

## Explanations on the ICES advice for 2024



### Redfish Greenland/Irminger Sea

The German fleet fishes for redfish mainly on the Greenland shelf and until 2020 in the Irminger Sea. Two redfish species, the deep redfish (*Sebastes mentella*) and the golden redfish (*S. norvegicus*, formerly *S. marinus*), occur there in several stocks. The status of these stocks varies. On the East Greenland shelf, the two species are also caught together. Distinguishing between *S. norvegicus* and *S. mentella* is often difficult, resulting in misreporting between the co-occurring species or both species being reported together as "redfish". This complicates stock assessment and management.

The *S. norvegicus* stock on the East Greenland shelf is part of the stock largely found on the Iceland shelf. The spawning stock biomass has been within safe biological limits since 2003 and has been fished according to the MSY principle since 2006. The ICES catch recommendation of no more than 41,286 tonnes for 2024 is 62% above the maximum recommended catch for 2023 of 25,545 tonnes and follows the ICES MSY approach. The significant increase in the maximum recommended catch results from a new assessment approach adopted in a benchmark in 2023. In the medium term, however, there is concern about recruitment to the stock, as this has been low since 2014. It is expected that the spawning stock biomass will decrease in the future as a result.

The exact status of the *S. mentella* stock on the Greenland shelf cannot be accurately assessed. The stock has declined sharply since 2010 and has not improved in subsequent years. As the most recent Greenland Shallow Water Survey biomass index values from 2020 were close to zero and the index from 2022 was not much higher, ICES recommends zero catch from this stock in 2024.

In the neighbouring Irminger Sea, two other *S. mentella* stocks occur, which are caught with pelagic trawls. These two stocks have also declined so much that ICES has recommended no fishing for the shallow stock since 2010 and for the deep stock since 2017. In 2021, the stock status of the shallow *S. mentella* stock in the Irminger Sea could be reassessed for the first time since 2013. The result of the survey was slightly more positive, as the resulting biomass index showed the highest value since 2005, but remained at a low level in historical comparison. Despite the slightly more positive assessment, the recommendation of a zero catch remains, as the slightly more positive result must first be confirmed in the next scientific survey. The deep

stock (> 500 m water depth) has been fished since the 1990s with a fishing mortality rate well above  $F_{MSY}$ . The results of the above-mentioned survey in 2021 show the lowest biomass value for the deep stock since the beginning of the survey. While e.g. Russia continues to fish for these stocks, the EU currently does not allow fishing for either stock.

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