

## Plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*) in Division 7.e (western English Channel)

### ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches should be no more than 927 tonnes in each of the years 2025 and 2026.

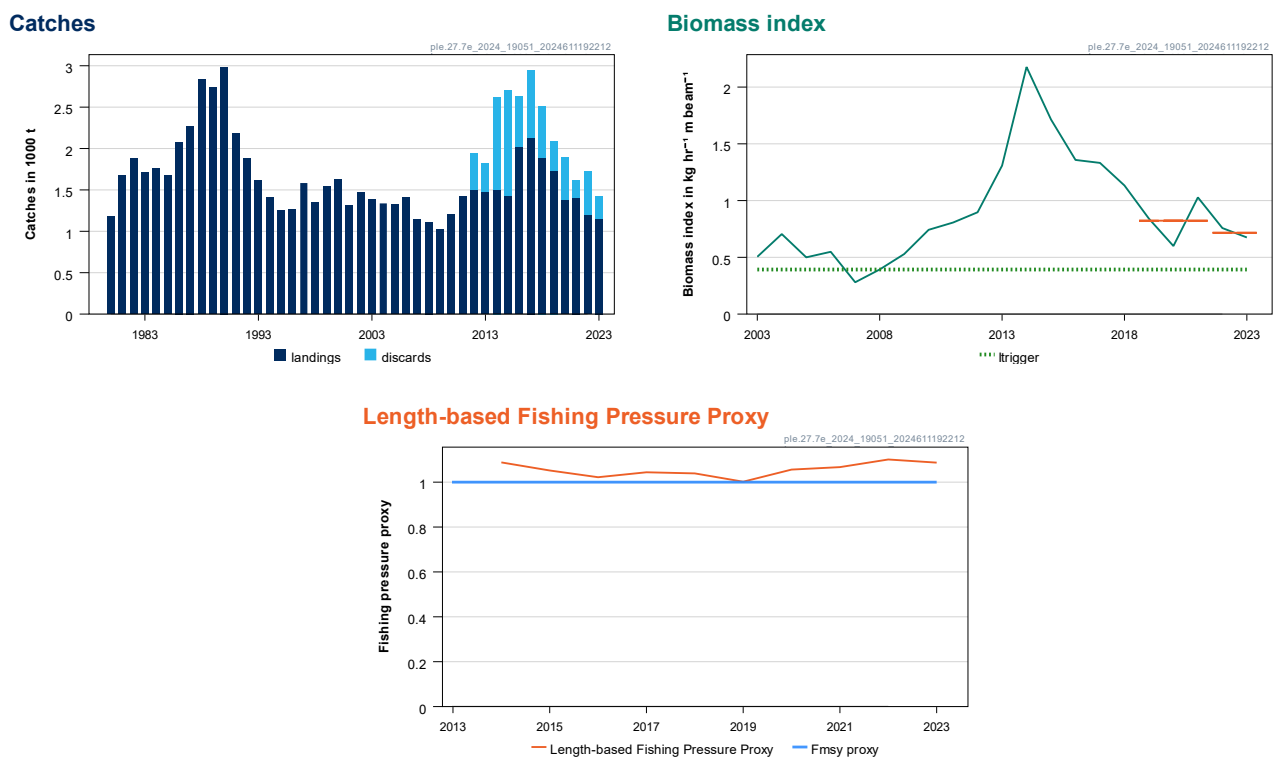
ICES notes the existence of a precautionary management plan, developed and adopted by some of the relevant management authorities for this stock.

### 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

Fishing pressure proxy on the stock is above the  $F_{MSY}$  proxy (Figure 1), and the stock-size index is above  $I_{trigger}$ .



**Figure 1** Plaice in Division 7.e. Summary of the stock assessment. ICES landings and discards (estimates available since 2012) and stock biomass index from the UK-FSP survey. The horizontal orange lines indicate the average of the biomass index for 2019 to 2021 and for 2022 to 2023. Fishing pressure proxy ( $L_{F=M}/L_{mean}$ ) from the length-based indicator (LBI) method is used for the evaluation of the exploitation status. The proxy fishing pressure is above the corresponding  $F_{MSY}$  proxy ( $L_{F=M}$ ) when the indicator ratio value is higher than 1 (shown by the horizontal blue line).

### Catch scenarios

ICES framework for category 3 stocks was applied (rfb rule, method 2.1; ICES, 2024a). A survey biomass index was used as an indicator of stock development. The advice is based on the recent advised catches, multiplied by the ratio of the mean of the last two index values (index A) and the mean of the three preceding values (index B), a ratio of observed mean length

in the catch relative to the target mean length, a biomass safeguard, and a precautionary multiplier. The stability clause was not applied since the change from the previous advice was between +20% and -30%. The discard rate (average 2012–2023) was 26% for the Division 7.e stock and 23% for the Division 7.e area.

**Table 1** Plaice in Division 7.e. The basis for the catch scenarios.\* 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.

Division 7.e plaice stock	
Previous catch advice $A_y$ (advised catch for 2024)	1219 tonnes
Stock biomass trend	
Index A (2022, 2023)	0.72 kg hr <sup>-1</sup> m beam <sup>-1</sup>
Index B (2019, 2020, 2021)	0.82 kg hr <sup>-1</sup> m beam <sup>-1</sup>
r: multiplier for stock biomass trend (index ratio A/B)	0.87
Fishing pressure	
Mean catch length ( $L_{\text{mean}} = L_{2023}$ )	31.7 cm
MSY proxy length ( $L_{F=M}$ )	34.4 cm
Fishing pressure proxy ( $L_{F=M}/L_{2023}$ )	1.09
f: multiplier for relative mean length in catches ( $L_{2023}/L_{F=M}$ )	0.92
Biomass safeguard	
Last index value ( $I_{2023}$ )	0.68 kg hr <sup>-1</sup> m beam <sup>-1</sup>
Index trigger value ( $I_{\text{trigger}} = I_{\text{loss}} \times 1.4$ )	0.39 kg hr <sup>-1</sup> m beam <sup>-1</sup>
b: multiplier for index relative to trigger, $\min\{I_{2023}/I_{\text{trigger}}, 1\}$	1.00
Precautionary multiplier to maintain biomass above $B_{\text{lim}}$ with 95% probability	
m: multiplier (generic multiplier based on life history)	0.95
RFB calculation**	927 tonnes
Stability clause (+20%/-30% compared to $A_y$ , only applied if $b = 1$ )	Not applied
Discard rate	26%
Catch advice for 2025 and 2026 ( $A_y \times r \times f \times b \times m$ )	927 tonnes
Projected landings corresponding to advice***	682 tonnes
% advice change <sup>^</sup>	-24%
Plaice in Division 7.e	
Catches of Division 7.e stock caught in Division 7.d	119 tonnes
Area based discard rate	23%
Catch of plaice in Division 7.e corresponding to the advice for the stock	809 tonnes
Projected landings of plaice in Division 7.e corresponding to the advice for the stock***	621 tonnes

\*\*  $A_{y+1} = A_y \times r \times f \times b \times m$

\*\*\*  $[A_{\text{advised}} \text{ for } 2025] \times [1 - \text{discard rate}]$ .

<sup>^</sup> Advice value for 2025 relative to the advice value for 2024 (1219 tonnes).

The current advice has decreased by 24% compared to last year’s advice because of a declining trend in the recent stock biomass index and because catch length data indicates that fishing pressure is above the  $F_{\text{MSY}}$  proxy.

### Basis of the advice

**Table 2** Plaice in Division 7.e. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	MSY approach
Management plan	ICES is aware of the multiannual management plan (MAP) which has been adopted by the EU for this stock (EU, 2019) and which ICES considers to be precautionary. There is no agreed shared management plan between the UK and the EU for this stock, and ICES provides advice according to ICES MSY approach.

### Quality of the assessment

Some uncertainty in the catch data exist because of the assumed migration patterns, but the current advice is based on an empirical harvest control rule and not affected by total catch estimates.

### Issues relevant for the advice

Mature individuals from the plaice stock in Division 7.e and the stock in Subarea 4 and Subdivision 20 migrate to Division 7.d in the first quarter. Thus, a proportion of catch of these two stocks occurs in Division 7.d. For the ple.27.7e, ple.27.7d, and ple.27.420 stocks, the catch advice is given at stock level but the catch corresponding to each area is provided in the catch scenario table. Of the plaice caught in Division 7.d, 12.69% is assumed to originate from the North Sea and 3.81% from the western English Channel (average ratio calculated over the years 2003–2023); both of these predicted catches are added to the predicted values for the ple.27.7d stock and applied to total catch, projected landings, and projected discards. Following ICES advice basis, catches in Division 7.d will consist of 2 600 tonnes from the ple.27.7d stock, plus 395 tonnes from the ple.27.420 stock and 119 tonnes from the ple.27.7e stock. All catch scenarios for ple.27.7e and ple.27.420 stocks assume that fishing opportunities for ple.27.7d stock in 2025 correspond to the “ICES basis for the advice scenario”.

Until 2023, a single TAC covered ICES divisions 7.e and 7.d. Since 2024, the TAC includes considerations of how much can be fished in each of the divisions 7.e and 7.d (EU, 2024).

### Reference points

**Table 3** Plaice in Division 7.e. Reference points, relative values, and their technical basis.

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
MSY approach	MSY $B_{\text{trigger}}$	0.39	Biomass index trigger value, defined as $I_{\text{trigger}} = I_{\text{loss}} \times 1.4$ , where $I_{\text{loss}}$ is the lowest observed historical biomass index value, $\text{kg hr}^{-1} \text{m beam}^{-1}$	ICES (2024a, 2022)
	$F_{\text{MSY proxy}}$	1	$L_{F=M} / L_{\text{mean}}$ ; MSY proxy reference length ( $L_{F=M} = 34.4 \text{ cm}$ ) divided by the mean catch length	ICES (2024a, 2022)
Precautionary approach	$B_{\text{lim}}$	Not defined		
	$B_{\text{pa}}$	Not defined		
	$F_{\text{lim}}$	Not defined		
	$F_{\text{pa}}$	Not defined		
Management plan	$SSB_{\text{mgt}}$	Not applicable		
	$F_{\text{mgt}}$	Not applicable		

### Basis of the assessment

**Table 4** Plaice in Division 7.e. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	3 (ICES, 2023)
Assessment type	Survey biomass trend applying the <i>rfb</i> rule for advice* (ICES, 2024b).
Input data	Commercial catch (international landings and discards, length frequencies from catch sampling); one survey index: UK-FSP (B4381)
Discards and bycatch	Discards estimates are raised to total international commercial catches. Discard information is available since 2012.
Indicators	Survey index (UK-Q1SWBeam [B2732])
Other information	Inter-benchmark in 2015 (IBPWCFat2; ICES, 2015)
Working group	Working Group for the Celtic Seas Ecoregion (WGCSE)

\* [View assessment in Transparent Assessment Framework \(TAF\)](#)

**History of the advice, catch, and management**

**Table 5** Plaice in Division 7.e. ICES advice, the agreed TAC, official landings, and ICES estimates of landings and discards. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice 7.e stock	Landings corresponding to advice 7.e stock	Catch corresponding to advice 7.e area	Landings corresponding to advice 7.e area	Agreed TAC 7.e	Official landings in 7.e	ICES discards in 7.e**	ICES landings in 7.e**
1987	Precautionary TAC		6800				1922	-	1958
1988	Precautionary TAC		6900				2328	-	2458
1989	No increase in effort; TAC		11700				1801	-	2358
1990	No increase in F; TAC		10700				1975	-	2593
1991	50% reduction in F in Division 7.e		8800				1383	-	1848
1992	Status quo F ( $F_{sq}$ ) gives over mean SSB		2000				1568	-	1624
1993	Not outside safe biological limits		-				1444	-	1417
1994	Within safe biological limits		-				1285	-	1156
1995	No increase in F		1400				1158	-	1031
1996	60% reduction in F		600				1138	-	1044
1997	60% reduction in F		510				1374	-	1323
1998	60% reduction in F		500				1242	-	1131
1999	Reduce F below $F_{pa}$		1100				959	-	1299
2000	Reduce F below $F_{pa}$		< 1080				1290	-	1281
2001	Reduce F below $F_{pa}$		< 930				1112	-	1106
2002	Reduce F below $F_{pa}$		< 890				1247	-	1257
2003	At least 50% reduction in F		< 530				1241	-	1277
2004	A 55% reduction in F		< 660				1142	-	1212
2005	A 64% reduction in F		< 580				1133	-	1203
2006	Substantial reduction in catch		-				1240	-	1313
2007	Substantial reduction in catch		-				966	-	1003
2008	Substantial reduction in catch		-				893	-	976
2009	Same advice as last year		-				977	-	923
2010	Substantial reduction in catch		-				1123	-	1092
2011	See scenarios		-				1354	-	1334
2012	MSY framework ( $F_{MSY}$ )		< 1440				1364	380	1366
2013	MSY framework ( $F_{MSY}$ )		-		< 2100		1360	291	1351
2014	MSY transition		-		< 1397		1340	1006	1341
2015	MSY framework ( $F_{MSY}$ )	< 1885	< 1546		< 1318		1249	1172	1246

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice 7.e stock	Landings corresponding to advice 7.e stock	Catch corresponding to advice 7.e area	Landings corresponding to advice 7.e area	Agreed TAC 7.e	Official landings in 7.e	ICES discards in 7.e**	ICES landings in 7.e**
2016	Precautionary approach (increase recent advised catch by no more than 20%)	≤ 2262	≤ 1697	≤ 1944	≤ 1458		1780	500	1777
2017	Precautionary approach (increase recent advised catch by no more than 20%)	≤ 2714	≤ 1391	≤ 2454	≤ 1258		1910	593	1915
2018	Precautionary approach (increase recent advised catch by no more than 20%)	≤ 3257	≤ 2239	≤ 2946	≤ 2025		1644	499	1644
2019	Precautionary approach	≤ 3648		≤ 3283			1523	169	1520
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 2721		≤ 2456			1277	447	1275
2021	Precautionary approach	≤ 2177		≤ 1961			1329	117	1331
2022	Precautionary approach	≤ 1742		≤ 1572			1102*	358	1103
2023	MSY approach	≤ 1219		≤ 1104			1103*	129	1104
2024	MSY approach	≤ 1219		≤ 1104		1083			
2025	MSY approach	≤ 927		≤ 809					
2026	MSY approach	≤ 927		≤ 809					

\* Preliminary.

\*\* The values correspond to the amount taken in Division 7.e and do not include the catch taken in Division 7.d.

### History of the catch and landings

**Table 6** Plaice in Division 7.e. Catch distribution of plaice in 7.e by fleet in 2023 as estimated by ICES. The values correspond to the amount taken in Division 7.e and do not include the catch taken in Division 7.d.

Total catch	Landings				Discards			
	Beam trawl	Otter trawl	Fixed nets	Other gear	Beam trawl	Otter trawl	Fixed nets	Other gear
1233 tonnes	77%	18%	3%	2%	44%	51%	3%	2%
	1104 tonnes				129 tonnes			

**Table 7** Plaice in Division 7.e. History of commercial landings by country and ICES estimates of landings and discards. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	Belgium	Netherlands	France	UK (E & W) incl. CIs	Others	Official total	ICES landings in 7.e	7.e stock caught in 7.d*	ICES landings for the stock**	ICES discards for the stock**
1976	5	-	323	312	-	640	640	-	640	
1977	3	-	336	363	-	702	702	-	702	
1978	3	-	314	467	-	784	784	-	784	
1979	2	-	458	515	-	975	977	-	977	
1980	23	-	325	609	9	966	1079	99	1178	
1981	27	-	537	953	-	1517	1501	175	1676	
1982	81	-	363	1109	-	1553	1688	190	1878	
1983	20	-	371	1195	-	1586	1495	219	1714	
1984	24	-	278	1144	-	1446	1547	211	1758	
1985	39	-	197	1122	-	1358	1441	236	1677	
1986	26	-	276	1389	-	1691	1810	268	2078	
1987	68	-	435	1419	-	1922	1958	314	2272	
1988	90	-	584	1654	-	2328	2458	377	2835	
1989	89	-	-	1712	< 1	1801	2358	384	2742	
1990	82	-	-	1891	2	1975	2593	392	2985	
1991	57	-	-	1326	-	1383	1848	335	2183	
1992	25	-	419	1110	14	1568	1624	258	1882	
1993	56	-	284	1080	24	1444	1417	197	1614	
1994	10	-	277	998	-	1285	1156	248	1404	
1995	13	-	288	857	-	1158	1031	216	1247	
1996	4	-	279	855	-	1138	1044	222	1266	
1997	6	-	329	1038	1	1374	1323	260	1583	
1998	22	-	327	892	1	1242	1131	215	1346	
1999	12	-	-	947	-	959	1299	244	1543	
2000	4	-	360	926	< 1	1290	1281	345	1625	
2001	12	-	303	797	-	1112	1106	204	1310	
2002	27	-	242	978	-	1247	1257	215	1472	
2003	39	-	216	985	1	1241	1277	110	1387	
2004	46	-	184	912	-	1142	1212	126	1337	
2005	48	-	198	887	-	1133	1203	117	1319	
2006	52	-	223	965	-	1240	1313	97	1411	
2007	84	-	202	680	-	966	1003	143	1146	
2008	66	-	148	679	-	893	976	135	1112	
2009	53	2	191	731	-	977	923	101	1024	
2010	51	2	227	843	-	1123	1092	116	1208	
2011	141	3	274	936	-	1354	1334	83	1417	
2012	134	2	224	1004	-	1364	1366	126	1492	448
2013	97	1	221	1041	-	1360	1351	121	1472	351
2014	41	-	323	976	-	1340	1341	149	1490	1133
2015	111	1	224	912	1	1249	1246	178	1424	1276
2016	145	< 1	204	1430	-	1780	1777	235	2013	618
2017	151	< 1	153	1605	1	1910	1915	213	2128	821
2018	143	3	118	1377	3	1644	1644	236	1880	633
2019	73	2	97	1351	< 1	1523	1520	204	1725	366
2020	73	1	79	1124	-	1277	1275	98	1373	514
2021	107	1	91	1130	-	1329	1331	72	1403	211
2022***	106	< 1	80	916	-	1102	1103	85	1188	536
2023***	108	< 1	74	921	-	1103	1104	45	1148	268

\* Migration correction (15% of the mature population caught in quarter 1 in Division 7.d) added to stock.

\*\* Includes the migration correction.

\*\*\* Preliminary official landings.

**Summary of the assessment**

**Table 8** Plaice in Division 7.e. Assessment summary. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	Biomass index (kg hr <sup>-1</sup> m beam <sup>-1</sup> )	Length-based fishing pressure proxy ( $L_{F=M}/L_{mean}$ )	ICES landings*	ICES discards*
1980			1178	
1981			1676	
1982			1878	
1983			1714	
1984			1758	
1985			1677	
1986			2078	
1987			2272	
1988			2835	
1989			2742	
1990			2985	
1991			2183	
1992			1882	
1993			1614	
1994			1404	
1995			1247	
1996			1266	
1997			1583	
1998			1346	
1999			1543	
2000			1626	
2001			1310	
2002			1472	
2003	0.50		1387	
2004	0.70		1337	
2005	0.50		1319	
2006	0.55		1411	
2007	0.28		1146	
2008	0.39		1112	
2009	0.53		1024	
2010	0.74		1207	
2011	0.81		1417	
2012	0.90		1492	448
2013	1.31		1472	351
2014	2.18	1.09	1490	1133
2015	1.71	1.05	1424	1276
2016	1.36	1.02	2013	618
2017	1.33	1.04	2128	821
2018	1.13	1.04	1880	633
2019	0.84	1.00	1725	366
2020	0.60	1.06	1373	514
2021	1.03	1.07	1403	211
2022	0.76	1.10	1188	536
2023	0.68	1.09	1148	268

\* Including the migration correction.

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