Determine the scientific name: Mallotus villosus

Identify the species: Capelin

Stock Identification:
The stock structure of capelin is unknown. Fish spawning at different locations/times of the year could indicate separate populations but no research has yet been conducted (ICES, 2014b). An assessment unit is considered in the Barents Sea region (ICES Subareas 1 and 2, excluding Division 2a West of 5°W) and managed on a multi-species basis by accounting for predation by cod. This fishery is unusual in that the majority of fish die after spawning. As the fishery is conducted on maturing fish, fishing mortality is thus not relevant for management of this stock (IMR, 2008).

Assessment:

Strengths:
- The Harvest Control Rule established in the management plan is considered as precautionary by ICES.
- All catches are assumed to be landed; bycatch levels are considered as low.
- Fishers’ and managers’ compliance is generally strong.
- Technical management measures and seasonal closures are established.
- Vessel Monitoring System in place to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in Norwegian vessels (24m length) or foreign vessels operating in Norwegian waters.
- Work is in progress to incorporate an ecosystem-approach on the Barents Sea’s most important species.
- There is no reported evidence of significant direct impacts of the capelin fishery on any protected species.
- The pelagic fishery is thought to raise little effects on the seafloor or benthic communities.

Weaknesses:
- The stock is projected to be above B_{lim} for 2019, but there is a > 5% probability that it may be below that value, which triggers a closure for the fishery.
- Capelin is a key prey for cod, herring, seabirds, and marine mammals but the harvest control rule and assessment model do not take directly into account the removal of capelin by predators prior to maturation.
- While B_{lim} is set for this stock, no target biomass reference point has been set.
- In the recent past, managers have not always followed the scientific advice.

Scores:

Management Quality:
- Management Strategy: ≥ 8
- Managers Compliance: 10
- Fishers Compliance: 10

Stock Health:
- Current Health: ≥ 6
- Future Health: ≥ 6

FIPS:
No related FIPs

MSC:
No related MSC fisheries

Recommendations:

- Contact the Joint Russian-Norwegian Fisheries Commission (JRNFC) and request that they adopt ecosystem-based fisheries management that specifically considers the importance of juvenile capelin as prey.
- Ensure future TACs are set in accordance with scientific advice.
- Work with scientists and managers to develop an appropriate target reference point.