect 30% of our seas, with one third being strictly protected; the plan's objectives are: contribute to getting and keeping fish stocks to sustainable levels, reduce the impact of fishing on the seabed, and minimise fisheries impacts on sensitive species. (EC 2024c)

The primary Estonian fisheries legislation, the Fishing Act of 19th February 2015, states that the purpose of the Act is to: "1) ensure conservation and economic use of fish and aquatic plant resources on the basis of internationally recognized principles of responsible fisheries; 2) ensure reproduction capacity of fish and aquatic plant resources and productivity of bodies of water; and 3) avoid undesirable changes in the ecosystem of bodies of water".

The primary Latvian fisheries legislation, the Fishery Law (1995), states that the "Purpose of [the] Law is such management of inland waters, territorial marine waters (hereinafter – the territorial waters), and economic zone waters of the Republic of Latvia, which, by taking into account the necessity of biodiversity preservation, ensures sustainable use of fish resources, protection, propagation, and research thereof for the long-term development of the State fishery sector".

M1.4 Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.

The clause is met considering that:

In EU member states fisheries management is generally carried out under the national legislation arising from the implementation and/or transposing of EU regulations, in particular but not limited to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013. In Estonia, the main fisheries legislation is the Fishing Act of 19th February 2015, as amended, which empowers the Ministry of Rural Affairs and Agriculture to implement the measures of the CFP. In Latvia, the main fisheries legislation is the Fishery Law (1995), as amended, which similarly empowers the Ministry of Agriculture.

M1.5 There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making.

The clause is met considering that:

Regarding the EU, the latest reform of the CFP from 2013, features regionalisation to allow EU countries with a management interest to propose detailed measures, which the Commission can then adopt as delegated or implementing act and transpose them into EU law (EC 2024a). The CFP foresees regionalisation for a number of instruments, such as: multiannual plans, discard plans, establishment of fish stock recovery areas, conservation measures for compliance with EU environmental laws, and technical measures, to ensure that joint recommendations reflect the stakeholders' views (EC 2024d). According to the CFP, Multiannual plans should be adopted in consultation with Advisory Councils, operators in the fishing industry, scientists and other stakeholders having an interest in fisheries management.

In Estonia, the main fisheries legislation is the Fishing Act of 19th February 2015, as amended, which empowers the Ministry of Rural Affairs and Agriculture to implement the measures of the CFP. In Latvia, the main fisheries legislation is the Fishery Law (1995), as amended, which similarly empowers the Ministry of Agriculture.

M1.6 The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available.

The clause is met considering that:

All of the information used to produce this MarinTrust assessment report was freely available online. The fisheries management decision-making process is primarily guided by the ICES advice, the basis for and outcomes of which are made available via the ICES website. Decisions and outcomes at the EU level are published on the EC website and elsewhere.

References

EC (2024a). https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en

EC (2024b). Scientific advice and data collection. https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/scientific-input/scientific-advice-and-data-collection_en

EC (2024c). Action plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries. https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp/action-plan-protecting-and-restoring-marine-ecosystems-sustainable-and-resilient-fisheries_en

EC (2024d). Multiannual plans. https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries/rules/multiannual-plans_en

Estonia, Fishing Act of 19th Feb 2015. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/531072023001/consolide>

ICES (2023). Benchmark Workshop on Baltic Pelagic stocks (WKBALTPEL). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23216492.v1>

ICES. (2024). Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:53. 584 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.25764978>

Kliimaministeerium (2024). Republic of Estonia. Ministry of Climate. Fisheries. <https://kliimaministeerium.ee/en/water-forest-resources/fisheries>

Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2013/1380/contents#>

This Fishery Law of Latvia of 1995 . <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC037831/>

Zemkopības ministrija (2024). Republic of Latvia. Ministry of Agriculture. <https://www.zm.gov.lv/en/about-us#fisheries-and-aquaculture>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.1.1, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	7.2, 7.3.1, 7.4.4, 12.3
GSSI	D.1.01, D.4.01, D2.01, D1.07, D1.04,

M2	Surveillance, Control and Enforcement - Minimum Requirements		
	M2.1	There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations.	Pass
	M2.2	There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when laws and regulations are discovered to have been broken.	Pass

M2.3	There is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing.	Pass
M2.4	Compliance with laws and regulations is actively monitored, through a regime which may include at-sea and portside inspections, observer programmes, and VMS.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Pass

There have been no substantial changes in the aspects of the fishery relevant to Section M2 since the 2023 re-approval. The references have been updated.

M2.1 There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations.

Clause is met considering that:

Monitoring and enforcement of fisheries compliance in the EU is primarily the responsibility of the individual member states. Within Estonia the relevant authority is the Environmental Inspectorate, as set out in the Fishing Act 2015. In Latvia responsibility falls to the Ministry of Agriculture.

National control and enforcement activities are supported by the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA). The EFCA aims to “promote the highest common standards for control, inspection and surveillance under the CFP” (EFCA 2024). The EFCA works in conjunction with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the European Maritime Safety Agency to support the various national agencies carrying out coastguard functions.

International control and enforcement activities are coordinated by the EFCA through the use of Joint Deployment Plans (JDPs). The JDP for the Baltic Sea, which coordinates actions between Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, has been in place since 2007.

M2.2 There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when laws and regulations are discovered to have been broken.

Clause is met considering that:

Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 establishes a community system for control, inspection and enforcement to ensure compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy. EU countries must ensure that a system of inspections and enforcement measures is in place to identify infringements and sanction offenders. They are responsible for establishing their own sanctioning systems but to ensure a level playing field they must conform to the requirements of the EU laws. These requirements include the obligation for sanctions to be ‘dissuasive, proportionate and effective’, to consider the seriousness and potential economic benefit of the offence as well as the prejudice to fishing resources and marine environments. EU countries are required to have a point system to sanction fishing vessel masters and licence holders when they commit serious infringements, the number of points to be attributed for specific infringements is fixed in detailed rules. Any vessel that accumulates more than a certain number of points in a three-year period will have its fishing licence suspended for up to 12 months. (EC 2024b)

Moreover, EU countries are required to have a point system to sanction fishing vessel masters and license holders when they commit serious infringements. The number of points to be attributed for specific infringements is fixed in detailed rules. Any vessel that accumulates more than a certain number of points in a three-year period will have its fishing license suspended for up to 12 months (EC 2023). Both Latvia and Estonia apply the EU regulations, and infringements under either jurisdiction may incur sanctions including fines, gear confiscation, and/or licence suspension.

M2.3 There is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing.

Clause is met considering that:

The EFCA publishes quarterly reports detailing control and enforcement activities under the Baltic Sea JDP (EFCA 2024a). The most recent available report is from January to December 2023 (EFCA 2024b), states that as part of the JDP there were (across

the entire Baltic Sea area) 2,907 inspections conducted ashore, which included 2 841 inspections of fishing vessels at landing, 24 transport inspections conducted on lorries, 41 inspections of premises and 1 inspection of a recreational fishing vessel. The inspection teams reported in total 92 suspected infringements (an infringement rate of 3.16%). There were 730 inspections carried out at sea including 236 inspections of fishing gear (e.g. salmon or eel traps), with 18 suspected infringements reported in total (an infringement rate of 2.5%). Aircraft surveillance reported 312 sightings by air, with no suspected infringements detected. (EFCA 2024b). Of the 110 suspected infringements, 27 were “Non-compliance with conservation measures”, 78 “non-compliance with the recording and reporting obligations, and 5 “Other types of noncompliance”. (EFCA 2024b)

Throughout the compilation of this MT assessment report, no evidence was encountered suggesting widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and available evidence suggests a robust and focused control and enforcement regime is in place.

M2.4 Compliance with laws and regulations is actively monitored, through a regime which may include at-sea and portside inspections, observer programmes, and VMS.

Clause is met considering that:

Compliance is monitored through a programme put in place as part of the Baltic Sea JDP. The EFCA states that the objective of the JDP is “to ensure the uniform and effective implementation of conservation and control measures applicable to pelagic and demersal stocks in the Union waters of the Baltic Sea. This concerns in particular the fisheries exploiting cod (including recreational fisheries in the Western Baltic), herring, salmon, sprat and European eel, as well as species under the landing obligation” (EFCA 2024c). In practice, this involves the forms of inspection listed in M2.3 above – inspections at-sea and ashore, and surveillance flights. EU-wide rules also apply, with mandatory VMS, e-logbooks, landing certificates, sales notes, designated ports, and other inspections throughout the supply chain.

References

Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1224/oj>

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EFCA (2024b). Baltic Sea JDP Report, 2023 4th Quarter. https://www.efca.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-06/12M-report_BS_Q2_WEB.pdf

EFCA (2024c). Baltic Sea JDP overview. <https://www.efca.europa.eu/en/content/baltic-sea>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.1.3
FAO CCRF	7.7.2
GSSI	D1.09

CATEGORY A SPECIES

The four clauses in this section apply to Category A species. Clauses A1 - A4 should be completed for **each** Category A species. If there are no Category A species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted. A Category A species must meet the minimum requirements of all four clauses before it can be recommended for approval. The clauses should be completed by providing sufficient evidence to justify awarding each of the requirements a pass or fail rating. The species must achieve a pass rating against all requirements to be awarded a pass overall. **If the species fails any of these clauses it should be re-assessed as a Category B species.**

Species Name		Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) – Gulf of Riga	
A1	Data Collection - Minimum Requirements		
	A1.1	Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.	Pass
	A1.2	Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.	Pass
Clause outcome:			Pass

A1.1 Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.

Clause is met considering that:

The EU Fisheries Control System, through the Fisheries Control Regulation (EC Regulation No 1224/2009) requires that data on catches (target species and bycatch) are recorded in logbooks by vessel captains and transmitted to the competent authority of each member state who then provide it to the Commission.

Total catches of herring in the Gulf of Riga in 2023 were 48,206t, of which 20,726t were caught by Estonian vessels and 27,480t were caught by Latvian vessels. Of the 48,206t, 42,475t (88%) were from the Gulf of Riga stock and 5,731t (12%) were from the Central Baltic stock. An additional 325t of Gulf of Riga herring was caught outside the Gulf of Riga, meaning total catches of Gulf of Riga herring were 42,800t (ICES 2024).

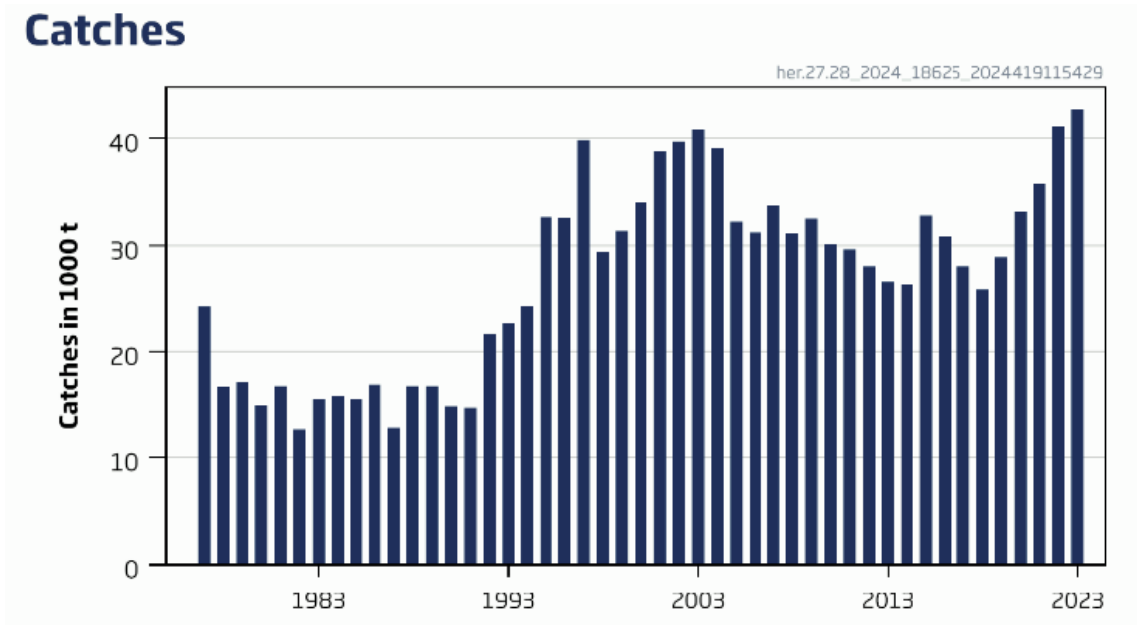


Figure 1. Gulf of Riga Herring Catches 1997-2023. (ICES 2024)

A1.2 Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.

Clause is met considering that:

In addition to commercial catch data, the stock assessment carried out annually by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS) utilises one acoustic survey index (GRAHS); maturity estimates from sampling; and a constant rate of natural mortality. Discards and bycatch are considered to be negligible (ICES 2024).

The challenging issue assessing this fishery is the mixed herring stocks from Central Baltic and Gulf of Riga, however, the assessment and the advice take in account of all of the Gulf of Riga herring stock, both that harvested in the Gulf of Riga and that harvested outside of it. The distinct differences in otolith structure serve as a basis for discrimination of Baltic herring populations, therefore the population belonging of individuals is assigned during the age reading process (ICES 2024).

Misreporting of herring and sprat is an ongoing problem which is challenging to quantify, because of a lack of access to representative data. This introduces an unquantifiable level of uncertainty into the assessment. However, efforts are underway to estimate the levels of misreporting (ICES 2024b).

References

ICES (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subdivision 28.1 (Gulf of Riga). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.28. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019279>

ICES (2024). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.1, 1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	7.3.1, 12.3
GSSI	D.4.01, D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A2 Stock Assessment - Minimum Requirements		
A2.1	A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.	Pass
A2.2	The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.	Pass
A2.3	The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.	Pass
A2.4	The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.	Pass
A2.5	The assessment is made publicly available.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Pass

A2.1 A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.

Clause is met considering that:

Herring in the Gulf of Riga is subjected to an annual stock assessment carried out by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). The stock was benchmarked in 2023 (ICES, 2023a) and outcomes were implemented in last assessment publish in 2024 (ICES 2024a). The benchmarking process ensures the stock assessment recognises the most recent available scientific understanding of the species, the stock, the fishery, and the ecosystems within which they occur. The stock assessment as a whole is conducted following the ICES methodology (ICES 2023b).

Data used for the stock assessment were: commercial catches; one acoustic survey index, fixed maturity ogive for years 1977–1994, time-varying maturity from commercial catches 1995 onwards; natural mortality is assumed to be constant at 0.2 for all years except 1979–1983, when it was 0.25 (ICES 2024a).

A2.2 The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.

Clause is met considering that:

The WGBFAS stock assessment provides an indication of the status of the stock relative to target and limit reference points. These reference points were updated in 2023 as a result of the full benchmarking of the stock (ICES 2023a). The new reference points are listed in Table 1. Key among these for the purposes of this MT assessment are the target reference points MSY $B_{trigger}$ and MAP MSY $B_{trigger}$, set at 72,907t; and the limit reference points B_{lim} and MAP B_{lim} , set at 52,076t (ICES 2024b). The 2024 catch advice indicates that the stock assessment projected an estimated SSB at spawning time 2024 of 131,262t, and states that spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} . (Figure 1) (ICES 2024b)

Table 1. Herring in Subdivision 28.1. Reference points, values, and their technical basis. Weights in tonnes. (ICES 2024b)

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
MSY approach	MSY $B_{trigger}$	72 907	B_{pa}	ICES (2023a)
	F_{MSY}	0.28	Stochastic simulations (EqSim) with segmented regression with fixed breakpoint at B_{pa} stock-recruitment model from the full time-series (1977–2021)	ICES (2023a)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	52 076	$B_{lim} = B_{pa} / 1.4$	ICES (2023a)
	B_{pa}	72 907	Average SSB based on SSB–recruitment pairs where $SSB \leq$ median SSB and recruitment \geq median recruitment	ICES (2023a)
	F_{lim}	0.49	Equilibrium scenarios with stochastic recruitment: F value corresponding to 50% probability of ($SSB < B_{lim}$)	ICES (2023a)
	F_{pa}	0.35	F_{POS} ; the F that leads to $SSB \geq B_{lim}$ with 95% probability	ICES (2023a)
Management plan	MAP MSY $B_{trigger}$	72 907	MSY $B_{trigger}$	ICES (2023a)
	MAP B_{lim}	52 076	B_{lim}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP F_{MSY}	0.28	F_{MSY}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F_{lower}	0.21–0.28	Consistent with the ranges resulting in no more than 5% reduction in long-term yield compared with MSY	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F_{upper}	0.28–0.33	Consistent with the ranges resulting in no more than 5% reduction in long-term yield compared with MSY	ICES (2023a)

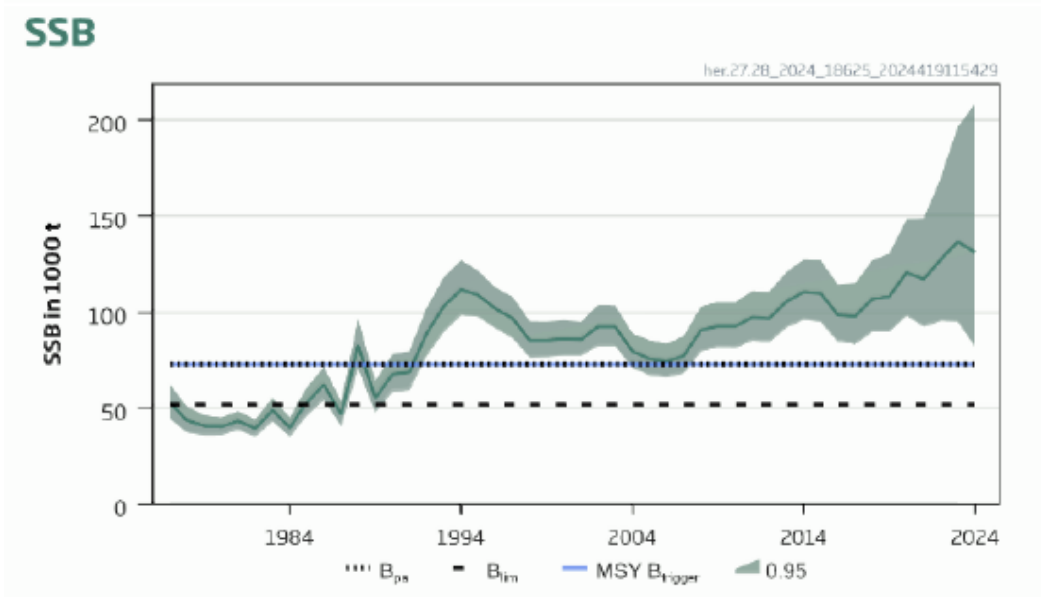


Figure 1. Gulf of Riga herring spawning-stock size is above MSY B_{trigger}, B_{pa}, and B_{lim}. (ICES 2024b)

A2.3 The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.

Clause is met considering that:

The ICES advice provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status in the form of recommended catches in the upcoming year. Latest advice indicates that when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for the Baltic Sea is applied, the catches in 2025 that correspond to the F ranges in the plan are between 30 394 tonnes and 45 235 tonnes. According to the MAP, catches higher than those corresponding to FMSY (39 233 tonnes) can be taken only under conditions specified in the plan, whilst the entire range is considered precautionary when applying ICES advice rule. Also, the advice considers that the Gulf of Riga herring stock is caught in a fishery with central Baltic herring stock; thus it applies to all catches from the Gulf of Riga herring stock in subdivisions 28.1 and 28.2 (Gulf of Riga and Central Baltic). (ICES 2024b).

ICES recognized a species misreporting problem of herring and sprat as an ongoing problem. These effects have been neither quantified nor included in the assessment because of a lack of access to representative data. Considerable effort was made before to estimate levels of misreporting; but the work was not finalized and is still ongoing. Misreporting undermines the data quality used and introduces into the assessment and advice a level of uncertainty that cannot be quantified (ICES 2024c)

A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.

Clause is met considering that:

The Guide to ICES Advisory Framework and Principles (ICES 2023b) sets out the process by which ICES carries out scientific activities and provides fishery management advice. When the results of the assessments are agreed by the ICES groups, they are sent the ICES Advice Drafting Group, which consists of National Experts, which review them, and they are finally reviewed by the Advisory Committee (ACOM) which delivers the ICES advice. The ACOM advice is grounded by 10 principles to support ecosystem-based management advice. This ensures that our advice is based on the best available science and data, considered legitimate by both authorities and stakeholders, and relevant and operational to the policy or management challenge in question. (ICES 2023b) (figure 1).

Principle 7 states that the process undergo through a peer review phase to ensure that the best available, credible science has been used and to confirm that the analysis provides a sound basis for advice. All analyses and methods are peer reviewed by at

least two independent reviewers. For recurrent advice, the review is conducted through a benchmark process; for special requests through one-off reviews. (ICES 2023b).



Figure 1. ICES advice principles, Principle 7 states that the process undergo through a peer review phase. (ICES 2023b).

A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.

Clause is met considering that:

All the stock Assessments and advice for this stock are publicly available on the ICES library website (<https://ices-library.figshare.com/>), including latest stock assessments, benchmark workshops and WGBFAS reports.

References

ICES. (2024a). Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:53. 584 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.25764978>

ICES. (2024b). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subdivision 28.1 (Gulf of Riga). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.28. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019279>

ICES (2024). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

ICES. (2023a) Benchmark Workshop on Baltic Pelagic stocks (WKBALTPEL). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:47. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23216492>

ICES. (2023b). Guide to ICES advisory framework and principles. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2023. ICES Advice 2023, section 1.1. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.22116890>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	12.3
GSSI	D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A3	Harvest Strategy - Minimum Requirements		
	A3.1	There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.	Pass
	A3.2	Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.	Pass

	A3.3 Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).	Pass
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Clause outcome: Pass

A3.1 There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.

Clause is met considering that:

Total fishing mortality is restricted through the use of a TAC, which is generally based on the ICES advice which in turn is based on the Baltic Sea MAP (Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 as amended). TACs have been set within the range recommended by ICES since the implementation of the MAP in 2018, and the TAC appears to be an effective mechanism for limiting catches as total removals from the Gulf of Riga stock have similarly been within the recommended range since that time.

The assessment and the advice take account of all of the Gulf of Riga herring stock, both that harvested in the Gulf of Riga and that harvested outside of it. A mixture of central Baltic herring (subdivisions 25–27, 28.2, 29, and 32) and Gulf of Riga herring (Subdivision 28.1) is caught in the Gulf of Riga. An example of how TAC setting could address the stock mixing issues is presented based on ICES MSY approach advice catch for the Gulf of Riga herring stock (39 233 tonnes), plus the assumed catch of central Baltic herring harvested in the Gulf of Riga, minus the assumed catch of Gulf of Riga herring taken outside the Gulf of Riga. The values of the two latter are given by the average catches over the last five years. (ICES 2024).

A3.2 Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.

Clause is met considering that:

Historically, removals of Gulf of Riga herring have been below the agreed TAC (ICES 2024), which has been set according to ICES advice. This has been effective in maintaining the Gulf of Riga herring spawning-stock size above to B_{pa} and B_{lim} reference points. (Table 1) (ICES 2024).

Table 1. Herring in Gulf of Riga. ICES advice, TAC for the Gulf of Riga, and catches of Gulf of Riga herring stock from the Gulf of Riga. All weights are in tonnes. (ICES 2024)

Year	ICES advice	Catch from stock corresponding to advice	Agreed TAC for Gulf of Riga	Catches of Gulf of Riga herring stock
2018	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.24–0.38), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.32$ only under conditions specified in the MAP	19 396–29 195, but catch higher than 24 919 only under conditions specified in the MAP	28 999	25 747
2019	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.24–0.38), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.32$ only under conditions specified in the MAP	20 664–31 237, but catch higher than 26 932 only under conditions specified in the MAP	31 044	28 922
2020	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.24–0.38), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.32$ only under conditions specified in the MAP	23 395–35 094, but catch higher than 30 382 only under conditions specified in the MAP	34 445	33 215
2021	Management plan	35 771 (ranges 27 702–41 423)	39 446	35 758
2022	Management plan	44 945 (range 34 797–52 132)	47 697	41 117
2023	Management plan	43 226 (range 33 519–50 079)	45 643	42 800
2024	Management plan	35 902 (range 27 696–41 370)	37 959	
2025	Management plan	39 233 (ranges 30 394–45 235)		

A3.3 Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).

Clause is met considering that:

The MAP requires that fishing opportunities are fixed in such a way that there is a less than 5% probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below B_{lim} . When scientific advice indicates that the spawning stock biomass of the stock is below B_{lim} , further remedial measures shall be taken to ensure rapid return of the stock to levels above the level capable of producing MSY. Those remedial measures may include suspending the targeted fishery for the stock and the adequate reduction of fishing opportunities.

References

ICES. (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subdivision 28.1 (Gulf of Riga). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.28. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019279>

Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R1139>

Standard clause 1.3.2.1.3

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.3, 1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.22 (e), 7.5.3
GSSI	D3.04, D6.01

A4	Stock Status - Minimum Requirements	
	A4.1	The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT: The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT: The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.

Clause outcome: Pass

A4.1 The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT:

The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT:

The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.

Clause is met considering that the Spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} and B_{lim} (ICES 2024) (Figure 1).

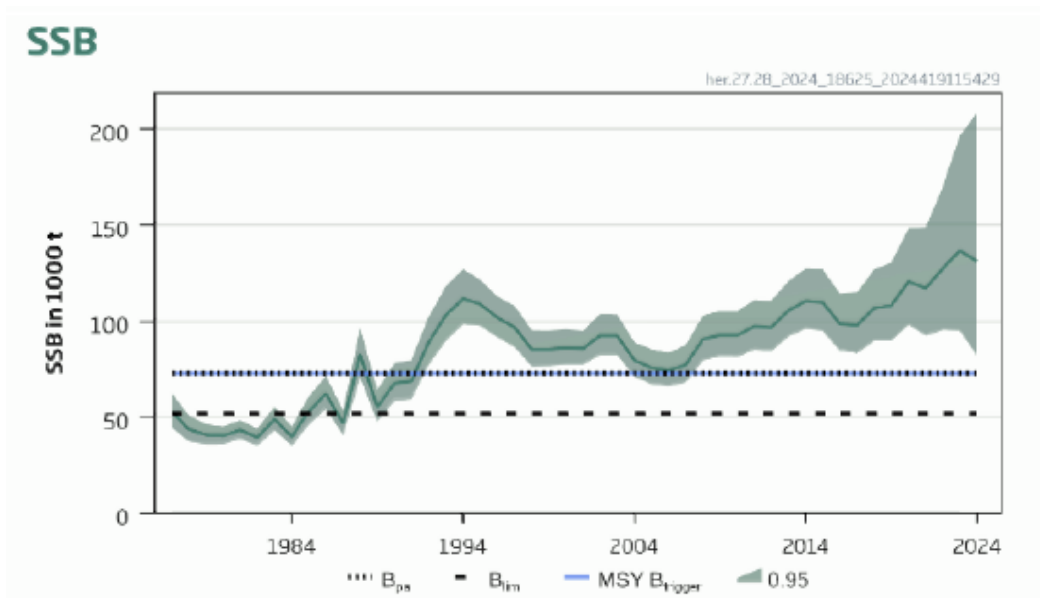


Figure 1. Gulf of Riga herring spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} . (ICES 2024)

References

ICES. (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subdivision 28.1 (Gulf of Riga). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.28. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019279>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.2.2 (e)
GSSI	D6 01

Species Name	Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)
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A1	Data Collection - Minimum Requirements	
A1.1	Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.	Pass
A1.2	Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.	Pass

Clause outcome: Pass

A1.1 Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.

Clause is met considering that:

The EU Fisheries Control System, through the Fisheries Control Regulation (EC Regulation No 1224/2009) requires that data on catches (target species and bycatch) are recorded in logbooks by vessel captains and transmitted to the competent authority of each member state who then provide it to the Commission. Total catches of sprat in the Baltic Sea in 2023 were 265,900t (ICES 2024).

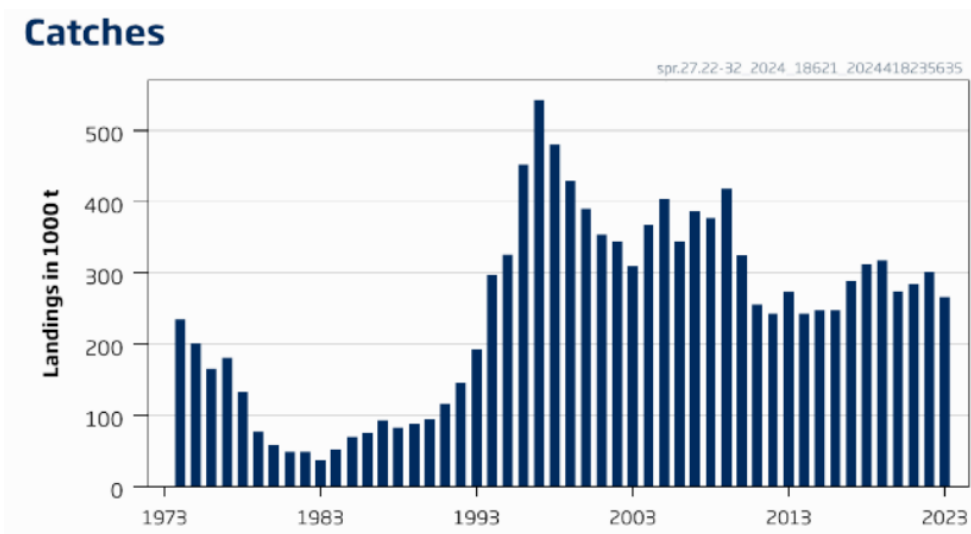


Figure 1. Sprat catches in the Baltic Sea 1974-2023. (ICES 2024)

A1.2 Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.

Clause is met considering that:

In addition to commercial catch data, the stock assessment carried out annually by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS) utilises two acoustic survey indices (the Baltic Acoustic Spring Survey (BASS) and the Baltic International Acoustic Survey (BIAS)); and natural mortalities from the ICES multispecies model (ICES 2024). The model assumes discards and bycatch are negligible. The 2024 catch advice includes a section covering the quality of the assessment, which notes that misreporting of herring and sprat is an ongoing problem which is challenging to quantify, and which introduces an unquantifiable level of uncertainty into the assessment. However, efforts are underway to estimate the levels of misreporting (ICES 2024).

References

Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1224/oj/eng>

ICES (2024). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.1, 1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	7.3.1, 12.3
GSSI	D.4.01, D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A2 Stock Assessment - Minimum Requirements		
A2.1	A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.	Pass
A2.2	The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.	Pass
A2.3	The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.	Pass
A2.4	The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.	Pass
A2.5	The assessment is made publicly available.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Pass

A2.1 A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.

Clause is met considering that:

Sprat in the Baltic Sea is subjected to an annual stock assessment carried out by the ICES Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). The last stock assessment was published in May 2024 (ICES 2024a). Data used for the stock assessment were: commercial catches; two acoustic surveys, natural mortalities from multispecies model (SMS) until 2021, M in 2022 and 2023 was assumed equal to SMS estimate of M for 2021, and fixed maturity ogive. Catches for Russian Federation since 2022 are taken from AtlantNIRO (2023) and the Russian Federation (2024) (ICES 2024a).

A2.2 The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.

Clause is met considering that:

The WGBFAS stock assessment provides an indication of the status of the stock relative to target and limit reference points. These reference points were updated in 2023 as a result of the full benchmarking of the stock (ICES 2023a), and the latest assessment has been conducted following the procedure agreed during the benchmark (ICES 2024b).

The new reference points are listed in Table 1. Key among these for the purposes of this MT assessment are the management plan target reference point (MAP MSY $B_{trigger} = 541,000t$) and limit reference point (MAP $B_{lim} = 459,000t$). (ICES 2023a). The 2024 catch advice indicates that the stock assessment projected an estimated SSB at spawning time 2024 of 692,126t, and states that spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} . (Figure 1) (ICES 2024a)

Table 1. Sprat in the Baltic Sea. Reference points, values, and their technical basis. Weights in tonnes. (ICES 2024a)

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
MSY approach	MSY $B_{trigger}$	541 000	B_{pa}	ICES (2023a)
	F_{MSY}	0.34	Stochastic simulations with Beverton–Holt and segmented regression stock-recruitment model	ICES (2023a)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	459 000	Biomass that produces half of the maximal recruitment in the Beverton–Holt stock-recruitment relationship	ICES (2023a)
	B_{pa}	541 000	$B_{lim} \times \exp(1.645 \times \sigma)$, where $\sigma = 0.1$	ICES (2023a)
	F_{lim}	0.58	Consistent with B_{lim}	ICES (2023a)
	F_{pa}	0.35	F_{p05} ; the F that leads to $SSB \geq B_{lim}$ with 95% probability	ICES (2023a)
Management plan	MAP MSY $B_{trigger}$	541 000	MSY $B_{trigger}$	ICES (2023a)
	MAP B_{lim}	459 000	B_{lim}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP F_{MSY}	0.34	F_{MSY}	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F_{lower}	0.26–0.34	Consistent with the ranges that result in a $\leq 5\%$ reduction in long-term yield compared with MSY	ICES (2023a)
	MAP target range F_{upper}	0.34–0.35	Consistent with the ranges that result in a $\leq 5\%$ reduction in long-term yield compared with MSY, constrained by F_{p05}	ICES (2023a)

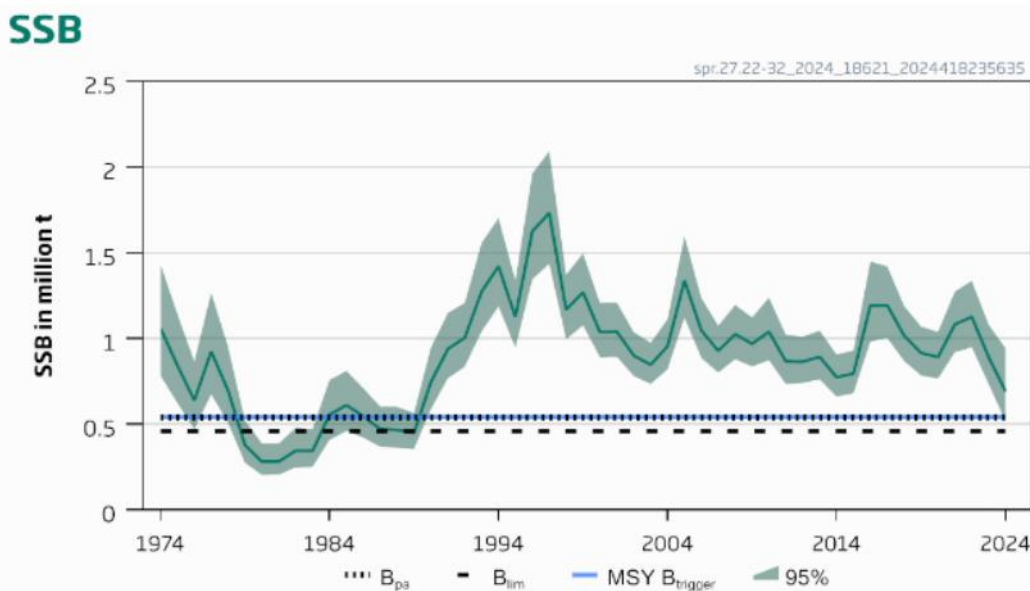


Figure 1. Sprat in the Baltic Sea spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} . (ICES 2024a)

A2.3 The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.

Clause is met considering that:

The ICES advice provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status in the form of recommended catches in the upcoming year. Latest advice indicates that when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for the Baltic Sea is applied, catches in 2 025 that correspond to the F ranges in the plan are between 130 195 tonnes and 169 131 tonnes. According to the MAP, catches higher than those corresponding to F_{MSY} (164 947 tonnes) can only be taken under conditions specified in the plan, whilst the entire range is considered precautionary when applying ICES advice rule. (ICES 2024a).

ICES recognized a species misreporting problem of herring and sprat as an ongoing problem. These effects have been neither quantified nor included in the assessment because of a lack of access to representative data. Considerable effort was made

before to estimate levels of misreporting; but the work was not finalized and is still ongoing. Misreporting undermines the data quality used and introduces into the assessment and advice a level of uncertainty that cannot be quantified (ICES 2024a)

A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.

Clause is met considering that:

The Guide to ICES Advisory Framework and Principles (ICES 2023b) sets out the process by which ICES carries out scientific activities and provides fishery management advice. When the results of the assessments are agreed by the ICES groups, they are sent the ICES Advice Drafting Group, which consists of National Experts, which review them, and they are finally reviewed by the Advisory Committee (ACOM) which delivers the ICES advice. The ACOM advice is grounded by 10 principles to support ecosystem-based management advice. This ensures that our advice is based on the best available science and data, considered legitimate by both authorities and stakeholders, and relevant and operational to the policy or management challenge in question. (ICES 2023b) (figure 1).

Principle 7 states that the process undergo through a peer review phase to ensure that the best available, credible science has been used and to confirm that the analysis provides a sound basis for advice. All analyses and methods are peer reviewed by at least two independent reviewers. For recurrent advice, the review is conducted through a benchmark process; for special requests through one-off reviews. (ICES 2023b).



Figure 1. ICES advice principles, Principle 7 states that the process undergo through a peer review phase. (ICES 2023b).

A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.

Clause is met considering that:

All the stock Assessments and advice for this stock are publicly available on the ICES library website (<https://ices-library.figshare.com/>), including latest stock assessments, benchmark workshops and WGBFAS reports.

References

ICES (2024a). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

ICES. (2024b). Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:53. 584 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.25764978>

ICES. (2023a) Benchmark Workshop on Baltic Pelagic stocks (WKBALTPEL). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:47. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23216492>

ICES. (2023b). Guide to ICES advisory framework and principles. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2023. ICES Advice 2023, section 1.1. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.22116890>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	12.3
GSSI	D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A3	Harvest Strategy - Minimum Requirements		
	A3.1	There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.	Pass
	A3.2	Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.	Pass
	A3.3	Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).	Pass
Clause outcome:			Pass

A3.1 There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.

Clause is met considering that:

Total fishing mortality is restricted through the implementation of catch quotas. In EU waters a TAC is set, and is generally based on the ICES advice which in turn is guided by the EU Baltic Sea MAP (Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 as amended). Total removals by the Russian fleet are restricted by a Russian autonomous quota.

A3.2 Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.

Clause is met considering that:

The total international quota – i.e. the sum of the EU TAC and the Russian autonomous quota – is generally within the boundaries of the ICES advice (table 1). In the last 10 years (2014 – 2023) total ICES catch estimation tend to be a little bit over the agreed TAC, however the catch surpluses have not exceeded the 10%, being 2020 the highest surplus by exceeding a 7% of the TAC. (figure 1). SSB has been estimated to be well above the limit reference point since the 90’s. (ICES 2024a).

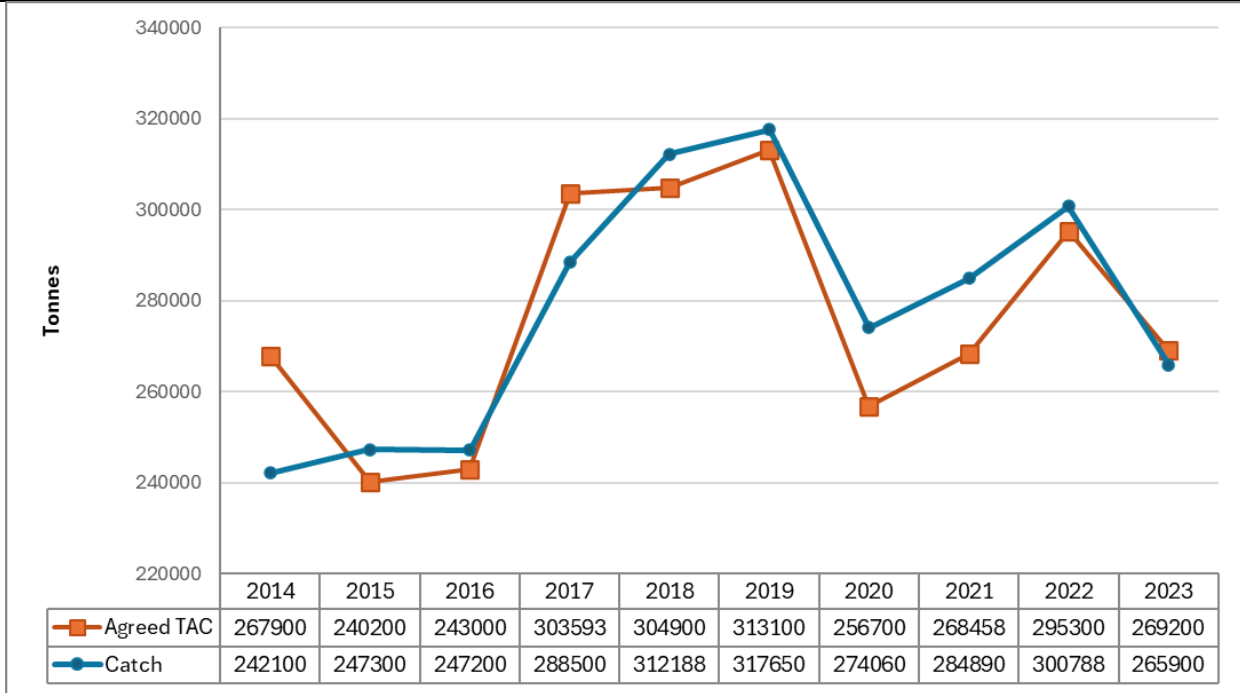


Figure 1. Sprat agreed TAC and catch in the Baltic Sea from 2014 to 2023. (data from ICES 2024)

Table 1. Sprat in the Baltic Sea. ICES advice, the agreed TAC, and ICES estimates of catch. All weights are in tonnes. (ICES 2024)

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Agreed TAC	ICES catch
2006	Agreed management plan	439 000	468 000	344 500
2007	$< F_{pa}$	$< 477\ 000$	454 000*	386 900
2008	$< F_{pa}$	$< 432\ 000$	454 000*	376 600
2009	$< F_{pa}$	$< 291\ 000$	399 000*	404 400
2010	$< F_{pa}$	$< 306\ 000$	380 000*	340 900
2011	$< F_{pa}$	$< 242\ 000$	322 700**	267 600
2012	MSY transition scheme	$< 242\ 000$	255 100**	243 000
2013	$F < F_{MSY}$	$< 278\ 000$	278 000**	273 100
2014	MSY approach	$< 247\ 000$	267 900**	242 100
2015	MSY approach	$< 222\ 000$	240 200**	247 300
2016	MSY approach ($F = 0.26$)	$\leq 205\ 000$	243 000**	247 200
2017	MSY approach ($F = 0.26$)	$\leq 314\ 000$	303 593**	288 500
2018	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.19–0.27), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.26$ only under conditions specified in MAP	219 152–301 722, but catch higher than 291 715 only under conditions specified in MAP	304 900**	312 188
2019	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.19–0.27), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.26$ only under conditions specified in MAP	225 752–311 523, but catch higher than 301 125 only under conditions specified in MAP	313 100**	317 650
2020	MAP target F ranges: F_{lower} to F_{upper} (0.19–0.27), but F higher than $F_{MSY} = 0.26$ only under conditions specified in MAP	169 965–233 704, but catch higher than 225 786 only under conditions specified in MAP	256 700**	274 060
2021	Management plan	247 952 (range 181 567–316 833)	268 458**	284 890
2022	Management plan	291 745 (range 214 000–373 210)	295 300**	300 788 ^{^,§}
2023	Management plan	249 237 (range 183 749–317 905)	269 200**	265 900 [^]
2024	Management plan	241 604 (range 191 075–247 704)	245 200**	
2025	Management plan	164 947 (range 130 195 – 169 131)		

* EU autonomous quota and does not include Russian Federation catches.

** TAC is calculated as EU + Russian Federation autonomous quotas.

[^] Russian Federation landings were not officially reported to ICES, but an estimate is included.

[§] Russian Federation landings were updated in 2024 by the Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS).

A3.3 Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).

Clause is met considering that:

The MAP requires that fishing opportunities are fixed in such a way that there is a less than 5% probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below B_{lim} . When scientific advice indicates that the spawning stock biomass of the stock is below B_{lim} , further remedial measures shall be taken to ensure rapid return of the stock to levels above the level capable of producing MSY. Those remedial measures may include suspending the targeted fishery for the stock and the adequate reduction of fishing opportunities.

References

ICES (2024a). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R1139>

Standard clause 1.3.2.1.3

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.3, 1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.22 (e), 7.5.3
GSSI	D3.04, D6.01

A4 Stock Status - Minimum Requirements

A4.1	The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT: The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT: The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.	Pass
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Clause outcome: Pass

A4.1 The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT:

The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT:

The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.

Clause is met considering that the Spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} and B_{lim} (ICES 2024a) (Figure 1).

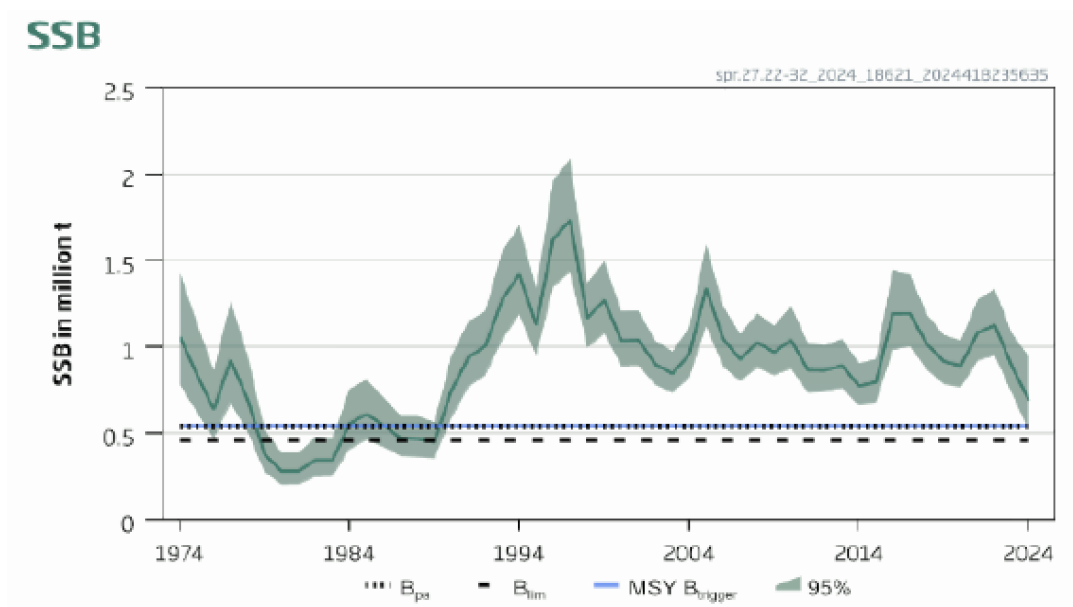


Figure 1. Baltic Sea sprat spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} . (ICES 2024a)

References

ICES (2024a). Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*) in subdivisions 22–32 (Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report.
<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019687.v1>

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.2.2 (e)
GSSI	D6 01

CATEGORY B SPECIES

Category B species are those which make up greater than 5% of landings in the applicant raw material, but which are not subject to a species-specific research and management regime sufficient to pass all Category A clauses. If there are no Category B species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted.

Category B species are assessed using a risk-based approach. The following process should be completed once for each Category B species.

If there are estimates of biomass (B), fishing mortality (F), and reference points

It is possible for a Category B species to have some biomass and fishing mortality data available. When sufficient information is present, the assessment team should use the following risk matrix to determine whether the species should be recommended for approval.

TABLE B(A) - F, B AND REFERENCE POINTS ARE AVAILABLE

Biomass is above MSY / target reference point	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
Biomass is below MSY / target reference point, but above limit reference point	Pass, but re-assess when fishery removals resume	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
Biomass is below limit reference point (stock is overfished)	Pass, but re-assess when fishery removals resume	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Biomass is significantly below limit reference point (Recruitment impaired)	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail

	Fishery removals are prohibited	Fishing mortality is below MSY or target reference point	Fishing mortality is around MSY or target reference point, or below the long-term average	Fishing mortality is above the MSY or target reference point, or around the long-term average	Fishing mortality is above the limit reference point or above the long-term average (Stock is subject to overfishing)
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If the biomass / fishing pressure risk assessment is not possible

Initially, the resilience of each Category B species to fishing pressure should be estimated using the American Fisheries Society procedure described in Musick, J.A. (1999). This approach is used as the resilience values for many species and stocks have been estimated by FishBase and are already available online. For details of the approach, please refer to Appendix A. Determining the resilience provides a basis for estimating the risk that fishing may pose to the long-term sustainability of the stock. Table B(b) should be used to determine whether the species should be recommended for approval.

TABLE B(b) - NO REFERENCE POINTS AVAILABLE. B = CURRENT BIOMASS; B_{av} = LONG-TERM AVERAGE BIOMASS; F = CURRENT FISHING MORTALITY; F_{av} = LONG-TERM AVERAGE FISHING MORTALITY.

B > B_{av} and F < F_{av}	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail
B > B_{av} and F or F_{av} unknown	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
B = B_{av} and F < F_{av}	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
B = B_{av} and F or F_{av} unknown	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
B > B_{av} and F > F_{av}	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
B < B_{av}	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
B unknown	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Resilience	High	Medium	Low	Very Low

Assessment Results

Species Name		NA
B1	Species Name	
	Table used (Ba, Bb)	
	Outcome	
References		
Links		
MarinTrust Standard clause		1.3.2.2, 4.1.4
FAO CCRF		7.5.1
GSSI		D.5.01

CATEGORY C SPECIES

In a whole fish assessment, Category C species are those which make up less than 5% of landings, but which are subject to a species-specific management regime. In most cases this will be because they are a commercial target in a fishery other than the one under assessment.

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 may be assessed as a Category D species instead, EXCEPT if there is evidence that it is currently below the limit reference point.

Species Name		Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) – Central Baltic Sea	
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.			
Clause is met considering that: The Central Baltic Sea herring stock (ICES subdivisions 25-29 and 32) most recent assessment was published in May 2024 by The International Council for exploration of the Sea (ICES) Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). The assessment was carried out using an age-based analytical assessment that uses catches in the model and in the forecast (ICES 2024). Central Baltic herring stock is caught in a fishery with the Gulf of Riga herring stock. The ICES stock assessment and advice considers all catches from the central Baltic herring stock in all areas where it occurs (ICES 2024). Total catches of central Baltic Sea herring stock in 2023 were 98,696t (Figure 1).			

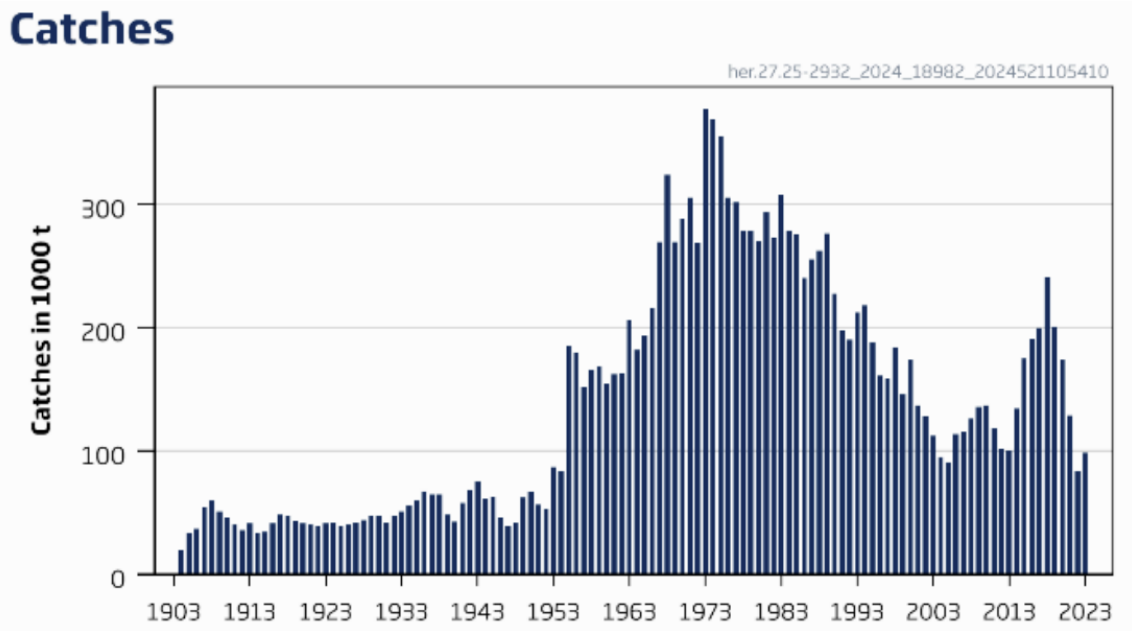


Figure 1. Central Baltic Sea herring stock catches from 1904-2023. (ICES 2024)

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.

The Clause is met considering that:

The 2024 central Baltic Sea herring stock assessment indicates that fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY} (Figure 1), and spawning-stock size is below $MSY B_{trigger}$, but between B_{pa} and B_{lim} (Figure 2). In 2023 SSB was below the $MSY B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} , so, the fact that SSB is now between B_{pa} and B_{lim} indicates that the stock is recovering. The catch advice is that when the EU multiannual plan (MAP) for the Baltic Sea is applied, catches in 2025 that correspond to the F ranges in the plan are between 95 340 (corresponding to $F_{MSY lower} \times SSB_{2025} / MSY B_{trigger}$) and 125 344 tonnes (corresponding to $F_{MSY} \times SSB_{2025} / MSY B_{trigger}$). (ICES 2024).

Relative Fishing Pressure

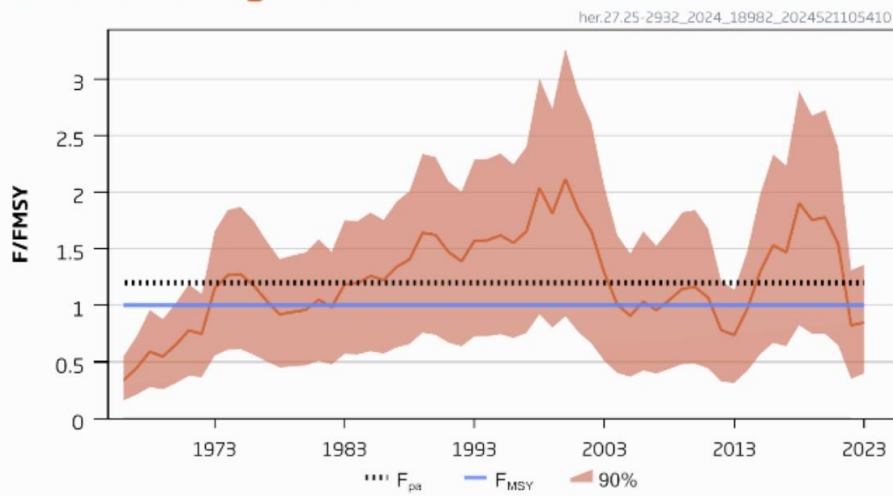


Figure 1. Central Baltic Sea herring in subdivisions 25-19 and 32 fishing pressure below F_{MSY} (ICES 2024).

Relative Spawning Biomass

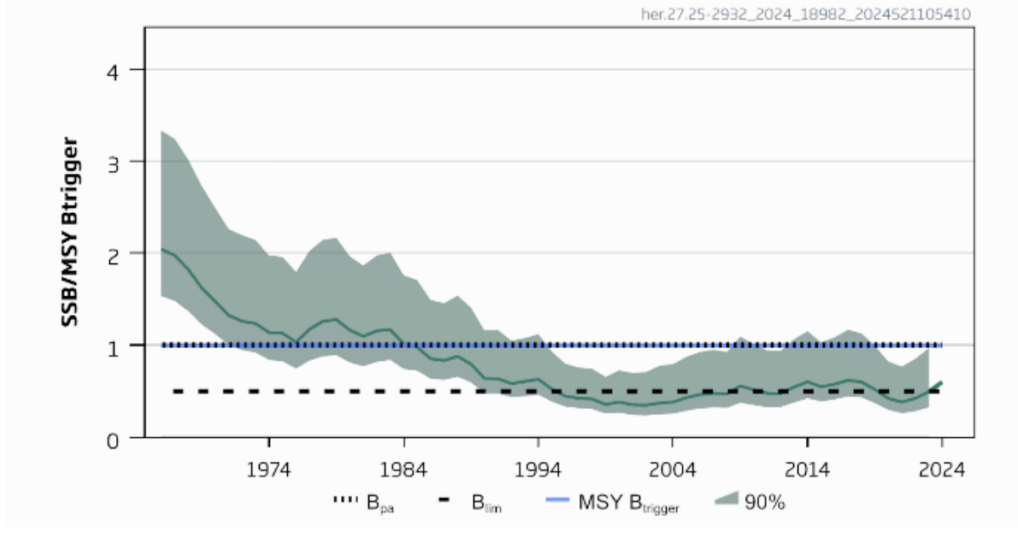


Figure 2. Central Baltic Sea herring in in subdivisions 25-19 and 32 spawning-stock size below $MSY B_{trigger}$, and between B_{pa} , and B_{lim} (ICES 2024).

References

ICES (2024). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019276.v1>

Links

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

CATEGORY D SPECIES

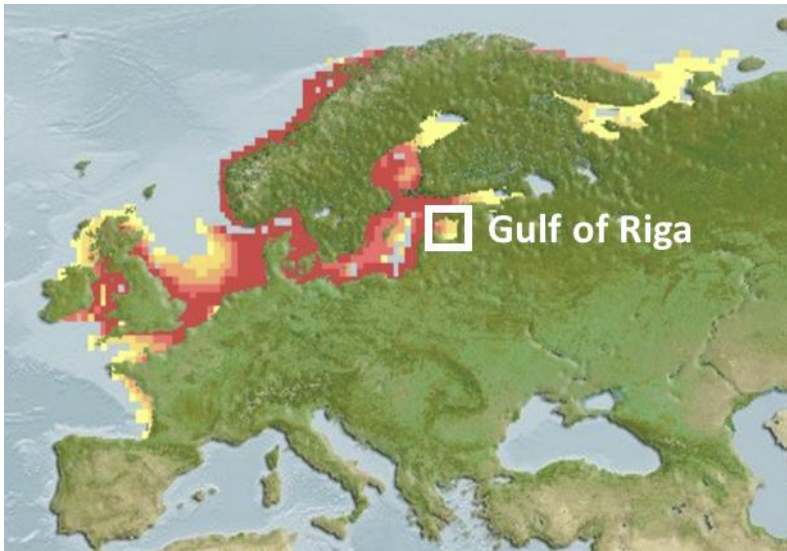
D1	Species Name	Smelt (<i>Osmerus eperlanus</i>)	
	Productivity Attribute	Value	Score
	Average age at maturity (years)	4.7 ¹	1
	Average maximum age (years)	18.9 ¹	2
	Fecundity (eggs/spawning)	18,028 ¹	2
	Average maximum size (cm)	45 ¹	1
	Average size at maturity (cm)	22.1	1
	Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner ¹	1
	Mean trophic level	3.5 ¹	3
	Average Productivity Score		1.57
	Susceptibility Attribute	Value	Score
	Availability (area overlap)	<10% overlap ¹	1
	Encounterability (the position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear)	High overlap ^{1,2}	3
	Selectivity of gear type	Individuals < size of maturity are frequently caught	3
	Post-capture mortality	Retained	3
	Average Susceptibility Score		2.5
	PSA Risk Rating (From Table D3)		Pass
	Compliance rating		Pass
	<p>Further justification for susceptibility scoring (where relevant) <i>For susceptibility attributes, please provide a brief rationale for scoring of parameters where there may be uncertainty affecting your decision</i></p> <p>Availability: Smelt distributes in the North Atlantic: White Sea southward to western coasts of France including Baltic Sea, southern North Sea and British Isles; the Gironde estuary is the southern limit of his distribution. Landlocked populations in lakes of coastal areas of North, Baltic, White and Barents Sea. North to about 68° N in Scandinavia. ¹ (figure 1).</p>		
			

Figure 1: Distribution of Smelt ¹, and location of the Gulf of Riga.

	<p>Encounterability: Smelt can be found up to 50m depth ¹, while herring inhabits in a range of 0-364m depth². Since herring is the target species and smelt is one of the relevant bycatch species, it was considered that the fishing gear position has a high overlap with the smelt despite the herring wide range of depth.</p> <p>Selectivity of gear type: No available information about the selectivity of gear type was found for this stock. However, as a precautionary approach a high-risk score was used in the assessment.</p>
<p>References</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 https://fishbase.se/summary/Osmerus-eperlanus.html 2 https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Clupea-harengus.html 	
<p><i>Standard clauses 1.3.2.2</i></p>	

Category D species are those which make up less than 5% of landings and 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.

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	NA
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

FURTHER IMPACTS

The three clauses in this section relate to impacts the fishery may have in other areas. A fishery must meet the minimum requirements of all three clauses before it can be recommended for approval.

F1	Impacts on ETP Species - Minimum Requirements		
	F1.1	Interactions with ETP species are recorded.	Pass
	F1.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species.	Pass
	F1.3	If the fishery is known to interact with ETP species, measures are in place to minimise mortality.	Pass
Clause outcome:			Pass

There have been no substantial changes in the aspects of the fishery relevant to Section F1 since the previous MT report.

F1.1 Interactions with ETP species are recorded.

The clause is met considering that:

The Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) was established in 2007 and collates and analyses information from across the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent sea areas (Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Seas) related to the bycatch of protected, endangered and threatened (PET) species, including marine mammals, seabirds, turtles and sensitive fish species in commercial fishing operations. (ICES 2023a)

There are several legislative instruments in ICES Member Countries, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and other European Union law concerning bycatch of PETS and their record. ICES obtains data on PETS bycatch through an annual data call. These data are mainly collected during at-sea observations carried out for the purposes of fisheries monitoring in accordance with the EU Data Collection Framework Regulation 2017/1004 (DCF). While the collection of protected species bycatch data through the DCF as part of the Multiannual Plan (DC-/EU-MAP) may facilitate targeted sampling of métiers of concern. (ICES 2023a)

Through the 2023 data call, 23 countries out of 25 responded and submitted data on fishing and sampling effort, and bycatch observations for 2022. Estonia and Latvia participate with data submissions to ICES WGBYC about fishing effort, observer effort, and bycatch records since 2019 (ICES 2023a).

At the time of writing, the Gulf of Riga herring fishery is MSC certified. In the third surveillance Report (Bureau Veritas 2023) states that there are no recorded interactions between the Gulf of Riga pelagic trawl fleet and ETP species in the last 10 years.

F1.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species.

The clause is met considering that:

In the Baltic Sea ecoregion, 148 marine mammals (8 species), 763 birds (19 species), 33 elasmobranchs (2 species), 1884 teleost individuals (3 species), 3 chondrosteians (1 species) and 673 lamprey (1 species) were recorded from 132604 days at sea (ICES 2023a). However, in table 1 are the most recent WGBYC reported by catch species by the fisheries in the Gulf of Riga, and none of them is an ETP species, indicating that interactions with ETP species in this area of the Baltic Sea are rare.

Table 1. WGBYC by catch species for the Gulf of Riga (ICES 2023b)

Species	Common name	IUCN Category	Total specimens
<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	Grey seal	Least Concern	14
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great cormoran	Least Concern	20
<i>Alosa fallax</i>	Twaite shad	Least Concern	2
<i>Cyclopterus lumpus</i>	Lumpfish	Near Threatened	1
<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>	European river lamprey	Least Concern	33

The low probability of ETP interactions is also indicated by the MSC PCR for the fishery, which notes there are no recorded interactions with any potentially ETP species (BV 2020). Furthermore, the list of potentially-impacted ETP species provided within the report includes only one which falls within the MT definition of an ETP species: the Baltic Sea sub-population of the harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*, IUCN Critically Endangered (Hammond et al 2008)). The PCR states that “the harbour porpoise does not occur regularly in the Gulf of Riga, and no interactions with the pelagic trawl fishery in the Gulf of Riga have been recorded” (BV 2020).

F1.3 If the fishery is known to interact with ETP species, measures are in place to minimise mortality.

As noted in F1.2, there is no evidence of interactions between the fishery and any species which fall within the MT definition of ETP. Despite this, throughout the Baltic Sea, measures are in place to minimise fishing-related ETP mortality. These include area closures (e.g. offshore from the mouth of the Oder), a ban on fishing in inshore areas in certain locations, monitoring requirements, marine protected areas designated for ETP species, and ban on capture of ETP and, where this occurs, their prompt release.

References

Bureau Veritas (2020). NZRO Gulf of Riga herring and sprat trawl fishery Public Certification Report, Bureau Veritas, July 2020. <https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/nzro-gulf-of-riga-herring-and-sprat-trawl-fishery/@assessments>

Bureau Veritas (2023). NZRO Gulf of Riga herring and sprat trawl fishery. Third surveillance report. November 2023. <https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/nzro-gulf-of-riga-herring-and-sprat-trawl-fishery/@assessments>

Hammond, P.S., Bearzi, G., Bjørge, A., Forney, K.A., Karczmarski, L., Kasuya, T., Perrin, W., Scott, M.D., Wang, J.Y., Wells, R.S. & Wilson, B (2008). *Phocoena phocoena* (Baltic Sea subpopulation) (errata version published in 2016). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2008: e.T17031A98831650. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2008.RLTS.T17031A6739565.en>

ICES (2023a). Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.24659484.v2>

ICES (2023b). https://github.com/ices-eg/wg_WGBYC/blob/master/2023/WGBYC2TAF/output/TOR_A_long_table_bycatch_only.xlsx

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.1
FAO CCRF	7.2.2 (d)
GSSI	D4.04, D.3.08

F2	Impacts on Habitats - Minimum Requirements		
	F2.1	Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management decision-making process.	Pass
	F2.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats.	Pass
	F2.3	If the fishery is known to interact with physical habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.	Pass
			Clause outcome: Pass

There have been no substantial changes in the aspects of the fishery relevant to Section F2 since the previous MT report.

F2.1 Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management decision-making process.

The clause is met considering that:

The pelagic trawl gears used in this fishery are not intended to make contact with the sea bed, and in order to avoid damage vessels will attempt to avoid such interactions wherever possible. The assessment guidance for this clause states that “good practice requires there to be a strategy in place that is designed to ensure the fishery does not pose a risk of serious or irreversible harm to habitat types”. For fisheries in the region which interact with seabed habitats, measures are in place to manage and mitigate impacts via mechanisms such as the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the requirements associated with Natura 2000 sites, and the technical measures set out in EU regulation.

F2.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats.

The clause is met considering that:

Pelagic trawl gears are not designed to make contact with the seabed. Such contact is likely to be minimal and consequently the impact of this gear on benthic habitats and seabed structures is considered minimal, if any.

F2.3 If the fishery is known to interact with physical habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.

The clause is met considering that:

Pelagic gears such as those used in this fishery are highly unlikely to cause significant habitat disruption. However, within the broader fisheries management structures present in the Baltic, measures are in place to protect habitats. Habitats are provided protection through the Natura 2000 network established under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (2009/147/EC; 92/43/EEC). This is a network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types which are protected in their own right. Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, Member States are required to establish the necessary conservation measures, including, if necessary, management plans for these sites and the impact of any ‘plans or projects’ likely to have a significant effect on the sites subject to assessment. The Technical Measures Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1241) also sets out technical measures which can protect habitats including regional measures under Article 15 and powers to introduce real-time closures and moving-on provisions. Even though the fishery is thought very unlikely to interact with seabed habitats, habitat protection measures applied to fisheries in general are in place

References

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:01992L0043-20130701>

Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009L0147>

HELCOM (2023). Baltic Sea Action Plan 2021 update. <https://helcom.fi/baltic-sea-action-plan/>

Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.2
FAO CCRF	6.8
GSSI	D.2.07, D.6.07, D3.09

F3 Ecosystem Impacts - Minimum Requirements		
F3.1	The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process.	Pass
F3.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.	Pass
F3.3	If one or more of the species identified during species categorisation plays a key role in the marine ecosystem, additional precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals.	Pass
Clause outcome:		Pass

There have been no substantial changes in the aspects of the fishery relevant to Section F3 since the previous MT report. References have been updated.

F3.1 The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process.

The clause is met considering that:

Commercial fisheries in the Baltic Sea are managed according to a Multi-Annual Plan (MAP), EU Regulation 2016/1139. The objectives of the MAP include implementing the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, the precautionary approach, and EU legislation including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Directive 2008/56/EC. Article 3 Clause 3 of the MAP states, “The plan shall implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimised”. Article 8 empowers the European Commission to adopt technical measures to “minimise the negative impact of fishing gears and fishing activities on the ecosystem”.

Also, the specific roles of herring and sprat in the Gulf of Riga ecosystem factors in to the development of the stock assessment process are taking in consideration, since the objectives of the 2023 benchmarking workshop, which aimed to update the stock assessment methodology included the following: “As part of the assessment methods workshop, knowledge about environmental drivers, including multispecies interactions, and ecosystem impacts should be integrated in the methodology” (ICES 2023).

The benchmarking workshop report provides evidence that ecosystem knowledge was indeed factored into discussions. The Gulf of Riga herring section includes an extensive discussion of “Ecosystem drivers”, stating for example that “the year-class strength of Gulf of Riga herring strongly depends on the severity of winter” (ICES 2023). Further consideration is given to Gulf of Riga herring and sprat specifically in the annual WGBFAS workshop and reports. In the case of sprat, there are ongoing efforts to “develop an F scaling factor to tune the long-term FMSY and account for medium-term ecosystem-driven variability in productivity” (ICES 2024a).

F3.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.

The clause is met considering that:

The most significant potential ecosystem impacts of the fishery arise from the removal of herring and sprat biomass. The ICES ecosystem overview (ICES, 2022) states that since the late 1980’s “the open-sea system has been dominated by small pelagic fish, such as sprat”, and that “in general, those seabird species eating sprat and herring have increased in number”. Prey depletion is not considered to be a determining factor in the health of populations of porpoise, seal or cod populations, all of

which predate sprat and herring (ICES 2022). Additionally, the ICES catch recommendations – which as noted in Section A are broadly followed – are calculated with the ecosystem considerations listed in F3.1, above. No other evidence was encountered during the completion of this report to indicate that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.

F3.3 If one or more of the species identified during species categorisation plays a key role in the marine ecosystem, additional precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals.

The clause is met considering that:

Herring and sprat are both considered to be important prey species in the Baltic Sea ecosystem. Natural mortality – primarily due to predation – is factored in to the ICES quota recommendations. Natural mortality levels are estimated for sprat as part of the stock assessment process, using a multispecies assessment model (ICES 2024b). Natural mortality of Gulf of Riga herring is assumed to be constant, but is still factored into the stock assessment process which leads to quota recommendations (ICES 2024b). In both cases, this means that catch recommendations are lower than they would be if natural mortality was not considered, and therefore catches are more conservative due to the important role played by both prey species

References

ICES (2023). Benchmark Workshop on Baltic Pelagic stocks (WKBBALPEL). ICES Scientific Reports. 5:47. 350 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.23216492>

ICES. (2024a). Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Scientific Reports. 6:53. 584 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.25764978>

ICES. (2024b). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subdivision 28.1 (Gulf of Riga). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, her.27.28. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.25019279>

Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32016R1139>

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.3
FAO CCRF	7.2.2 (d)
GSSI	D.2.09, D3.10, D.6.09

SOCIAL CRITERION

In addition to the scored criteria listed above, applicants must commit to ensuring that vessels operating in the fishery adhere to internationally recognised guidance on human rights. They must also commit to ensuring there is no use of enforced or unpaid labour in the fleet(s) operating upon the resource.

Appendix A - Determining Resilience Ratings

The assessment of Category B species described in this assessment report template utilises a resilience rating system suggested by the American Fisheries Society. This approach was chosen because it is also used by FishBase, and so the resilience ratings for many thousands of species are freely available online. As described by FishBase, the following is the process used to arrive at the resilience ratings:

“The American Fisheries Society (AFS) has suggested values for several biological parameters that allow classification of a fish population or species into categories of high, medium, low and very low resilience or productivity (Musick 1999). If no reliable estimate of r_m (see below) is available, the assignment is to the lowest category for which any of the available parameters fits. For each of these categories, AFS has suggested thresholds for decline over the longer of 10 years or three generations. If an observed decline measured in biomass or numbers of mature individuals exceeds the indicated threshold value, the population or species is considered vulnerable to extinction unless explicitly shown otherwise. If one sex strongly limits the reproductive capacity of the species or population, then only the decline in the limiting sex should be considered. We decided to restrict the automatic assignment of resilience categories in the Key Facts page to values of K , t_m and t_{max} and those records of fecundity estimates that referred to minimum number of eggs or pups per female per year, assuming that these were equivalent to average fecundity at first maturity (Musick 1999). Note that many small fishes may spawn several times per year (we exclude these for the time being) and large live bearers such as the coelacanth may have gestation periods of more than one year (we corrected fecundity estimates for those cases reported in the literature). Also, we excluded resilience estimates based on r_m (see below) as we are not yet confident with the reliability of the current method for estimating r_m . If users have independent r_m or fecundity estimates, they can refer to Table 1 for using this information.”

Parameter	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Threshold	0.99	0.95	0.85	0.70
r_{max} (1/year)	> 0.5	0.16 - 0.50	0.05 - 0.15	< 0.05
K (1/year)	> 0.3	0.16 - 0.30	0.05 - 0.15	< 0.05
Fecundity (1/year)	> 10,000	100 - 1000	10 - 100	< 10
t_m (years)	< 1	2 - 4	5 - 10	> 10
t_{max} (years)	1 - 3	4 - 10	11 - 30	> 30

[Taken from the FishBase manual, “Estimation of Life-History Key Facts”, <http://www.fishbase.us/manual/English/key%20facts.htm#resilience>]

Appendix B- MarinTrust Fishery Assessment Peer Review Template

This section comprises a summary of the fishery being assessed against version 2 of the MarinTrust Standard.

Fishery under assessment	WF07_Herring and Sprat Whole fish Fishery Assessment WF07 – Herring and Sprat FAO27, ICES 3.d28.1 (gulf of riga)
Management authority (Country/State)	European Commission (EC), Estonia, Latvia
Main species	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)
Fishery location	FAO 27, ICES e.d28.1
Gear type(s)	Pelagic trawls
Overall recommendation. (Approve/ Fail)	Approve

Summary: in this section, provide any additional information about the fishery that the reviewers feel is significant to their decision.
<p>The report is well-written, provides some great figures and references, and follows the MT guidance. The catch profile has been verified by multiple data sources and the species categories have been applied appropriately, all species scored passed the MT Whole Fishery assessment.</p> <p>This review also checked harmonisation between WF07 and WF37, both Estonian herring sprat fisheries. Although the already published WF37 report uses 2022 catch data for herring and sprat to justify scoring, the outcomes, rationales and evidence used in both reports to justify the scoring are largely aligned.</p>
General Comments on the Draft Report provided to the peer reviewer
<p>A2 – both species the references and diagrams provided in this section are really helpful!</p> <p>A3.2 sprat – really liked the figure plotting catch against advice.</p>

Summary of Peer Review Outcomes

Peer reviewers should review the fishery assessment report with the primary objective of answering the key questions listed in the table below. Where the situation is more complicated, reviewers may instead answer “See Notes”.

	YES	NO	See Notes
A – Fishery Assessment			
1. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MarinTrust fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?	X		
2. Does the Species Categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?	X		
3. Are the scores in the following sections accurate (i.e. do the scores reflect the evidence provided)?	X		
Section M - Management	X		
Category A Species	X		
Category B Species	X		
Category C Species	N.A		
Category D Species	X		
Section F – Further Impacts	X		

Detailed Peer Review Justification

Peer reviewers should provide support for their answers in the boxes provided, by referring to specific scoring issues and any relevant documentation as appropriate.

Detailed justifications are only required where answers given are one of the ‘No’ options. In other (Yes) cases, either confirm ‘scoring agreed’ or identify any places where weak rationales could be strengthened (without any implications for the scores).

Boxes may be extended if more space is required.

1. Is the scoring of the fishery consistent with the MarinTrust standard, and clearly based on the evidence presented in the assessment report?
The peer reviewer agrees with all of the scoring which has been well evidenced throughout, references all appear to be up-to-date, with working links. A few comments are made below but would not expect this to change the overall outcome of the assessment.
Certification body response

2. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MARINTRUST fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?
Most sections of the report have been completed with sufficient information and evidence to justify the scoring given. The opening table is missing the client, email and application code. The opening table the management system is listed as EU, the report discusses EU management system as applied by the Estonian and Latvian government. It may be appropriate to also list the member states in the opening table for clarity.
Certification body response
Missing client information has been added. Estonian and Latvian governments have been added as management authorities.

3. Does the Species Categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?	
The species categorisation looks accurate and based on the available evidence, the reference links provided are up-to-date and working. Catch of GoR Herring and IPI catch of central Baltic herring is teased apart and reviewed by the auditor, the additional table is extremely helpful, however it would have been good to see how the auditor considered the problem of misreporting (a known issue) in choosing scoring categories for species.	
Certification body response	
Although misreporting of spart and herring is a known problem, this is not considered in the ICES assessments and advice, therefore it was not considered in this assessment either. Its supposed that there are ongoing efforts to quantify misreporting, but as long as there are no concrete results, there is not way to include this information in the assessment.	

3M. Are the scores in “Section M – Management” clearly justified?	YES
Scoring is detailed and covers both the EU, Estonian and latvian management systems, in all scoring rationales. Minor correction in M1.1 opening line, pelagic and mid-water trawls and trap nets. Noting the other Estonia MT WF assessment is for mid-water trawls.	
Certification body response	
Mid-water trawls has been added.	

3A. Are the “Category A Species” scores clearly justified? YES	
All sections of the report have been completed with sufficient information and evidence to justify the scoring given. Few very minor comments below: Herring - A1.2 – the information collected on misreporting should also be mentioned here. It is for sprat so imagine was deleted accidentally, same text used for sprat covers both species. A2.3 for both species the misreporting problem should be mentioned in the context of the clause.	
Certification body response	
Herring A1.2- misreporting text and reference has been included. A2.3- misreporting problem has been included for both species.	

3B. Are the “Category B Species” scores clearly justified? N.A	
Certification body response	

3C. Are the “Category C Species” scores clearly justified? YES	
Central Baltic herring has been shown to constitute <5% of the catch profile and there is a species-specific management regime. The most recent stock assessment (ICES 2024) has the stock being between B_{pa} , and B_{lim} therefore C1.2 and C1.2 are both met.	
Certification body response	
NA	

3D. Are the “Category D Species” scores clearly justified? YES	
Smelt is the only species scored as a category D species. All sections of the table have been completed with sufficient information and evidence to justify the scoring given, all reference links are up to date and working. Scoring largely aligns with the already approved WF37 report however it is noted that there are different scores for Fecundity, the information used is the same, ~18k eggs but WF37 assigns a score of 1 which is in-accurate,	

2 is used here which is for 100-20k eggs. As this is not material to the outcome of either assessment, no change needed at this stage.

Certification body response

NA

3F. Are the scores in “Section F – Further Impacts” clearly justified? YES

All sections of the report have been completed with sufficient information and evidence to justify the scoring given. This fishery is a pelagic fishery so interaction with the seabed is largely disregarded, interactions with ETP species is recorded and herring/sprat fishery removals are appropriate considered in regards to ecosystem impacts on predator species.

Certification body response

NA

Optional: General comments on the Peer Review Draft Report

Certification body response

NA

Glossary

Non-target: Species for which the gear is not specifically set, although they may have immediate commercial value and be a desirable component of the catch. OECD (1996), Synthesis report for the study on the economic aspects of the management of marine living resources. AGR/FI(96)12

Target: In the context of fishery certification, the target catch is the catch of stock under consideration by the unit of certification – i.e. the fish that are being assessed for certification and ecolabelling. (GSSI)