IDENTIFICATION

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Sprattus sprattus

SPECIES NAME(S)
European sprat

STOCK IDENTIFICATION

Previous attempts to identify different populations of European sprat during the 1980-1990s were unsuccessful (Nielsen 1994). Gulf of Lyon and the Adriatic Sea populations have the “biggest genetic distance” within the Mediterranean and any population differentiation was found between the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the Bay of Biscay (Debes et al. 2008). Genetic analysis showed a clear genetic distinction from the NE Atlantic Ocean and the Baltic Sea and a high differentiation of the Adriatic Sea population from all northern samples (Limborg et al. 2012). More recently, a “complex population structure is considered across the species’ distribution” (Limborg et al. 2012). Nevertheless ICES recommends the conduction of further studies to clarify this structure (e.g. apparent overlap between North Sea and English Channel spratts) thus here we consider the existing assessment units (ICES 2014):

- Celtic Sea and West of Scotland in Subarea VI and Divisions VIIa–c and f–k
- Skagerrak and Kattegat in Division IIIa
- North Sea in Subarea IV
- English Channel in Divisions VIId,e
- Baltic Sea in Subdivisions 22–32.

ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- A multiannual plan (MAP) for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea was established in 2016. ICES advice is based on this MAP and is considered precautionary.
- Spawning stock biomass has been well above the target reference point in the last years and has increased since 2014.
- Specific management measures are incorporated in the MAP in case SSB is below the limit reference point.
- Fishers compliance with set TAC has been high in the last years in general.

Weaknesses

- The retrospective pattern of the main assessment model (LSA model) shows quite large deviations of estimates for certain years, especially for fishing mortality, and as compared to the secondary model (SAM).
- The sum of EU TAC plus Russian autonomous quota for 2018 is slightly above the upper advised catch by ICES in 2018.
- The amount of discarding of age-groups 0 and 1 fish directed to human consumption is unknown.

Options

- Develop a spatial management plan for the fisheries that catch sprat, with the aim to improve cod condition.
- Reduce uncertainties regarding landings by each species and amount of discarding of recruits, as these uncertainties could influence the estimates of absolute stock size and fishing mortality.

SCORES

Management Quality:

- Management Strategy: ≥ 8
- Managers Compliance: 9.8
- Fishers Compliance: 10

Stock Health:

- Current Health: 10
- Future Health: 7.7

FIPS

No related FIPs

MSC

- LFPS pelagic trawl sprat (Sprattus sprattus): MSC Certified
- NZPS Gulf of Riga herring and sprat trawl fishery: MSC Full Assessment
- SPPO Baltic herring and sprats: Withdrawn

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with managers to develop a spatially explicit management plan for the fisheries that catch Baltic sprat, aiming for adequate amounts of sprat in all areas to serve as prey for cod stocks and other ecosystem needs.
- Improve catch, discard, and bycatch data reporting. Catch and discard data should be reported at a species specific level, and bycatch data collection should include interactions with birds and mammals, especially for the gillnet fleet.
Ensure future TACs are set in accordance with scientific advice.
Ensure these recommendations are represented to the EU Pelagic Advisory Council ([https://www.pelagic-ac.org/](https://www.pelagic-ac.org/)) directly or through one of the General Assembly members.
Within FishSource, the term "fishery" is used to indicate each unique combination of a flag country with a fishing gear, operating within a particular management unit, upon a resource. That resource may have a known biological stock structure and/or may be assessed at another level for practical or jurisdictional reasons. A fishery is the finest scale of resolution captured in FishSource profiles, as it is generally the scale at which sustainability can most fairly and practically be evaluated.

### Management Unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT UNIT</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT UNIT</th>
<th>FLAG COUNTRY</th>
<th>FISHING GEAR</th>
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<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Single boat midwater otter trawls</td>
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<td></td>
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<th>MANAGEMENT UNIT</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>FISHING AREA</th>
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<td>European Commission (EC)</td>
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