Atlantic herring North Sea autumn spawners

ASSESSMENT

Strengths
- There is an updated management plan since 2008 which is consistent with the precautionary and MSY approaches.
- Fishing mortality has been low in recent years.
- Spawning stock biomass has been increasing and is currently estimated to be well above the precautionary reference point, Bpa.
- The directed herring fishery is considered a "very clean" fishery, with almost no impact on the seabed and minimal bycatch, including of Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species.
- Slippage associated to highgrading is not allowed in the North Sea and Skagerrak, and discarding is prohibited in Norway.
- Fishers’ compliance has been improving.
- Bycatch of non-target species is small, and interactions with PET species are null in the MSC certified fishery. Fishing gear does not impact the seabed.

Weaknesses
- The series of weak recruitment observed since 2002 is the lowest observed; the stock is considered to remain in a low productivity phase.
- TACs are generally set higher than ICES recommendations.
- Sampling in the areas of overlap with Baltic stocks is limited, as is of discarding practices.
- Two MSC conditions related to compliance with the defined harvest control rule are open and two recommendations were made during re-certification.

SCORES

Management Quality:
- Management Strategy: 8.4
- Managers Compliance: 10
- Fishers Compliance: 10

Stock Health:
- Current Health: 10
- Future Health: 9.3

FIPS
- No related FIPs

MSC
- Northern Ireland Pelagic Sustainability Group (NIPSG) Irish Sea-Atlantic mackerel & North Sea herring: Suspended
- Scottish Pelagic Sustainability Group Ltd. North Sea Herring: MSC Recertified
- Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association North Sea Herring: MSC Recertified
- FFA & SPFS North Sea Herring: MSC Certified

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Monitor the performance of the fishery and its management to ensure the fishery continues to be eligible for condition-free MSC re-certification.