



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

Sea Fisheries Sustainability Impact Assessment Stakeholder Consultation

09 September 2025

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 2026*" and the accompanying Staff Working Document.

The closing date for submissions is close of business 03 October 2025.

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 2026
- 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 2026

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. The Minister presents the SIA and directly hears the views and advice of members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Fisheries and Maritime Affairs 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 timing and procedures of the SIA process have been adjusted 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 2026 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 SIA 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 2026. This table compares the ICES advice for 2026 and lists Ireland's 2025 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 2026" and the accompanying Commission Staff Working Document which were published on 06 June 2025. 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 2026 that is currently available. Note that Albacore tuna advice is not provided by ICES; this is ICCAT advice

Stock name	Advice for 2026	TAC code	2025 TAC	2025 IE quota
Cod 6b	11	COD/5W6-14	74	11
Haddock 4,6a,20*	108,301	HAD/03A.	5,892	0
		HAD/5BC6A.	10,681	1,304
		HAD/2AC4.	95,862	0
Haddock 6b	20,432	HAD/6B1214	10,195	622
Whiting 6a	5,364	WHG/56-14	4,952	1,435
Anglerfish 3a,4,6*	30,358	ANF/04-N.	1,100	0
		ANF/2AC4-C	19,622	0
		ANF/56-14	11,104	890
Megrim 4,6a + Megrim 6b‡	8,050 + NA	LEZ/56-14	5,847	614
		LEZ/2AC4-C	2,895	0
Saithe 4,6,3a*	60,167	POK/56-14	7,433	366
		POK/2C3A4	71,638	0
Cod 7a	0	COD/07A.	165	82
Haddock 7a	1,331	HAD/07A.	1,893	692
Whiting 7a	200	WHG/07A.	721	258
Plaice 7a	614	PLE/07A.	1,504	396
Sole 7a	545	SOL/07A.	609	94
Cod 7e-k	0	COD/7XAD34	644	335
Haddock 7b-k	0	HAD/7X7A34	6,353	1,182
Whiting 7bk	0	(WHG/7BCE-K)†	4,810	1,301
Whiting 7d	39,265	(WHG/7D)†	27,564	7,458
Plaice 7bc	15	PLE/7BC.	15	13
Plaice 7fg	114	PLE/7FG.	114	40
Plaice 7hjk	130	PLE/7HJK.	130	53
Sole 7bc	15	SOL/7BC.	15	14
Sole 7fg	989	SOL/7FG.	1,149	33
Sole 7hjk	170	SOL/7HJK.	170	77
Hake Northern*	54,912	HKE/04-N.	1,675	0
		HKE/03A.	1,746	0
		HKE/571214	32,479	1,730
		HKE/2AC4-C	2,021	0
		HKE/8ABDE.	22,026	0
Anglerfish (black) 7,8 + Anglerfish (white) 7,8	22,390 + 36,090 = 58,480	ANF/07.	47,559	3,367
		ANF/8ABDE.	12,741	0
Megrim 7b-k,8abde‡‡ + Megrim (4-spot) 7,8	NA + 694	LEZ/07.	20,030	3,038
		LEZ/8ABDE.	1,981	0
Pollack 6,7*	3,310	POL/07.	689	48
		POL/56-14	77	11
Saithe 7-10	146	POK/7/3411	1,220	690

Stock name	Advice for 2026	TAC code	2025 TAC	2025 IE quota
Small-eyed ray 7fg	103	RJE/7FG.	103	8
Undulate ray 7de	3,639	RJU/7DE.	3,784	381
Undulate ray 7bj	0		0	0
Blonde ray 4a,6	7	SRX/67AKXD	9,430	1,145
Blonde ray 7afg	573			
Blonde ray 7e	231			
Cuckoo ray 6,7,8abd	7,529			
Sandy ray 6,7	27			
Shagreen ray 6,7	134			
Spotted ray 6,7bj	32			
Spotted ray 7ae-h	757			
Thornback ray 6	67			
Thornback ray 7afg	1,669			
Thornback ray 7e	170			
Albacore tuna NEA	47,251	ALB/AN05N	47,251	4,604
Herring 6aN	1,501	HER/5B6ANB	1,745	403
Herring 6aS,7bc	3,269	HER/6AS7BC	2,724	2,600
Herring 7aN	2,935	HER/07A/MM	5,223	52
Herring 7aS,7g-k	0	HER/7G-K.	869	750
Ling NEA*	9,322	LIN/03A-C.	144	0
		LIN/04-N.	550	0
		LIN/04-C.	2,266	0
		LIN/6X14.	10,907	752
Spurdog NEA*	22,594	DGS/15X14	13,998	2,325
		DGS/2AC4-C	4,415	0
		DGS/03A-C.	1,453	0

Notes:

*In cases where the ICES stock advice covers multiple TAC areas, the ICES advice for 2026 is presented, along with the proportions of the TAC and IE quota for 2025 per TAC area.

† The parts of the WHG/7X7A-C TAC that can be fished in 7b,c,e-k and 7d respectively.

‡ Catch advice for megrim in 6b will be published in autumn; it has been in the order of 1,000t in recent years.

‡‡ Catch advice for megrim 7b-k,8abde will be published in autumn; it has been in the order of 22,000t in recent years.

§ For rays and skates, ICES provides advice at the stock level but most skates and rays in areas 6 and 7 (excl 7d) are managed under a single TAC.

Table 2. Stocks of relevance to Ireland for which catch advice for 2026 has not yet been published.

Stock name		Advice for 2026	TAC code	2025 TAC	2025 IE quota
Cod 4,6a,7d,20*		NA	COD/03AN.	2,846	0
			COD/07D.	1,158	0
			COD/5BE6A	1,114	131
			COD/2A3AX4	19,910	0
<i>Nephrops</i> 6 no FU	Subarea	167‡	NEP/5BC6.	13,637	184
<i>Nephrops</i> FU11		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> FU12		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> FU13		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> 7 no FU	Subarea 7†	120‡	NEP/07.	16,689	5,313
<i>Nephrops</i> FU14		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> FU15		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> FU16		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> FU17		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> FU19		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> FU20-21		NA			
<i>Nephrops</i> FU22		NA			
Other rays 6,7		NA	SRX/67AKXD	9,430	1,145
Blue whiting NEA		NA	(WHB) §	1,447,054	51,263
Bluefin tuna		NA	BFT/AE45WM	40,570	0
Boarfish 6,7,8		NA	BOR/678-	38,295	26,462
Herring 1,2		NA	HER/1/2-	401,794	2,080
Horse mackerel NS		NA	JAX/4BC7D	970	16
Horse mackerel W		NA	JAX/08C.	10,324	0
Horse mackerel W		NA	JAX/2A-14	65,221	16,406
Mackerel NEA		NA	(MAC) §	576,958	39,914

Notes:

* In cases where the ICES stock advice covers multiple TAC areas, the proportions of the TAC and IE quota for 2025 per TAC area are presented.

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

‡ Catch advice is available for 2025 for these stocks but not for the other stocks that are managed in the same TAC.

§ For blue whiting and mackerel, the EU publishes a TAC for these species (Council Regulation EU 2025/202) but the sum of the coastal states' quota does not necessarily add up to this value