

Ms Charlina Vitcheva  
Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries  
European Commission  
Jozef II-straat 99  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire, Zoetermeer, 21 May 2024

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

**Subject: Joint-Recommendation NWWAC-PelAC Sprat in English Channel (areas 7d and 7e)**

ICES published advice on sprat in areas 7d and 7e (English Channel) on 18 April 2024, advising catches of no more than 5 250 t from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 following the MSY-approach.

Following the established [Gentlemen's Agreement between the NWW and Pelagic ACs](#) agreed on March 31 2022, both ACs acknowledge that any recommendation on sprat in areas 7d and 7e fall under the direct competence of the NWWAC, in accordance with Annex III of the CFP.

The NWWAC proposes the following recommendation for this stock, which is endorsed by the Pelagic AC and is the result of a joint-exercise, whereby the NWWAC advises on bycatch issues and the PelAC advises on the directed fishery.

**Proposed recommendation for NWWAC (supported by the PelAC)**

The NWWAC and PelAC recommend that the TAC for sprat in the English Channel is set according to the ICES advice.

The advice mentions the stock structure of sprat populations in the Celtic Seas ecoregion is unknown. The ACs fully support the valuable ongoing genetics stock-identification projects being carried out to better understand the stock structure of the sprat populations in the Celtic Seas ecoregion.

In addition, the PelAC will be examining the possibility of developing a management strategy for sprat in the Celtic Sea ecoregion once this stock-ID work is completed and the delineation of the stock boundaries is identified.

Given the key role that the stock has in the NWW ecosystem, for example as a forage fish for many predatory species, the ACs believe it would be important to incorporate ecosystem-based considerations in its management and assessment, and therefore encourage all the concerned parties to develop a roadmap for this purpose.



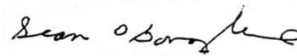
Additionally, the ACs consider that the development of future spatial measures on sprat should be proposed by managers and evaluated by ICES, focusing on their impact on the health of this critical species as well as on the impacts of the fishery on other targeted species.

Finally, in the context of improved management of the directed fishery, the ACs note that stock-ID work is becoming urgent, and that this work should be carried out as a matter of priority before publishing ICES advice for Sprat Subarea 6 and divisions 7.a–c and 7.f–k (West of Scotland, southern Celtic Seas) which has questionable scientific basis. The NWWAC and PelAC suggest that the current sprat management units should be evaluated by ICES.

Yours sincerely,



Emiel Brouckaert  
NWWAC Chairman



Sean O'Donoghue  
PelAC Chairman

