



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Sea Fisheries Sustainability Impact Assessment Stakeholder Consultation

01 September 2023

Purpose of the Consultation

Stakeholders are invited to comment on the ICES advice for fish stocks and the European Commission's Communication "*Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2024*" and the accompanying Staff Working Document.

The closing date for submissions is close of business 03 October, 2023.

All submissions received, subject to legal and editorial considerations, will be published on the FishingNET website.

Documents accompanying this Consultation Paper

- Table prepared by the Marine Institute indicating the Fishing Mortality and Spawning Stock Biomass of fish stocks relative to their reference points (Table 3)
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council
- Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2024
- Commission staff working document accompanying the document:
Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council
- Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2024

Background

Fishing opportunities (Total Allowable Catches or TACs) for most of the commercial fish stocks of interest to Ireland are agreed on annual basis in the EU Fisheries Council of Ministers on the basis of a proposal produced by the European Commission. In order to examine the implications for Ireland, a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) of the proposal is conducted and brought before the Dáil before fisheries negotiations commence. The Minister presents the SIA and directly hears the views and advice of members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Agriculture, Food and Marine to inform position in EU/UK consultations, Coastal States consultations and at EU Fisheries Council.

The SIA is an important step in Ireland's preparation for the TAC setting process. The SIA draws conclusions from a consultation process with all major stakeholders and expert contributions from the Marine Institute (MI) and Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM). The objective of the SIA is to look at the overall impacts the proposal could have on the sustainability of the fishing sector from a biological, economic and social perspective.

In the past, the SIA was conducted in October/November after the EU Commission published its proposal for fishing opportunities for the coming year. In previous years, the Commission's proposal would include the proposed TACs and quotas for most stocks, except inshore and shellfish stocks not subject to TACs & Quotas.

In addition, where advice for a stock had not yet been received, or international negotiations for stocks were still ongoing, the fishing opportunities would be presented as *pro memoria* (*pm*) in the proposal. This has been the case for stocks such as Mackerel, Blue Whiting and Atlanto-Scandian Herring. These stocks are jointly managed by the EU and the other Coastal States in whose waters these stocks are present. The TACs for these stocks are set at the Coastal States' negotiations, where the Commission negotiates on behalf of the Member States. The Commission has exclusive competence to negotiate fishery agreements on behalf of the EU Member States.

Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the majority of stocks of relevance to Ireland – which were previously exclusively Union resources – are now shared resources under international law. This means that the Commission, on behalf of the EU, must consult with the UK (and in some cases both the UK and Norway) on the setting of fishing opportunities for these shared stocks. As a result, when the Commission publishes its TAC and Quota proposal, these shared stocks will be listed as *pro memoria* (*pm*).

SIA Format and Process

The new EU-UK consultation process has resulted in changes to the timing and arrangements of the EU's TAC setting process. Consequently, the Minister has adjusted the timing and procedures of the SIA process so that it can continue to provide a meaningful and effective contribution to how Ireland prepares for negotiations on fishing opportunities.

The Minister aims to carry out the SIA process before the consultations with the UK commence, in advance of the Coastal States consultations and before the Commission publishes its proposal for 2024 Fishing Opportunities. Due to this, the advice for some fish stocks has not yet been finalised by ICES. However, carrying out the process at this stage will facilitate input from stakeholders, analysis by BIM and MI and the views of the Oireachtas in time for the start of the TAC setting process.

The scientific analysis of the Sustainability Impact Assessment will be based on the available ICES advice and will also consider relevant reports of the EU Commission's Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).

The consultation with stakeholders will be based on the ICES advice. The ICES advice forms the basis of the scientific advice used by the Commission in proposing TACs and informs the EU's negotiating position for consultations with Third Countries, such as the UK. Therefore, it is the most suitable option for conducting the SIA, in the absence of a proposal from the Commission.

Table 1 (below) lists the stocks for which ICES has published advice for 2024. This table compares the ICES advice for 2024 and lists Ireland's 2023 quota for these stocks. For clarity, a table showing the stocks for which we do not yet have advice is also included (Table 2). The ICES advice for Mackerel, Horse mackerel, *Nephrops* and Blue Whiting – some of Ireland's most important commercial stocks – is awaited.

A more detailed table, setting down the Fishing Mortality and Spawning Stock Biomass of each stock relative to their reference points is also attached for information (Table 3).

Also attached is the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council "Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2023" and the accompanying Commission Staff Working Document which were published on 14 June, 2023. This Communication is the Commission's first step in preparing for the TAC setting process and highlights the approach that the Commission will take for setting the TAC and Quota proposal and for consultations on fishing opportunities with

Third Countries. These documents give an insight into the Commission's objectives and guiding principles.

Table 1. ICES advice for 2024 that is currently available.

ICES stock	Advice for 2024	TAC code	2023 TAC	2023 IE quota
Cod 6a	0	COD/5BE6A	1,210	188
Cod 6b	11	COD/5W6-14	74	14
Haddock 3a,4,6a*	149,024	HAD/03A.	3,589	0
		HAD/5BC6A.	6,507	887
		HAD/2AC4.	58,402	0
Whiting 6a	3,879	WHG/56-14	2,636	802
Megrim 4,6a	7,900	LEZ/56-14	5,499	605
Saithe 4,6,3a*	73,815	POK/2C3A4	53,374	0
		POK/56-14	5,538	357
Haddock 7a	2,263	HAD/07A.	2,648	1,003
Whiting 7a	0	WHG/07A.	721	269
Plaice 7a	1,902	PLE/07A.	2,039	767
Sole 7a	0	SOL/07A.	605	94
Cod 7e-k	0	COD/7XAD3 4	644	336
Haddock 7b-k	8,252	HAD/7X7A3 4	11,901	2,275
Whiting 7bk	0	WHG/7X7A- C	9,650	3,877
Whiting 7d	25,363			
Plaice 7bc	15	PLE/7BC.	19	17
Plaice 7fg	402	PLE/7FG.	402	147
Plaice 7hjk	132	PLE/7HJK.	132	55
Sole 7bc	15	SOL/7BC.	19	17
Sole 7fg	1,267	SOL/7FG.	1,338	39
Sole 7hjk	170	SOL/7HJK.	213	96
Hake Northern*	72,839	HKE/03A.	2,490	0
		HKE/571214	46,335	2,485
		HKE/2AC4-C	2,883	0
		HKE/04-N.	1,870	0
		HKE/8ABDE.	31,422	0
Anglerfish (black) 7,8 + Anglerfish (white) 7,8	25,579 + 35,502 = 61,081	ANF/07.	45,724	3,283
Megrim 7b-k,8abde + Megrim (4-spot) 7,8	23,303 + 867 = 24.170	LEZ/07.	21,348	3,297
		LEZ/8ABDE.	2,111	0
Pollack 6,7*	0	POL/07.	6,410	453
		POL/56-14	125	18
Small-eyed ray 7fg	86	RJE/7FG.	86	8

ICES stock	Advice for 2024	TAC code	2023 TAC	2023 IE quota
Undulate ray 7de	4,675	RJU/7DE.	3,192	332
Undulate ray 7bj	0	No TAC	No TAC	No TAC
Blonde ray 7afg	573	SRX/67AKXD §	9,797	1,207
Blonde ray 7e	213			
Cuckoo ray 6,7,8abd	8,064			
Sandy ray 6,7	27			
Shagreen ray 6,7	134			
Spotted ray 6,7bj	36			
Spotted ray 7ae-h	814			
Thornback ray 6	96			
Thornback ray 7afg	1,833			
Thornback ray 7e	170			
Herring 6aN	1,454	HER/5B6AN B	1,212	161
Herring 6aS,7bc	2,270	HER/6AS7BC	1,892	1,720
Herring 7aN	7,279	HER/07A/M M	7,309	439
Herring 7aS,7g-k	0	HER/7G-K.	869	750
Ling NEA*	13,317	LIN/04-N.	500	0
		LIN/03A-C.	144	0
		LIN/04-C.	2,577	0
		LIN/6X14.	12,371	865
Spurdog NEA	17,855	DGS/15X14	10,889	1,871

Note:

*In cases where the ICES stock advice covers multiple TAC areas, the ICES advice for 2024 is presented, along with the proportions of the TAC and IE quota for 2023 per TAC area.

‡ While ICES provides individual advice for each stock within the Skates and Rays in the Celtic Seas assemblage, Skates and Rays in Division 6a, 6b, 7a-c and 7e-k are managed under a single TAC for all species.

§ The advice for stocks in the Skates and Rays group listed in Table 1 was issued in 2022 for 2023 and 2024. Advice for Blonde ray 4,6 and Other rays 6,7 will be published later this year.

Table 2. Stocks of relevance to Ireland for which catch advice for 2024 has not yet been published. Note that Albacore tuna advice is not provided by ICES; this is ICCAT advice and has not yet been published.

ICES stock		Advice for 2024	TAC code	2023 TAC	2023 IE quota
Haddock 6b		NA	HAD/6B121 4	4,078	264
Plaice 6		NA	PLE/56-14	592	224
Sole 6		NA	SOL/56-14	57	46
Anglerfish 3a,4,6		NA	ANF/2AC4-C	7,211	0
		NA	ANF/04-N.	900	0
		NA	ANF/56-14	4,082	343
Megrim 6b		NA	LEZ/2AC4-C	2,723	0
Cod 7a		NA	COD/07A.	165	83
Saithe 7-10		NA	POK/7/3411	2,541	1,404
Nephrops 6 no FU	Area 6†	NA	NEP/5BC6.	13,311	179
Nephrops FU11		NA			
Nephrops FU12		NA			
Nephrops FU13		NA			
Nephrops 7 no FU	Area 7†	NA	NEP/07.	18,353	6,027
Nephrops FU14		NA			
Nephrops FU15		NA			
Nephrops FU16		NA			
Nephrops FU17		NA			
Nephrops FU19		NA			
Nephrops FU20-21		NA			
Nephrops FU22		NA			
Blonde ray 4a,6	Skates & Rays in the Celtic Sea (Sub-areas 6 & 7, excluding	NA	SRX/67AKXD §	9,797	1,207
Other rays 6,7		NA			

	Division 7d) ‡				
Albacore tuna NEA		NA	ALB/AN05N	37,801	3,398
Blue whiting NEA		NA	WHB sum quota	946,280	48,761
Bluefin tuna		NA	BFT/AE45W M	40,570	0
Boarfish 6,7,8		NA	BOR/678-	22,791	15,749
Herring 1,2		NA	HER/1/2-	511,171	2,646
Horse mackerel NS		NA	JAX/4BC7D	8,969	194
Horse mackerel W		NA	JAX/08C.	2,120	0
			JAX/2A-14	13,157	3,213
Mackerel NEA		NA	MAC sum quota	540,392	52,385

Notes:

† For Nephrops, ICES provides advice at Functional Unit level, whereas the TAC is set at Sub-area level (6 or 7).

An outtake restriction of 3,787t was set for FU16 in 2023. In the case of the 2023 IE quota for Nephrops in Area 7, the outtake restriction for FU16 is 1,374t.

‡ While ICES provides individual advice for each stock within the Skates and Rays in the Celtic Seas assemblage, Skates and Rays in Division 6a, 6b, 7a-c and 7e-k are managed under a single TAC for all species.

§ The advice for stocks in the Skates and Rays group listed in Table 1 was issued in 2022 for 2023 and 2024. Advice for Blonde ray 4,6 and Other rays 6,7 will be published later this year.