

Explanations on the ICES advice for 2024

North Sea herring



The spawning stock biomass of North Sea herring has fluctuated between 1.2 and 2.4 million tonnes since the late 1990s. Since 1996, the spawning stock biomass has been within safe biological limits and fishing mortality has been consistently below F_{MSY} .

Despite sufficient stock biomass, herring recruitment has been below average since 2003. Only 2013 produced a stronger year class. A somewhat larger recruitment is also calculated for 2022. From herring larval catches on the spawning grounds it is evident that sufficient larvae continue to hatch. However, in many years these do not reach the juvenile herring stage. The reasons for this are not conclusively clear. As a result of low juvenile production, the stock has declined over the last few years, but stays above biomass limits.

For 2024, ICES recommends a maximum catch of 532,166 tonnes (of which 522,832 tonnes are for human consumption fisheries) under the MSY approach. This is 31.8% more than the maximum catch set in 2023 for the human consumption fleet and 28.3% more than last year's ICES recommendation.

In addition to the fishery for human consumption (A fleet), there is also an industrial fishery in the North Sea for the production of fish meal and fish oil (B fleet). As juvenile herring are the main by-catch in the sprat fishery, this fleet segment has its own catch limit for herring by-catch (for 2024 this is 9,334t according to the ICES recommendation). In addition, herring stocks from the North Sea and the Baltic Sea mix and are caught together off the southern Norwegian coast, in the Skagerrak/Kattegat and in the western Baltic Sea. For Baltic herring from the western Baltic Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, ICES recommends a fishing ban for 2024 due to the poor stock status. Therefore, the corresponding recommendations for catch shares of North Sea herring in the areas mentioned (so-called C and D fleet) have been set to zero.

Contact:

Dr. Norbert Rohlf

Institute of Sea Fisheries, 27572 Bremerhaven

Phone: +49 (0)471 94460-331, Mail: norbert.rohlf@thuenen.de

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