

## Sardine (*Sardina pilchardus*) in Subarea 7 (southern Celtic Seas and the English Channel)

### ICES advice on fishing opportunities

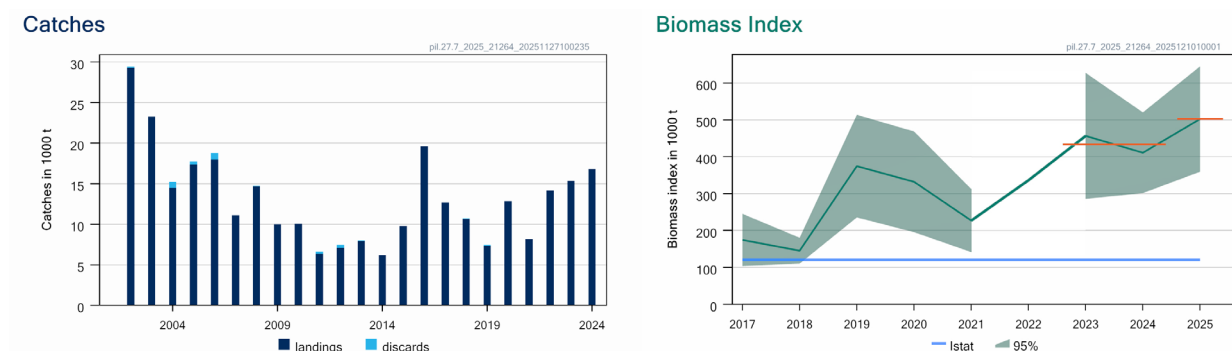
ICES advises that when the precautionary approach (PA) is applied, catches in 2026 should be no more than 16 158 tonnes.

### Non-fisheries conservation considerations

Conservation aspects and associated management measures may exist at a national or regional level but were not reviewed by ICES.

### Stock development over time

ICES cannot assess the stock and exploitation status relative to maximum sustainable yield (MSY) reference points because these are undefined. The stock size is above  $I_{stat}$  (index trigger value for biomass safeguard, a precautionary approach reference point).



**Figure 1** Sardine in Subarea 7. Left: catches disaggregated by category since 2002, including below minimum size (BMS) landings. Right: biomass index for the total area from the PELTIC acoustic survey, with 95% confidence interval (shaded area); the calculation of the 2022 value did not allow a confidence interval to be produced). The horizontal orange lines indicate the biomass index for 2025 and the average for 2023–2024.

### Catch scenarios

ICES framework for category 3 short-lived stocks using the 1-over-2 rule was applied (ICES, 2025a). The biomass estimate for the total area of the PELTIC acoustic survey was used as the biomass index. The advice is based on the ratio between the last index value (index A) and the average of the two preceding values (index B), multiplied by last year's advice. The index is estimated to have increased by 15.8% and thus the uncertainty cap was not applied. The 1-over-2 rule with an uncertainty cap of 80% and a biomass safeguard is considered precautionary and as such a PA buffer was not considered (ICES, 2020). Discarding is considered negligible.

**Table 1** Sardine in Subarea 7. The basis for the catch scenarios\*.

Index A (2025)		502 312 tonnes
Index B (2023–2024)		433 671 tonnes
Index ratio (A/B)		1.158
Biomass safeguard ( $I_{stat}$ )		Not applied
Uncertainty cap	Not applied	-
Advised catch for 2025		13 950 tonnes
Discard rate		Negligible
Catch advice 2026**		16 158 tonnes
% advice change		+15.8 %

\*The figures in the table are rounded. Calculations were done with unrounded inputs, and computed values may not match exactly when calculated using the rounded figures in the table.

\*\*[Advice for 2025] × [index ratio]

The advice for 2026 is higher than the advice for 2025 because of a larger biomass index in 2025 relative to the mean of 2023–2024.

### Basis of the advice

**Table 2** Sardine in Subarea 7. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for sardine in this area

### Quality of the assessment

In 2025, the PELTIC survey did not sample a small offshore area in the Bristol Channel because of technical reasons. The estimated sardine biomass in this area is typically < 5% of the total estimated biomass and therefore the total estimated biomass in 2025 may have been slightly underestimated.

### Issues relevant for the advice

As with previous assessments, French catches from ICES rectangles 25E5 and 25E4 (Subarea 7) are allocated to Division 8.a, as they occur on the boundary between divisions and are considered more closely associated with the sardine stock in divisions 8.a–b and 8.d. In 2024, the catch reallocated to Subarea 8 was 6 905 tonnes, which constitutes 41% of the catches in the rest of Subarea 7. The boundary between sardine stocks in subareas 7 and 8 is unclear, and further studies are needed to support this procedure to allocate catches. Similarly, little is known about the extension of the stock in the North Sea, where sardine is also present.

### Reference points

**Table 3** Sardine in Subarea 7. Reference points, values, and their technical basis.

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	MSY $B_{trigger}$	Not defined		
	$F_{MSY}$	Not defined		
Precautionary approach	$I_{stat}$	120 751 tonnes	Geomean( $I_{hist}$ ) $\times$ exp( $-1.645 \times sd(\log(I_{hist}))$ ); $I_{hist}$ is the available historical series of the biomass index for the total area (2017–2021)	ICES (2022)
	$B_{lim}$ , $B_{PA}$	Not defined		
	$F_{lim}$	Not defined		
	$F_{PA}$	Not defined		
Management plan	$SSB_{mgt}$	Not defined		
	$F_{mgt}$	Not defined		

## Basis of the assessment

**Table 4** Sardine in Subarea 7. The basis of the assessment.

ICES stock data category	3 (2025b)
Assessment type	Survey trends-based assessment* (ICES, 2025c)
Input data	Commercial catch, biomass estimates from the total area of the acoustic survey PELTIC ([A6259], 2017-2024)
Discards and bycatch	Discards were not included as discarding is considered negligible in the last five years
Indicators	None
Other information	This stock was benchmarked in 2021 (WKWEST; ICES, 2021)
Working group	Working Group on Southern Horse Mackerel, Anchovy, and Sardine (WGHANSA)

\*View assessment in Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF).

## History of the advice, catch, and management

**Table 5a** Sardine in Divisions 8.a–b and 8.d, and Subarea 7\*. ICES advice and official landings. No total allowable catch (TAC) is set for this stock. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Official landings	ICES landings
2010	None		32592	30287
2011	None		28847	28840
2012	None		37214	37214
2013	None		40971	40130
2014	20% reduction of catches (average of last three years)	< 27554	45312	42015
2015	No new advice, same as for 2014	< 27554	36928	38070
2016	Precautionary approach (increase catches by no more than 20%)	≤ 33065	47324	49161
2017	Precautionary approach (same advised catch value as given for 2016)	≤ 33065	57889	43101

\*Prior to 2017, sardine in this area was assessed as a single stock combining Subarea 7 (English Channel and Celtic Sea) and divisions 8.a–b and 8.d (Bay of Biscay).

**Table 5b** Sardine in Subarea 7. ICES advice and official landings. No total allowable catch (TAC) is set for this stock. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Official landings*	ICES landings
2018	Precautionary approach: 20% reduction in catch relative to the 2014–2016 average	Value not quantified	10428	10671
2019	Precautionary approach: same advice as for 2018	Value not quantified	8959	7937
2020	No catch advice	Value not quantified	14447	13553
2021	No catch advice	Value not quantified	7830	8524
2022	Precautionary approach	≤ 6 906	13316	14178
2023	Precautionary approach	≤ 8 306	15327	15319
2024	Precautionary approach	≤ 13 459	16843	16808
2025	Precautionary approach	≤ 13 950		
2026	Precautionary approach	≤ 16 158		

\*Official landings exclude some catches from ICES rectangles 25E5 and 25E4, which are not part of the pil.27.7 stock. Sardine landings in these rectangles may be greater than for the entirety of the pil.27.7 stock. Official landings in 2024 are preliminary.

## History of the catch and landings

**Table 6** Sardine in Subarea 7. Catch distribution by fleet in 2024 as estimated by ICES.

Catch	Landings			Discards
	Pelagic trawl	Purse-seine	Other gears	
16 808 tonnes	46 %	54 %*	< 1 %	Negligible
	16 808 tonnes			

\*Landings from UK erroneously reported as gillnets and fly shooting were allocated to purse-seine.

**Table 7** Sardine in Subarea 7. History of reported landings; values are presented for each country participating in the fishery. All weights are in tonnes\*.

Year	Rectangles 25E5 and 25E4 (Subarea 7)	Subarea 7, excluding rectangles 25E5 and 25E4							
	France	Denmark	France	Germany	Ireland	Netherlands	UK	Other Countries**	Total
1970	n/a	0	1014	2112	0	38	890	0	4054
1971	n/a	0	1350	3362	0	108	1242	0	6062
1972	n/a	0	1297	1553	0	54	2190	0	5094
1973	n/a	0	1603	2577	0	17	2375	0	6572
1974	n/a	0	833	1826	0	15	1280	0	3954
1975	n/a	0	678	4043	0	561	6	0	5288
1976	n/a	0	1284	2346	0	127	3	0	3760
1977	n/a	0	3544	183	0	623	10778	0	15128
1978	n/a	0	2773	1463	0	1523	549	0	6308
1979	n/a	0	3247	1188	0	1321	46	0	5802
1980	n/a	0	3573	79	0	1131	753	0	5536
1981	n/a	4471	1125	0	0	553	35	0	6184
1982	n/a	1311	908	0	0	928	141	0	3288
1983	n/a	4743	802	19	0	795	6	0	6365
1984	n/a	1210	817	0	0	0	1	0	2028
1985	n/a	3111	2089	0	0	0	20	0	5220
1986	n/a	3602	2570	0	0	0	30	0	6202
1987	n/a	1573	965	0	0	0	124	0	2662
1988	n/a	3234	2586	0	0	0	0	0	5820
1989	n/a	4667	1219	0	0	11	1660	0	7557
1990	n/a	6113	1128	107	0	6	2078	0	9432
1991	n/a	4462	1963	8	0	0	2952	0	9385
1992	n/a	17843	1777	4	0	41	4493	0	24158
1993	n/a	13395	1135	0	0	109	4917	0	19556
1994	n/a	20804	1285	2	0	20	2081	0	24192
1995	n/a	9603	1282	66	0	107	7133	0	18191
1996	n/a	1396	1563	0	0	48	7304	0	10311
1997	n/a	1124	3346	13	0	411	7280	0	12174
1998	n/a	14316	1974	100	192	1647	6873	0	25102
1999	n/a	3490	119	146	2375	5166	4815	8	16119
2000	1324	1682	4074	436	354	6586	4353	0	17485
2001	1281	0	8589	454	1060	6609	10375	0	27087
2002	1872	0	7977	130	11417	1905	6636	0	28065
2003	5685	0	8186	13	4030	6897	4150	0	23276
2004	2700	0	7807	60	2046	2187	2389	0	14489
2005	4487	0	10605	140	922	2231	3457	0	17355
2006	5032	0	11120	246	2416	2287	1925	0	17994
2007	2829	4	7315	0	28	1106	2574	0	11027
2008	3033	53	8562	43	473	2073	3306	0	14510
2009	4780	0	3918	0	65	3406	2568	0	9957
2010	6608	13	706	62	50	6645	2540	0	10016
2011	5456	3	237	5	1966	513	3614	0	6338
2012	5098	40	372	587	16	1637	4423	0	7075
2013	6901	40	1703	214	473	1739	3722	0	7891
2014	4737	953	1100	18	0	193	3893	0	6157
2015	2569	1011	1208	1551	555	1171	4301	0	9797

Year	Rectangles 25E5 and 25E4 (Subarea 7)	Subarea 7, excluding rectangles 25E5 and 25E4							
	France	Denmark	France	Germany	Ireland	Netherlands	UK	Other Countries**	Total
2016	8610	2286	925	1941	464	4697	9389	2	19704
2017	6790	2460	820	1475	329	0	7596	0	12680
2018	7034	263	606	758	89	811	8143	1	10671
2019	6255	0	671	53	33	90	7049	40	7936
2020	12034	3217	592	0	58	185	9500	0	13552
2021	12409	89	743	0	509	111	7074	0	8526
2022	10300	3151	1393	2	993	89	8549	1	14178
2023	7359	278	1762	0	3094	925	9260	0	15319
2024	6905	0	3050	0	3150	543	10065	0	16808

n/a = not available.

\*Only catches from 2002 to 2019 were revised by all countries for the benchmark in 2021. Therefore, catches prior to 2002 are excluded from Figure 1.

\*\* Includes Belgium, Lithuania, and Spain.

### Summary of the assessment

**Table 8** Sardine in Subarea 7. Assessment summary. The “High” and “Low” columns represent the 95% confidence intervals of the biomass index. All values are in tonnes.

Year	Biomass index (total area)			Landings	Discards	Below minimum size (BMS) landings***
	Low	Index	High			
2002				29287	190	
2003				23276	10	
2004				14488	737	
2005				17354	377	
2006				17994	785	
2007				11108	15	
2008				14675	51	
2009				9957	40	
2010				10017	4	
2011				6337	275	
2012				7075	342	
2013				7891	91	
2014				6157	0	
2015				9783		15
2016				19634		68
2017	103811	174637	245464	12662	28	18
2018	110408	145514	180620	10670	16	1
2019	235510	374617	513724	7317	111	620
2020	195609	332098	468587	12852		701
2021	141654	227117	312580	8155		370
2022	**	336306*	**	14178		
2023	285757	456482	627206	15309	11	10
2024	301481	410861	520242	16808		
2025	359507	502312	645117			

\*Raised estimate.

\*\*No uncertainty estimates were available.

\*\*\* Included in landings totals in the assessment.

## Sources and references

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