

Lesser-spotted dogfish (*Scyliorhinus canicula*) in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j (West of Scotland, Irish Sea, southern Celtic Seas)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, landings should be no more than 4 781 tonnes in each of the years 2026 and 2027. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catches.

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 on the stock is below $F_{MSY\ proxy}$, and the stock-size indicator is above $I_{trigger}$.

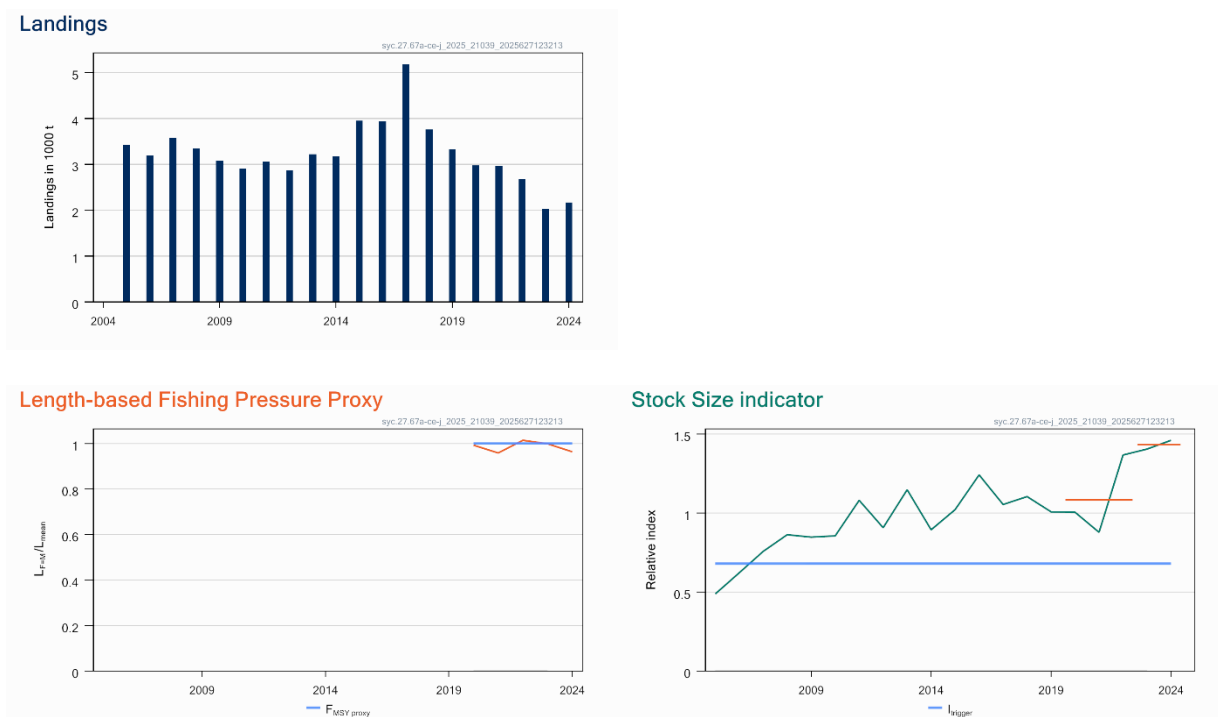


Figure 1 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. Summary of the stock assessment. Landings over time. The length-based fishing pressure proxy $L_{F=M}/L_{mean}$ (inverse of the indicator ratio, f) is used for the evaluation of the exploitation status. Stock-size indicator is the mean normalized total biomass index from the average of four surveys (EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 [G9527], IE-IGFS-WIBTS-Q4 [G7212], SP-PORC-WIBTS-Q3 [G5768], and UK(E&W)-BTS-Q3 [B6596]). The horizontal orange lines indicate the average of the stock-size indicator for 2023 to 2024 and 2020 to 2022.

Catch scenarios

ICES framework for category 3 stocks was applied (rfb rule, method 2.1, ICES, 2025a). A combined survey biomass index was used as an indicator of stock size. The advice is based on the recent advised landings (2025), 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 considered and applied to limit the increase in landings advice to 20%. The discard rate is unquantified.

Table 1 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. The basis for the catch scenarios*.

Previous landings advice A_y (2025)	3 984 tonnes	
Stock biomass trend		
Index A (2023, 2024)	1.43	
Index B (2020, 2021, 2022)	1.08	
r: index ratio (A/B)	1.32	
Fishing pressure		
Mean catch length ($L_{\text{mean}} = L_{2024}$)	55.4 cm	
MSY proxy length ($L_{F=M}$)	53.3 cm	
Fishing pressure proxy ($L_{F=M} / L_{\text{mean}}$)	0.96	
f: multiplier for relative mean length in catches ($L_{\text{mean}} / L_{F=M}$)	1.04	
Biomass safeguard		
Last index value (I_{2024})	1.46	
Index trigger value ($I_{\text{trigger}} = I_{\text{loss}} \times 1.4$)	0.68	
b: multiplier for index relative to trigger min $\{I_{2024} / I_{\text{trigger}}, 1\}$	1	
Precautionary multiplier to maintain biomass above B_{lim} with 95% probability		
m: multiplier (generic multiplier based on life history)	0.95	
RFB calculation**	5 194 tonnes	
Stability clause (+20%/–30% compared to A_y , only applied if $b = 1$)	Applied	1.2
Discard rate	Unquantified	
Landings advice for 2026 and 2027 ($A_y \times$ stability clause)	4 781 tonnes	
% advice change***	+20%	

* 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.

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

*** Advice value for 2026 and 2027 relative to the advice value for 2024 and 2025 (3984 tonnes).

The increase in advice (20%) is due to the increase in the stock-size indicator.

Basis of the advice

Table 2 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for lesser-spotted dogfish in this area

Quality of the assessment

The four trawl surveys used as input data to the assessment cover most of the stock area distribution and sample mature fish effectively. The area covered by the UK(E&W)-BTS-Q3 survey was reduced because of COVID-19 restrictions (Division 7.a was not sampled) in 2020, and those data were excluded (ICES, 2023). The EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 survey data series was updated in 2025, which resulted in minor changes to the annual biomass index, while the overall trend remained unchanged.

Commercial catch length data for 2022 were updated in 2024 for UK.

Given the high variability in estimated discard quantities, these data are not considered appropriate for providing catch advice although the length data are used in the calculations of length-based indicators.

Discard survival of 78% in otter trawl fisheries has been estimated (Rodríguez-Cabello *et al.*, 2005). Data are limited for other métiers, notably gillnets. This discard survivability was applied to discard length data for the years 2020 to 2024 in the 2025 assessment. Consequently, L_c and $L_{F=M}$ were recalculated in 2025 using pooled data from 2020 to 2022 as per the 2023 assessment.

Issues relevant for the advice

Discarding is variable between fishing fleets and has not been fully quantified for all the time-series. It is considered that discards are generally several times higher than landed quantities (ICES, 2023).

Reference points

Table 3 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. Reference points, values, and their technical basis.

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	I_{trigger}	0.68	$I_{\text{loss}} \times 1.4$, where I_{loss} is the lowest observed relative index value (2005), the value of which may vary each year	ICES (2025b)
	$F_{\text{MSY proxy}}$	$\frac{L_{\text{mean}}}{L_{F=M}} = 1^*$	The value of M/k was fixed at 1.5. $L_{F=M}$ is based on L_c (length at 50% of modal abundance), which was recalculated in 2025 from pooled data (2020–2022)	ICES (2025b)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	Not defined		
	B_{PA}	Not defined		
	F_{PA}	Not relevant		
Management plan	SSB_{mgt}	Not applicable		
	F_{mgt}	Not applicable		

* No reference points are defined for this stock in terms of absolute values. The LBI-estimated values of the ratio $L_{\text{mean}}/L_{F=M}$ are used to estimate exploitation status relative to the proxy MSY reference point.

Basis of the assessment

Table 4 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	3 (ICES, 2023a)
Assessment type	Trends from combined biomass index and length-based indicator (ICES, 2025b)
Input data	Commercial landings. Survey: combined standardized total biomass index from EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 [G9527], IE-IGFS-WIBTS-Q4 [G7212], SP-PORC-WIBTS-Q3 [G5768] and UK(E&W)-BTS-Q3 [B6596]. Growth parameters: $L_{\text{inf}} = 87.4$ cm; $k = 0.1$ year ⁻¹ (ICES, 2023b). Length data from commercial catches 2020 to 2024. Discard survival rate 78% (Rodríguez-Cabello <i>et al.</i> , 2005).
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified
Indicators	Length-based indicator
Other information	None
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF)

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 5 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. ICES advice and estimated landings. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Landings corresp. to advice	ICES estimated landings
2005	No advice		3426
2006	No advice		3195
2007	No advice		3579
2008	No advice		3344
2009	Status quo catch		3080
2010	No new advice, same as for 2009		2909
2011	Maintain catch at recent level		3064
2012	No new advice, same as for 2011		2868
2013	Increase catch by maximum 20% + no species-specific total allowable catch (TAC)		3219
2014	No new advice, same as for 2013		3176
2015	No new advice, same as for 2014		3948

Year	ICES advice	Landings corresp. to advice	ICES estimated landings
2016	Precautionary approach	Increase by no more than 18% compared to the average catches in 2012–2014	3932
2017	Biennial advice	Same catch value as advised for 2016	5175
2018	Precautionary approach	≤ 4296	3762
2019	Precautionary approach (same advice as for 2018)	≤ 4296	3325
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 3540	2981
2021	Same advice as in 2020	≤ 3540	2956
2022	Precautionary approach	≤ 3596	2678
2023	Precautionary approach	≤ 3596	2032
2024	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	≤ 3984	2171
2025	MSY approach	≤ 3984	
2026	MSY approach	≤ 4781	
2027	MSY approach	≤ 4781	

History of the catch and landings

The distribution of this species may extend into the NEAFC regulatory areas (RAs); the main component of the stock, however, occurs in shelf seas, and catches from the RAs are considered to be negligible with no reported landings.

Table 6 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. Catch distribution by fleet in 2024 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2024)	Landings			Discards
Unquantified	All other bottom trawls 79%	Beam trawls 13%	Other gears 8%	Unquantified
	2 171 tonnes			

Table 7 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. ICES estimates of landings by country (in tonnes). Blank cell = no reported landings; 0 =< 0.5 t

Year	Belgium	Spain	France	UK	Ireland	Netherlands	Total*
2005	240	34	2936	123	92		3426
2006	225	33	2873	22	42	0	3195
2007	199	37	3101	115	128		3579
2008	165	12	2728	191	248		3344
2009	168	17	2479	226	190	0	3080
2010	165	28	2368	111	232	6	2909
2011	227	48	2359	111	317	1	3064
2012	236	109	2060	241	221	1	2868
2013	216	26	2284	380	310	4	3219
2014	141	18	2292	389	336	0	3176
2015	252	20	2024	1282	367	3	3948
2016	194	9	1969	1333	425	1	3932
2017	209	12	3355	1075	524	0	5175
2018	181	25	1518	1628	411	0	3762
2019	194	7	1376	1510	235	4	3325
2020	176	6	1210	1364	224	2	2981
2021	175	3	1305	1250	222	1	2956
2022	192	6	1277	1058	144	0	2678
2023	187	8	996	767	70	4	2032
2024	174	8	1071	763	155		2171

*Includes landings from Division 7.k, which are usually < 0.5 tonnes per year.

Summary of the assessment

Table 8 Lesser-spotted dogfish in Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.e–j. Assessment summary. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	Stock-size indicator	Fishing pressure proxy ($L_{F=M} / L_{mean}$)	ICES landings
2005	0.49		3426
2006	0.62		3195
2007	0.76		3579
2008	0.86		3344
2009	0.85		3080
2010	0.86		2909
2011	1.08		3064
2012	0.91		2868
2013	1.15		3219
2014	0.89		3176
2015	1.02		3948
2016	1.24		3932
2017	1.05		5175
2018	1.10		3762
2019	1.01		3325
2020	1.01	0.99	2981
2021	0.88	0.96	2956
2022	1.37	1.01	2678
2023	1.41	1.00	2032
2024	1.46	0.96	2171

Sources and references

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[Download the stock assessment data and figures](#)

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