MarinTrust Standard V2

Whole fish Fishery Assessment

Norway Pout (Trisopterus esmarkii), FAO 27, ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat)

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Table 1 Application details and summary of the assessment outcome

Application details and summary of the assessment outcome			
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Country: Norway			
Email address:		**Applicant Code**	
Certification Body Details			
Name of Certification Body:		**LRQA**	
Assessor Name	**CB Peer Reviewer**	**Assessment Days**	**Initial/Surveillance/ Re-approval**
Blanca Gonzalez	Sam Peacock	5	Surveillance 1
Assessment Period	January 2024 – January 2025		
Scope Details			
Management Authority (Country/State)	Norway, EU		
Main Species	Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*)		
Fishery Location	FAO 27 Atlantic Northeast, ICES Subarea 4 (North Sea) and Division 3.a (Skagerrak and Kattegat)		
Gear Type(s)	Small-meshed trawls		
Outcome of Assessment			
Overall Outcome	PASS		
Clauses Failed	NONE		
CB Peer Review Evaluation	Agree with assessment outcome		
Fishery Assessment Peer Review Group Evaluation	Agree with assessment outcome		
Recommendation	PASS		

Table 2. Assessment Determination

Assessment Determination
The Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) assessment for ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3a (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat) includes 8 species: Norway pout as target, and haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*), whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), saithe (*Pollachius virens*), herring (*Clupea harengus*), blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*), horse mackerel *(Trachurus trachurus)* and greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*) as bycatch. The horse mackerel is listed and Vulnerable and all other species as Least Concern by the IUCN and none of them appears in any CITES appendix. Norway pout represents up to 95% of the total catch being a Type 1 species, and considering that there is a management regime specifically aimed with stablish reference points was assessed under Category A. The rest of the species are estimated to represent less than 5% of the fishery. Blue whiting, saithe, herring, whiting and haddock were assessed as category C given that all of them are subject to a management regime specifically aimed, with stablish reference points and an annual TAC stablish each year. Meanwhile, horse mackerel and greater silver smelt were assessed as category D since they do not have a management plan in place, neither reference point. The reviewed evidence about the Norway pout stock management framework (M1) and surveillance, Control and Enforcement measures (M2), indicates that there have been no relevant changes to any aspect covered by Sections M1 and M2 in contrast to the last year assessment; however, information has been updated. The Norway pout assessment as Category A species indicates that enough data are collected to assess the stock each year. The stock is assessed by ICES using a MSY approach and an Age-based analytical assessment, and there are stablish B_{lim} and B_{pa} reference points to estimate the spawning-stock size under a precautionary approach. The ICES advice provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status in the form of recommended catches in the upcoming year, all analyses and methods are peer reviewed and publicly available. The primary mechanism by which total fishing mortality on the Norway pout stock is restricted comes in the form of Total Allowable Catches (TAC), however, in recent years total catches have been below the ICES advice. When the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point Commercial fishery removals are prohibited, this happened in 2005, first part of 2006, all of 2007 and in first part of 2011 and 2012. The last stock assessment was carried out in 2023 and the Spawning-stock size is above B_{pa} and B_{lim} reference points. The Haddock, whiting, saithe, herring and blue withing assessed as Category C species, includes fishery removals data in their stock assessment process, since all of them were assessed using an Age-based analytical assessment that uses catches and surveys in the model and in the forecast. Blue whiting stock is above F_{MSY} and F_{pa} but below F_{lim}; while the rest of the species have a fishing pressure on the stock below F_{MSY} . All the 5 species have a spawning-stock size above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa}, and B_{lim}. In the Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) of category D species, the greater silver smelt awarded an average productivity score of 1.57 and an average susceptibility score of 2.75; while the horse mackerel awarded an average productivity score of 1.71 and an average susceptibility score of 2.75. Both species passed against Table D3, indicating these stocks are not vulnerable to the Norway pout fishery. The fishery has a low impact on ETP species. The only ETP species identified in the catch of this fishery so far is spurdog, but measures are in place to minimise its mortality.

Impact on habitat is low, despite fishery may generate impacts in the seabed there are a number of regulations to protect marine habitats from fisheries. Norway pout is benthopelagic species often found just off the bottom on deep mud habitats, thus, the fishery does not need to scrape the fish off the bottom and consequently the gear has a low surface impact. Nevertheless, a number of management measures have been established by Norway and the European Union to minimise impact.

The effects of the Norway pout fishery on the ecosystem may include physical disturbance, interaction with ETP species, bycatch of no target species and ghost fishing, and this is considered in management decisions for benefit of the ecosystem. Also, the evidence indicates that the fishery does not have a significative e negative impact on the marine ecosystem where the fishery occurs and the key role of the Norway pout is considered when recommending total permissible fishery removals.

The Norway pout fishery in Subarea 4 and Division 3a (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat) PASSED all the Marin Trust requirements in this assessment, therefore its approval is recommended to be used as a raw material in Marine Trust certified products.

Fishery Assessment Peer Review Comments

The assessor has carried out a thorough and well-referenced surveillance assessment of the Norway pout fishery in ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3a. This fishery was re-approved in January 2023 and there have been few significant changes since that time. The species categorisation section has been updated to reflect new data, leading to some changes in the Type 2 species covered by the assessment. The species categorisations are supported by the data and the assessor has provided adequate justification for their decisions.

The only Type 1 species remains Norway pout. Norway pout biomass is estimated to be above the target reference point level, and catches continue to fall significantly short of the maximum level recommended by ICES. All Category C species are also estimated to have biomass above the target reference point level, and meet the other MT requirements uncontroversially. Both Category D species pass the PSA.

There have been no substantial changes in Sections M or F.

Overall, the peer reviewer agrees with the assessor that this fishery continues to meet the MT whole fish requirements, and should remain approved as a source of raw materials for MT-certified factories.

The report was edited in response to the initial internal peer review feedback, including changes to the species categorisation section. The peer reviewer considers all original concerns to have been addressed.

Notes for On-site Auditor

There are no concerns that requires attention from the on-site auditor.

Table 3 General Results

General Clause	Outcome (Pass/Fail)
M1 - Management Framework	PASS
M2 - Surveillance, Control and Enforcement	PASS
F1 - Impacts on ETP Species	PASS
F2 - Impacts on Habitats	PASS
F3 - Ecosystem Impacts	PASS

Table 4 Species- Specific Results

List all Category A and B species. List approximate total percentage (%) of landings which are Category C and D species; these do not need to be individually named here

Category	Species	% landings	Outcome (Pass/Fail)	
Category A	Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*)	>95%	A1	PASS
			A2	PASS
			A3	PASS
			A4	PASS
Category C	Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) Saithe (*Pollachius virens*) Herring (*Clupea harengus*) Blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*)	<5%	PASS	
Category D	Horse mackerel *(Trachurus trachurus)* Greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*)	<5%	PASS	

Table 5 Species Categorisation Table

Common name	Latin name	Stock	IUCN Redlist Category[1]	% of landings	Management	Category
Norway pout	*Trisopterus esmarkii*	ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3a (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat)	Least Concern [2]	81 - 95%	Yes	A
Haddock	*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*	Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak)	Least Concern [3]	<1%	Yes	C
Whiting	*Merlangius merlangus*	Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel)	Least Concern [4]	<5%	Yes	C
Saithe	*Pollachius virens*	subareas 4 and 6, and in Division 3.a (North Sea, Rockall and West of Scotland, Skagerrak and Kattegat)	Least Concern [5]	<5%	Yes	C
Herring	*Clupea harengus*	Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak	Least Concern [6]	<5%	Yes	C

[1] https://www.iucnredlist.org/

2 https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/18125208/45098689

3 https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/13045/45097487 in europe (VU global)

4 https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/198585/45097610 (in europe)

5 https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/190304/45098360 in europe

6 https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/155123/4717767

7 https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/198586/18983495

8 https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/198647/43157137

9 https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/18140328/44740389

		and Kattegat, eastern English Channel)				
Herring	*Clupea harengus*	ICES subareas 1, 2, and 5, and in divisions 4.a and 14.a, Norwegian spring-spawning herring (Northeast Atlantic and Arctic Ocean)	Least Concern [6]	<5%	Yes	C
Blue whiting	*Micromesistius poutassou*	ICES subareas 1–9, 12, and 14 (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters)	Least Concern[7]	<5%	Yes	C
Horse mackerel	*Trachurus trachurus*	ICES divisions 3.a, 4.b–c, and 7.d (Skagerrak and Kattegat, southern and central North Sea, eastern English Channel)	Vulnerable[8]	<5%	Yes	D
Greater silver smelt	*Argentina silus*	ICES subareas 1, 2, and 4, and in Division 3.a (Northeast Arctic, North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat)	Least Concern[9]	<5%	No	D
Species categorisation rationale						

The species considered for the Norway pout assessment includes the blue whiting, horse mackerel, greater silver smelt, haddock, saithe, herring, and whiting.

Historically most common bycatch species related to the fishery were haddock, whiting, saithe and herring (ICES 2023a), however, the original reference from this information are data from 2005(Nielsen et al. 2016). This information matched available catching data from 2010 to 2014, where the only difference was the presence of blue withing instead saithe (MRGA 2023). From 2016 to 2018 (DNV 2022) and 2020 (DNV 2021) data indicates a shift in the bycatch components of the fisheries, where dominant species are: blue whiting, horse mackerel, silver smelt, saithe and herring. Herring and whiting bycatch trends fluctuate trough time with important variations, where some years catch was above the 1% while not in others. (table 1).

In 2021 a research project about comparing the bycatch reduction capacity between a trawl fitted with a sorting grid and a trawl fitted with a newly developed, flexible system called the Excluder in the Norway pout fishery, indicates that bycatch composition matches with the species reported since 2016 (Grimaldo et al. 2023), supporting the changes in the bycatch species composition in contrast with data from 2005.

The previous Marin Trust assessment for this fishery assessed the following species: herring, blue whiting, cod, haddock, saithe, whiting, anglerfish (or monkfish), and greater silver smelt, considering that Johnsen et al. (2016) proscribed maximum % bycatches of cod, haddock, saithe, herring, greater silver smelt and monkfish in the fishery, and that Nielsen et al. (2016) mentions that bycatches of herring, saithe, cod, haddock, whiting, and monkfish have been documented at various levels in the Norway pout directed small meshed fishery in the North Sea and Skagerrak. Nevertheless, data are from 2002-2005 (ICES 2017).

Taking into consideration the most recent available data blue whiting, horse mackerel, greater silver smelt, haddock and saithe, were included in this assessment given that they are the most representative by catch species, ranging from 1 to 9% of the total catch since 2010. Herring and whiting were also included in the assessment since both species had been present in all the available records, and fluctuations are above 1%. Cod and anglerfish were no longer considered for the assessment since catches haven´t been registered since 2010 and 2020 data are below 0.1%.

Most recent catch data from 2016-2018 represent the catch composition for Norway pout with bottom (small mesh) trawl gear in the North East Atlantic (ICES 4 and Skagerrak, ICES 3.a.) by Norwegian vessels, where it is recognized that bycatch is composed mainly by blue whiting and horse mackerel (DNV 2022). 2020 data are catches in Norwegian Norway pout fishery by Norwegian vessels, but in this case, data are from bottom and midwater trawls are combined as “trawls” (DNV 2021). (Table 1).

Table 1: compilation of most representative bycatch species data in the Norway pout fishery. 2010-2014 data were taken from MRGA 2023. 2016-2018 data were taken from DNV 2022 . 2020 data were taken from DNV 2021.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2017	2018	2020
Norway pout	90.82%	82.95%	87.65%	91.53%	89.22	80.70%	82.60%	82.50%	82.38%
Blue whiting	0.02%	0.69%	0.23%	0.41%	0.81%	8.20%	6.30%	4.10%	9.00%
Horse mackerel	-	-	-	-	-	3.10%	4.40%	1.30%	3.22%
Silver smelt	-	-	-	-	-	2.20%	1.60%	2.90%	2.43%
Saithe	-	-	-	-	-	2.00%	1.20%	0.70%	1.90%
Herring	6.15%	12.80%	7.55%	4.83%	5.90%	0.80%	1.50%	4.30%	1.73%
Whiting	1.85%	2.05%	2.90%	1.45%	1.99%	1.20%	0.80%	2.60%	0.33%
Haddock	0.60%	0.22%	0.04%	0.22%	0.23%	-	-	-	0.15%
Cod	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.06%
Anglerfish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.07%

No many descriptive data about catch composition are available, however, available information and sources indicate that Norway pout makes up the majority of catches in the targeted fishery around 81-95%; also, it is listed as Least Concern species by the IUCN and do not appear in any CITES appendix. In addition, it is subject to a management regime specifically aimed, with stablish reference points and an annual TAC stablish each year by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). Therefore, the Norway pout is a Type 1 species and was assessed under category A.

Bycatch species have been relatively low in the recent decade and have decreased over the years due to management measures that have been enforced in the fishery (ICES 2023a), thus landing reports commonly includes Norway pout catch and bycatch together as the fishery total catch (ICES 2023b). Available data indicates that bycatch species represent <5% of the total catch despite catch variations per year. Most commonly caught species according to 2010 – 2020 data (blue whiting, horse mackerel, silver smelt, haddock, saithe, herring and whiting) were categorized as Type 2 species; since horse mackerel is listed and Vulnerable and all other species as Least Concern by the IUCN and none of them appears in any CITES appendix.

Blue whiting, saithe, herring, whiting and haddock were assessed as category C given that all of them are subject to a management regime specifically aimed, with stablish reference points and an annual TAC stablish each year by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). Meanwhile, horse mackerel and greater silver smelt were assessed as category D since the greater silver smelt do not have any agreed precautionary management plan in these areas and biomass estimates used an acoustic index from the Norwegian Continental Slope Deep Sea Survey in spring only from Subarea 2 (ICES 2023c), while there is no management plan for horse mackerel in this area and no reference points are defined for this stock in terms of absolute values (ICES 2023d).

DNV. 2021. Norway sandeel, pout and North Sea sprat fisheries: 3rd surveillance report – 03.05.2021. Marine Stewardship Council fisheries assessment. https://cert.msc.org/FileLoader/FileLinkDownload.asmx/GetFile?encryptedKey=HvoIkOxAhfSYEtacIquH/AwzFfagM7+pSFdQ0BFYqsA4ml6tVlobKT4SACHcj7UU

DNV. 2022. Norway sandeel, pout and North Sea sprat fisheries. Announcement Comment Draft Report. https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/norway-sandeel-pout-and-north-sea-sprat/@@assessments

Grimaldo, E., Brinkhof, J., Herrmann, B., Cerbule, K., Grimsmo, L., & Pettersen, H. (2023). Improved bycatch reduction in the mixed demersal trawl fishery for Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*). Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science, 281, 108189. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272771422004474

ICES (2017). Report of the Benchmark Workshop on Norway Pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat) (WKPOUT). ICES Expert Group reports (until 2018). Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5599

ICES (2023a). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5

ICES (2023b). Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21907857.v1

ICES (2023c). Greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*) in subareas 1, 2, and 4, and in Division 3.a (Northeast Arctic, North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21828207.v1

ICES (2023d). Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*) in divisions 3.a, 4.b–c, and 7.d (Skagerrak and Kattegat, southern and central North Sea, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21856536.v1

Johnsen, E., Misund, R., Palmason, S. R., and Blom, G. 2016. Norwegian industrial fishery for Norway pout in the North Sea in ICES. 2016. Report of the Benchmark Workshop on Norway Pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (North Sea, Skagerrak,

and Kattegat), 23–25 August 2016, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:35. 396 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5599

Lebechnech, L. (2022). Whole fish Fishery Assessment Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) in FAO 27, ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3a (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat). Marin Trust assessment report. https://www.marin-trust.com/programme/main-standard/approved-whole-fish

MRAG. 2023. DFPO, DPPO and SPFPO North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat Sandeel, Sprat and Norway Pout. Announcement Comment Draft Report. https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/dfpo-dppo-and-spfpo-north-sea-skagerrak-and-kattegat-sandeel-sprat-and-norway-pout/@@assessments

Nielsen, J. R., Olsen, J., Håkonsson, K. B., Egekvist J. and Dalskov, J. 2016. Danish Norway pout fishery in the North Sea and Skagerrak in ICES. 2017. Report of the Benchmark Workshop on Norway Pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) in Subarea 4 and Division 3ª (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat), 23–25 August 2016, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:35. 69 pp: https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5599

MANAGEMENT

The two clauses in this section (M1, M2) relate to the general management regime applied to the fishery under assessment. The clauses should be completed by providing sufficient evidence to justify awarding each of the requirements a pass or fail rating. A fishery must meet all the minimum requirements in every clause before it can be recommended for approval.

M1	Management Framework – Minimum Requirements		
	M1.1	There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.	PASS
	M1.2	There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.	PASS
	M1.3	Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability.	PASS
	M1.4	Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.	PASS
	M1.5	There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making.	PASS
	M1.6	The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery.

Clause is met considering that:

The Norway pout distribution for this stock is in the northern North Sea and in Skagerrak at depths between 50 and 300 m, the fishery is nearly exclusively performed by Danish and Norwegian vessels using small mesh trawls in the northwestern North Sea (ICES 2023a), thus the fishery is managed by the European Commission (EC) and Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries (DoF) (Fish Source 2024).

The European Commission trough the Common fisheries policy (CFP) set of rules for sustainably managing European fishing fleets and conserving fish stocks in EU waters (EC 2024a) through the Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy, which sets out objectives for catch and fishing effort limits to ensure that EU fisheries are ecologically, economically and socially sustainable.

The Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries serves as the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries' advisory and executive body in matters pertaining to fishing and the management of aquaculture. Its role is to provide professional input to the policy making process for the management of marine resources (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a).

M1.2 There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and assessing the fishery.

Clause is met considering that:

The Directorate of Fisheries in Norway has an Electronic Reporting Systems, where Norwegian vessels, when operating in national waters, in the economic zones of other countries or in international waters, are able to report their fishing activity using one reporting system. All relevant information is registered in the software on board the vessel and the reports are sent electronically to the Directorate of Fisheries. All Norwegian vessels 15 meters and above (12 meters when operating in the Skagerrak area) and vessels flying the flag of the countries which have fisheries agreements with Norway, should report electronically their catch requirements and activity when fishing in Norwegian waters. All data is stored by the Directorate of Fisheries and is only accessible to authorized personnel who are subject to a duty of confidentiality. The main users of the information are the Norwegian Coast Guard and the Directorate of Fisheries. The Joint Rescue Coordination Centers and the Institute of Marine Research also have access to part of the information (Directorate of Fisheries 2024b). The Institute of Marine Research is the largest marine research institution in Norway and the main adviser to the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs (IMR 2024).

The EU's data collection framework outlines the EU countries' obligations to collect, manage and make available a wide range of fisheries and aquaculture data needed for scientific advice. This includes biological, environmental, economic, and social data. Member States' data collection activities are financially supported by the EU. Data collection needs to ensure accuracy, reliability and timeliness, safe storage and improved availability of data. (EC 2024b).

In 2010 Norway and the European Union reached a bilateral agreement about data exchange for fishing vessel operating in each other's' economic zones. This agreement formed a foundation to be used in other such agreements. Common principles were established to ensure adequate information for control and enforcement of fishing activities (Directorate of Fisheries 2024b).

By a joint request of the EU and Norway, The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), trough the Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK) assess each year the Norway pout, providing advice on fishing opportunities, catch, and effort, including each year Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and an overview of the stock development over time (ICES 2023a, ICES 2023b). Latest Norway pout assessment was carried out in September 2023, where the 2016 benchmark assessment for this species was updated (ICES 2023a).

M1.3 Fishery management organisations are publicly committed to sustainability.

Clause is met considering that:

In Norway The Directorate of Fisheries' goal is to promote profitable economic activity through sustainable and user-oriented management of marine resources and the marine environment (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a). Also, The Marine Resources Act's main aim is to ensure sustainable and economically profitable management of wild living marine resources and genetic material derived from them, and to promote employment and settlement in coastal communities. It requires that Norwegian fisheries management be guided by the precautionary approach, in line with international treaties and guidelines, and by an ecosystem approach that takes into account habitats and biodiversity (Directorate of Fisheries 2024c).

In EU, the European Commission trough the Common Fishery Policy (CFP) marine action plan, aims to reinforce the CFP's contribution to the EU's environmental objectives: A healthy marine environment with healthy fish stocks and rich biodiversity is the only way to ensure a prosperous future for EU fisheries communities in the medium and long-term (EC 2024a). The marine action plan contributes to delivering on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and its commitment to legally and effectively protect 30% of our seas, with one third being strictly protected; the plan´s objectives are: contribute to getting and keeping fish stocks to sustainable levels, reduce the impact of fishing on the seabed, and minimise fisheries impacts on sensitive species. (EC 2023a)

M1.4 Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions.

Clause is met considering that:

The Directorate of Fisheries in Norway operates under the Marine Resources Act stablish since 2008. The Act applies to all harvesting and other utilisation of wild living marine resources and genetic material derived from them; thus, The Ministry shall evaluate which types of management measures are necessary to ensure sustainable management of wild living marine resources. Also, The Act´s chapter 3 "Catch quantities and quotas", mentions that The Ministry may prescribe the maximum permitted quantities (national quotas) of wild living marine resources that may be harvested, expressed in terms of; weight, volume, number of individuals, the number of days harvesting is permitted, or in other terms. A national quota shall be determined for a specific period of time. When a national quota has been determined, the total quantity of group quotas, research and training quotas and other quotas issued may not exceed the national quota (Directorate of Fisheries 2024c).

The Common Fishery Policy (CFP) continues to be the adequate legal framework to address the challenges that EU fisheries and the seas on which they depend are facing; therefore, the CFP set the rules that need to be follow in order to sustainably managing European fishing fleets and conserving fish stocks. The rules include fishing quotas, multiannual plans, discarding, deep-sea fisheries, illegal fishing, fishing fleet capacities, technical measures, small-scale fisheries, and enforcing the rules (EC 2024c). The actual Marine Action Plan reinforce the CFP's contribution to the EU's environmental objectives and reduce the adverse impact of fishing activities on marine ecosystems. The Commission calls on Member States to take fisheries conservation measures to protect and manage marine protected areas (MPAs) effectively, with a clear timeline. (EC 2023a, 2023b).

M1.5 There is a consultation process through which fishery stakeholders are engaged in decision-making.

Clause is met considering that:

With a new Marine Resources Act (MRA) entered into force in Norway in 2009, an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) was implemented. This new approach includes defining management objectives and some simple tools to achieve an overview of management needs and prioritise among these where development of new or revised management measures are most urgently needed, while integrating broader conservation issues and ensuring high stakeholder involvement on a regular basis (Gullestad et al. 2017). The Section 8 "Council for regulatory advice" of the MRA indicates that "The Ministry may appoint a Council for Regulatory Advice that can give its opinion before regulations are made under this Act. The Ministry may adopt regulations on the composition of the Council and its tasks. The Council shall include representatives of organisations for the parties that normally have an interest in such cases." (2024c). In November occurs the Annual Regulatory Meeting where stakeholders get involved in management decisions through the Advisory Meeting for Fisheries Regulations (The Regulatory Board), representing fishermen's associations, the fishing industries, trade unions, the Sami Parliament, local authorities, environmental organizations and other stakeholders (EP 2008, Gullestad et al. 2017). The annual regulatory cycle (figure 1) with stakeholder participation has been in place since the 1970's, its scope now broadened by the provisions of the new act to include ecosystem and biodiversity related issues (Gullestad et al. 2017).

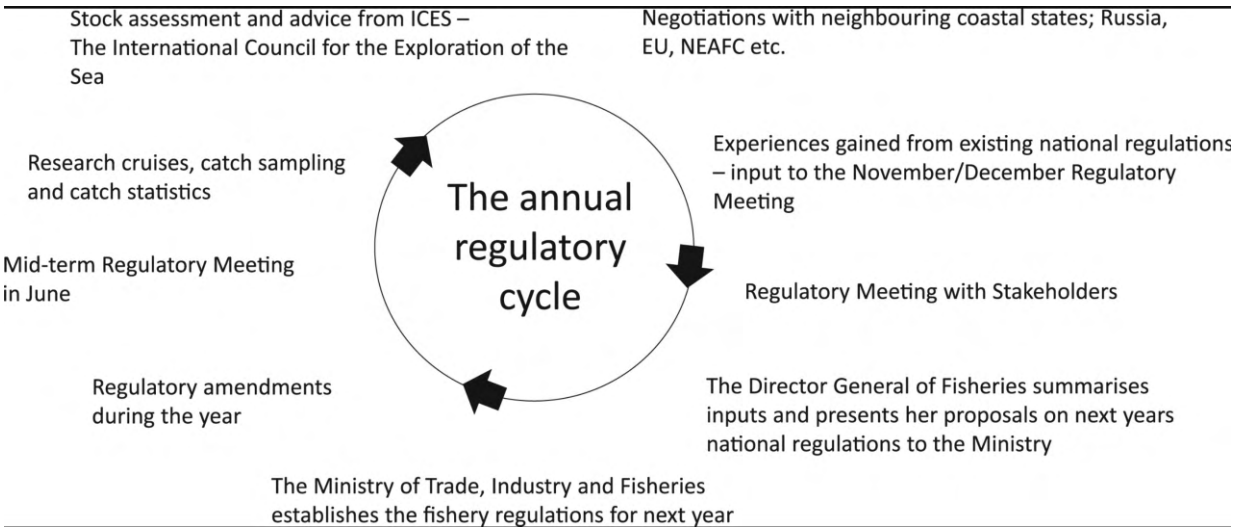

Figure 1. The annual regulatory cycle that occurs in November, where stakeholders get involved in management decisions (Gullestad et al. 2017).

Regarding the EU, the latest reform of the CFP from 2013, features regionalisation to allow EU countries with a management interest to propose detailed measures, which the Commission can then adopt as delegated or implementing act and transpose them into EU law (2024a). The CFP foresees regionalisation for a number of instruments, such as: multiannual plans, discard plans, establishment of fish stock recovery areas, conservation measures for compliance with EU environmental laws, and technical measures, to ensure that joint recommendations reflect the stakeholders' views (EC 2024d). according to the CFP, Multiannual plans should be adopted in consultation with Advisory Councils, operators in the fishing industry, scientists and other stakeholders having an interest in fisheries management.

M1.6 The decision-making process is transparent, with processes and results publicly available.

Clause is met considering that:

The UK / EU / Norway trilateral fishing agreements are publicly available and negotiations are transparent in meeting records. The 2024 trilateral agreement includes the terms of reference for a Working Group on the distribution of Norway pout in Subarea 4 (North Sea) and Division 3.a (Skagerrak and Kattegat) and adjacent waters, with the objective of collect and collate information on the entire geographical distribution of all life stages of Norway pout, based on internationally recognised data collection methods and on the distribution of catches from this stock (TFA 2023).

ICES stock assessments and annual Total allowable catches (TACs) for the Norway pout can be found in their website (https://ices-library.figshare.com/. Assessment reports). Reports includes historic data, analysis methods description, specific criteria, and rationally used in order to set the TAC.

Information about Norwegian fisheries and aquaculture management are made public on the Norwegian government website (https://www.regjeringen.no/en/id4/), while information regarding the EU fisheries can be found in the Oceans and fisheries sections of the European commission webpage (https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/fisheries_en).

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Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.1.1, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	7.2, 7.3.1, 7.4.4, 12.3
GSSI	D.1.01, D.4.01, D2.01, D1.07, D1.04,

M2	**Surveillance, Control and Enforcement - Minimum Requirements**		
	M2.1	There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations.	PASS
	M2.2	There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when laws and regulations are discovered to have been broken.	PASS
	M2.3	There is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing.	PASS
	M2.4	Compliance with laws and regulations is actively monitored, through a regime which may include at-sea and portside inspections, observer programmes, and VMS.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

M2.1 There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations.

Clause is met considering that:

In Norway the Marine Resources Act places the overall responsibility for monitoring, control and surveillance. The fisheries regulations are enforced when the fish is landed and when it is exported, and at sea, the Coast Guard is responsible for inspecting fishing vessels and checking their catch against their log books (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a). The 1997 Coast Guard Act provides the Coast Guard with the authority to conduct inspections in waters under Norwegian jurisdiction, within the fields covered by the Marine Resources Act and secondary legislation given with statutory authority in that Act (NCG 2024).

The Directorate of Fisheries inspects activities on the fishing grounds and performs physical inspections of landings. Upon the landing of catches, the landings data are checked against the fishing rights of the vessel. This task is performed by the fish sales organizations and the Directorate of Fisheries. Norwegian vessels are required to have electronic catch logbooks (Electronic Reporting Systems (ERS). Norway has agreements in place with a number of other countries about exchange of ERS data, including the EU. The Directorate of Fisheries keeps track of how much fish is taken of the quotas of individual vessels, different vessel groups and other states at any given time, based on reports from the fishing fleet, the value of any catch delivered above a vessel's quota is retained by the sales organization and used for control purposes. Also, the Marine Resources Act Chapter 6 "Arrangements for control and enforcement" and Chapter 7 "Control and enforcement" set the duties that must to be done by the Ministry, the Directorate of Fisheries and fishermen to contribute to an effective control of the fisheries. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a).

In EU, EU fisheries control system is in charge to ensure that the rules of the common fisheries policy are applied and implemented in practice. Control measures include: controls on access to waters (e.g fishing licences), fishing effort (e.g. vessels tonnage and engine power), technical measures (e.g. rules on fishing gears), and the monitoring and registration of catches that are extracted from the seas and oceans by the EU fishing fleet. Fisheries rules and control systems are agreed at EU level, however they are implemented by the EU countries through their national control systems that are in line with the Fisheries Control System. (EC 2024a)

The principal actors in the EU fisheries control system are:

- The EC, which controls and evaluates the application of the rules of the CFP in Eu countries through audits and inspections
- The European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), who coordinates the implementation of specific control and inspection programmes (SCIP) in the EU
- National authorities. Implementation of the fisheries rules and control systems through their national control systems

- Other stakeholders such as masters, fishing vessels' licence holders and fisheries operators are also actors in the EU fisheries control system.

These actors have obligations to ensure control, enforcement and inspection of the rules of the common fisheries policy (CFP) and, in the case of the industry, to operate in accordance with the rules enshrined under an EU legislative framework for control. (EC 2024a)

M2.2 There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when laws and regulations are discovered to have been broken.

Clause is met considering that:

The Norwegian Marine Resources Act Chapters 11 "Coercive fines and infringement fines" and 12 "Criminal liability" describe coercive and infringement fines. The Ministry may impose coercive fines and prison to ensure compliance with provisions made in or under the Act. A coercive fine is a continuous fine that becomes effective from a specified deadline for complying with an order if the deadline for compliance with the order is not met. An infringement fine may be also imposed as a fixed penalty, or the amount may be fixed in each case. Such factors as the profit or potential profit those responsible have made through the contravention, how serious the contravention was, and the extra costs of control measures and processing the case may be considered in determining the amount of the fine. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a).

Alternatively, catch, gear, vessels or other properties can be confiscated (§ 65). The Act on First-Hand Sales of Wild Catch of Marine Resources also provides a legal foundation for sanctions, including penal liability (§ 22; same as for the Marine Resources Act) and confiscation (§ 23), and the Coast Guard Act for penal liability (§ 36; up to six months prison or two years for infringements committed under aggravating circumstances). The Norwegian enforcement agencies use a graduated sanctioning system, with sanctions ranging from oral warnings, written warnings and administrative fines to formal prosecution. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a).

In the EU, if through monitoring, surveillance or inspections, national authorities identify an infringement of the CFP rules, they are required to initiate proceedings to sanction the offenders.EU countries are responsible for establishing their own sanctioning systems but to ensure a level playing field they must conform to the requirements of the EU laws. These requirements include the obligation for sanctions to be 'dissuasive, proportionate and effective', to consider the seriousness and potential economic benefit of the offence as well as the prejudice to fishing resources and marine environments. EU countries are required to have a point system to sanction fishing vessel masters and licence holders when they commit serious infringements, the number of points to be attributed for specific infringements is fixed in detailed rules. Any vessel that accumulates more than a certain number of points in a three-year period will have its fishing licence suspended for up to 12 months. (EC 2024b)

The Commission may verify the application of the sanctioning systems in the EU countries through investigations and audits. EU countries also report the number of detected infringements as part of a five-yearly report on the implementation of the EU control legislation. (EC 2024b)

M2.3 There is no substantial evidence of widespread non-compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing.

Clause is met considering that:

The Norwegian Marine Resources Act Chapter 8 "Measures against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing" prohibited the landing catches of wild living marine resources caught by vessels that are not Norwegian, or by vessels that are not under the command of a Norwegian national or anyone assimilated to Norwegian nationals, if: a) the catch is from a fish stock of joint interest to Norway and other states that is not subject to a joint management regime, b) the catch has been taken in contravention of a desired harvesting or fishing pattern, will result in a reasonable total allowable catch being exceeded, or is in contravention of international agreements, and c) the flag state cannot on request confirm that the catch has been taken during fishing activities that are in accordance with a desired harvesting or fishing pattern or that are not in contravention of rules for fishing activities that have been agreed with another country. Chapter 8 also set measures targeting anyone engaged

in or accessory to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and indicates that the Ministry may, in order to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, prohibit activities that may undermine national management measures or measures taken by international or regional fisheries management organisations. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a).

In November 1998, the Norwegian Black list identify the vessels that have taken part in fishing outside quota arrangements in international waters for a stock which is subject to regulations in waters under Norwegian fisheries jurisdiction or take part in fishing operations that contravene regulatory measures laid down by regional or sub regional fisheries management organisations or arrangements. The consequences of being listed is the refusal of a license to fish/ tranship in the Norwegian Economic Zone and the Fishery Zone around Jan Mayen. In the last 5 years, only 1 vessel was included in the Black list. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024b).

The EU is working to close the loopholes that allow operators to profit from IUU fishing activities. The EU regulation to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (in short: the IUU Regulation) entered into force on 1 January 2010. The Commission is working actively with all stakeholders to ensure coherent application of the IUU Regulation, and only marine fishery products accompanied by catch certificates validated by the competent flag state can be imported into the EU (EC 2024c).

The EU regularly updates the IUU vessel list, which includes IUU vessels identified by regional fisheries management organisations. The IUU Regulation can take steps against states turning a blind eye to illegal fishing activities: the Commission first issues a warning (yellow card), then if the country is still not complying, it will identify the country as non-cooperating. (the so-called red card) and place it in the list of non-cooperating countries. Fisheries products from the country in question will then be banned from the EU market. The IUU Regulation also applies to EU operators operating anywhere in the world and under any flag. In March 2023 the EU joined the IUU Fishing Action Alliance. The EU fully supports the main objectives of the Alliance through the IUU Regulation: internally with Member States by means of the EU Catch Certification Scheme and externally via IUU dialogues with third countries, actions on international ocean governance, maritime safety and labour conditions. (EC 2024c).

The fishery is not TAC-constrained in that total landings have been well below TACs in recent years (ICES 2023), such that there is no incentive for TAC-related offenses such as underreporting. No illegal landings or other infringements have been reported in this fishery.

M2.4 Compliance with laws and regulations is actively monitored, through a regime which may include at-sea and portside inspections, observer programmes, and VMS.

Clause is met considering that:

The Norwegian Marine Resources Act Chapter 7 “Control and enforcement” indicates that The Directorate of Fisheries shall ensure that those to whom this Act applies comply with provisions laid down in or under the Act and with other legislation on participation in the harvesting, marketing, production, import and export of wild living marine resources. Inspectors and observers may be placed on board harvesting vessels. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a)

Anyone whose activities are inspected in accordance with provisions issued in or under this Act or other legislation such shall cooperate with the competent authorities during inspections, among other things by answering calls on the radio or other communication equipment. The police shall provide the Directorate of Fisheries with any assistance and protection needed to conduct inspections, and The Directorate of Fisheries may take samples of products, open packaging and take samples of goods, and may among other things thaw frozen products. If the owner of the goods or anyone else incurs expenses as a result of such investigations, they may not claim to have these expenses refunded. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a)

The FMC (Fisheries Monitoring Centre) is the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries' 24/7 office for monitoring Norwegian and foreign fishing vessels' activities. The centre is responsible for processing various reporting schemes imposed on the Norwegian fishing fleet while at sea and foreign vessels operating in Norwegian waters. One key task is the follow-up of Norwegian and foreign vessels in terms of tracking reports and various electronic catch and activity reports required when

active at sea. The centre is a hub in the effort to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) through close contact with national and international monitoring authorities. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024c)

VMS transmitters on Norwegian vessels must be approved by the Directorate and installed only by those authorized by the Directorate. Norwegian vessels involved in fishing operations 15m and above are required to comply with position reporting. This also includes vessels of 12m (Norway and EU) when operating in the Skagerrak area. Foreign vessels of 24m or more (15m or more in the case of EU vessels) are subject to position reporting when operating in Norwegian waters outside Skagerrak. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024d).

For the Norwegian fishery, an ordinance was introduced in 2010 requiring the use of sorting grids to further reduce bycatch. This is still in force for Norwegian vessels fishing in EU waters, in the directed fishery for Norway pout (ICES 2023).

In the EU, as key actors in the EU fisheries control system, the Commission, European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and national authorities monitor fishing activity and conduct inspections. In addition to physical inspections, modern technologies provide the authorities with the means of controlling fishing activities at sea in a manner that is not possible with traditional controls. These technologies complement the use of non-satellite based technologies for geopositioning such as mobile phone apps, as well as the deployment of control assets such as patrol vessels, surveillance aircraft and drones to identify possible illegal activities. (EC 2024d)

The EFCA uses a national Electronic Reporting Systems (ERS) and satellite or non-satellite-based tracking of small-scale vessels (typically vessels below 12m) and digital tools in support of traceability to track fish from landing to retail. Also, there is a Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) incorporating closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems, sensors and automatic recognition software reviewing technologies, that helps for monitoring compliance and ensuring the accurate documentation of catches. (EC 2024d)

ERS is used by fishing vessel masters and national authorities to record, report, process, store and send data on catches, landings, sales and transshipments, and its key element is the electronic logbook, in which the fishing vessel master records and reports these data electronically rather than in paper format. This record is then sent to the national authorities, who store the information in a secure database. One big advantage of electronic reporting is that national authorities, through an internationally agreed standard, the United Nations Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange (UN/FLUX), can exchange and easily cross-check data and detect illegal activities that could otherwise go unnoticed. (EC 2024d)

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is the principal satellite-based monitoring system which regularly provides data to the fisheries authorities on the location, course and speed of vessels. It is compulsory for all EU vessels greater than 12m, with the data shared between EU countries. Also, a satellite-based technology (satellite imaging of sea areas) is used to help to locate and identify fishing vessels at sea. (EC 2024d)

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Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.1.3
FAO CCRF	7.7.2
GSSI	D1.09

CATEGORY A SPECIES

The four clauses in this section apply to Category A species. Clauses A1 - A4 should be completed for **each** Category A species. If there are no Category A species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted. A Category A species must meet the minimum requirements of all four clauses before it can be recommended for approval. The clauses should be completed by providing sufficient evidence to justify awarding each of the requirements a pass or fail rating. The species must achieve a pass rating against all requirements to be awarded a pass overall. **If the species fails any of these clauses it should be re-assessed as a Category B species.**

Species Name		**Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*)**	
A1	**Data Collection - Minimum Requirements**		
	A1.1	Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.	PASS
	A1.2	Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

A1.1 Landings data are collected such that the fishery-wide removals of this species are known.

Clause is met considering that:

In Norway, a landing obligation is in place and all the catch recorded in the logbook and sent to the research and management institutions which use this data for assessing and managing purposes (Directorate of Fisheries 2024), while the EU has a data collection framework (DCF) that outlines the EU countries' obligations to collect, manage and make available a wide range of fisheries and aquaculture data needed for scientific advice (EC 2024).

By a joint request of the EU and Norway, The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), through the Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK), assess each year the Norway pout (ICES 2023a). Therefore, ICES has compiled historical data for annual landings (catches) by country of the Subarea 4 and Division 3.a. Landing data are provided by ICES WGNSSK Working Group members, and records are available from 1961 up today (ICES 2023a). Figure 1 shows the total catch of Norway pout registered for the North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat (ICES 2023b).

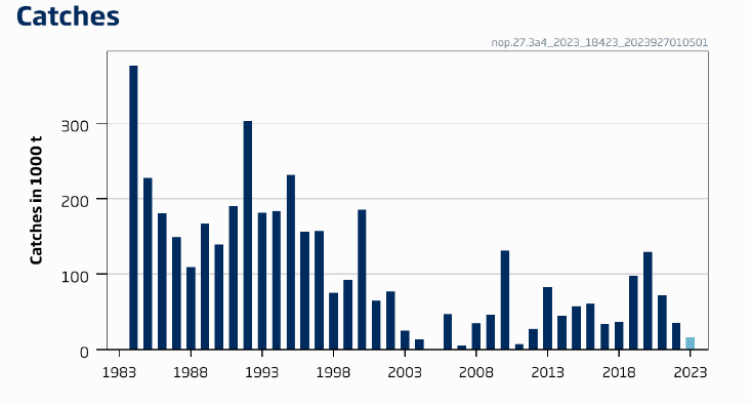

Figure 1. Norway pout catches in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a. Catches in 2023 (shaded in a lighter colour) are up to mid-September. (ICES 2023b).

A1.2 Sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated.

Clause is met considering that:

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), trough the Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK) assess each year the Norway pout, providing advice on fishing opportunities, catch, and effort, including each year Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and an overview of the stock development over time (ICES 2023a, ICES 2023b).

For this, ICES count with available data of: landings/catches, age composition in landings, weight at age, maturity and natural mortality; as well as commercial fishery data and fishery independent survey data from research vessels (ICES 2023a), thus sufficient additional information is collected to enable an indication of stock status to be estimated. As well as landing data, this information is provided by ICES WGNSSK Working Group members.

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Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.1, 1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	7.3.1, 12.3
GSSI	D.4.01, D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A2	**Stock Assessment - Minimum Requirements**		
	A2.1	A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.	PASS
	A2.2	The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.	PASS
	A2.3	The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.	PASS
	A2.4	The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.	PASS
	A2.5	The assessment is made publicly available.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

A2.1 A stock assessment is conducted at least once every 3 years (or every 5 years if there is substantial supporting information that this is sufficient for the long-term sustainable management of the stock), and considers all fishery removals and the biological characteristics of the species.

Clause is met considering that:

Each year the ICES Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK) conduct a stock assessment using an Age-based analytical assessment (quarterly SAM model, called SESAM). Since Norway pout is a short-lived species, recruitment is highly variable and strongly influences both the spawning-stock and total biomass, ICES approach to MSY-based management for short-lived species has been used here in the form of an escapement strategy based on a stochastic forecast. (ICES 2023a)

Stock assessment uses commercial catches (quarterly catches; catch-at-age and mean weight-at-age from catch sampling from the main Danish and Norwegian fisheries), four survey indices (IBTS Q1 [G1022], IBTS Q3 [G2829], EngGFS-IBTS-Q3 [G2829], and ScoGFS-IBTS-Q3 [G2829]). Constant maturity data from survey estimates, constant natural mortality estimated from survey indices (IBTS Q1&3), and constant mean weight-at-age in the stock from long-term commercial catch estimates. (ICES 2023a, 2023b)

A2.2 The assessment provides an estimate of the status of the biological stock relative to a reference point or proxy.

Clause is met considering that:

The September 2023 assessment of Norway pout in the North Sea and Skagerrak is an update assessment based on the August 2016 ICES WKPOUT benchmark assessment (ICES 2023a). ICES assess the Norway pout stock using a MSY approach (escapement strategy based on stochastic projections) with an F_{cap} ($F_{bar[1–2]}$) = 0.7 as reference point. There are also stablish B_{lim} and B_{pa} reference points to estimate the spawning-stock size under a precautionary approach. (ICES 2023a, 2023b) (table 1).

ICES has previously evaluated a proposed management plan from Norway and EU, but it has not been implemented for the fishery , thus, no reference points for fishing pressure or for MSY Btrigger have been defined for this stock (ICES 2023a, 2023b).

Table 1. Norway pout in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a. Reference points, values, and their technical basis (ICES 2023b).

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
MSY approach	MSY $B_{escapement}$	Not defined	It has not been defined, as the escapement strategy uses directly the 95% probability of SSB being above B_{lim}	
	F_{MSY}	Not defined		
	F_{cap}	0.70	A long-term management strategy evaluation, indicating that an escapement strategy for Norway pout is only precautionary with the addition of an upper limit on fishing mortality = F_{cap} ($F_{bar[1–2]}$) at 0.7	Brooks and Nielsen (2020)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	42 573 tonnes (4th quarter)	$B_{lim} = B_{loss}$, the lowest observed biomass in 2005 (as estimated in the updated benchmark assessment)	Brooks and Nielsen (2020)
	B_{pa}	69 736 tonnes (4th quarter)	$B_{pa} = B_{lim}\, e^{0.3 \times 1.645}$	Brooks and Nielsen (2020)
	F_{lim}	Not defined		
	F_{pa}	Not defined		
Management plan	SSB_{mgt}	Not applicable		
	F_{mgt}	Not applicable		

A2.3 The assessment provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status.

Clause is met considering that:

The ICES advice provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status in the form of recommended catches in the upcoming year. Latest advice indicates that when the MSY approach is applied, catches from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024 should be no more than 20 583 tonnes. The catch forecast is for the period 1 October to 30 September, and ICES considers that this forecast sufficiently approximates the TAC period and that it can be used directly for management purposes for the period 1 November 2023–31 October 2024 (ICES 2023a,2023b).

The change in advice (−82%) relative to the advice value in 2023 (116 823 tonnes), is due to below-average recruitment in 2021 and 2023, around-average recruitment in 2022, and a downward revision in recruitment in 2022. However, the TAC is not fully taken, likely due to targeting of other, more profitable species and bycatch regulations in place – mainly in relation to herring and whiting bycatch. Discarding and bycatch of Norway pout is considered negligible (ICES 2023a,2023b).

A2.4 The assessment is subject to internal or external peer review.

Clause is met considering that:

The ICES Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK) performs stock assessments on the main demersal stocks in the North Sea, Skagerrak, and Eastern English Channel. The WGNSSK is conformed

from 55 members representing Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. WGNSSK is a dynamic and experienced group, including both permanent members and young scientists (WGNSSK 2024).

The assessment of the Norway pout stock is conducted annually by the group. From 18 – 22 September 2023 the assessment was carried out through online meetings where 15 scientists from fisheries research institutes and universities from the countries around the North Sea and Skagerrak area participate (ICES 2023a).

It is understood that the assessment for the stock was presented at the meeting, reviewed and the results agreed by the group. When the results of the assessments are agreed by the ICES groups, they are sent the ICES Advice Drafting Group, which consists of National Experts, which review them, and they are finally reviewed by the Advisory Committee (ACOM) which delivers the ICES advice. The ACOM advice is grounded by 10 principles to support ecosystem-based management advice. This ensures that our advice is based on the best available science and data, considered legitimate by both authorities and stakeholders, and relevant and operational to the policy or management challenge in question. (ICES 2023c) (figure 1).

Principle 7 states that the process undergo through a peer review phase to ensure that the best available, credible science has been used and to confirm that the analysis provides a sound basis for advice. All analyses and methods are peer reviewed by at least two independent reviewers. For recurrent advice, the review is conducted through a benchmark process; for special requests through one-off reviews. (ICES 2023c).

Figure 1. ICES advice principles, Principle 7 states that the process undergo trough a peer review phase. (ICES 2023c).

A2.5 The assessment is made publicly available.

Clause is met considering that:

All the stock Assessments and advice for this stock are publicly available on the ICES (latest advice) website (https://www.ices.dk/advice/Pages/Latest-Advice.aspx) and the ICES WGNSSK website (https://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WGNSSK.aspx).

References

ICES (2023a). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5

ICES (2023b). Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21907857.v1

ICES (2023c). Guide to ICES advisory framework and principles. General ICES Advice guidelines. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.22116890.v1

WGNSSK (2024). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak. Members. https://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/Members.aspx?Acronym=WGNSSK
Links

MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.2, 1.3.2.1.4, 1.3.1.2
FAO CCRF	12.3
GSSI	D.5.01, D.6.02, D.3.14

A3	**Harvest Strategy - Minimum Requirements**		
	A3.1	There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.	PASS
	A3.2	Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.	PASS
	A3.3	Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

A3.1 There is a mechanism in place by which total fishing mortality of this species is restricted.

Clause is met considering that:

There is no specific management objective set for this stock. With present fishing mortality levels, the status of the stock is more determined by natural processes and less by the fishery. The European Community has decided to apply the MSY approach for short lived species in taking measures to protect and conserve living aquatic resources, to provide for their sustainable exploitation and to minimize the impact of fishing on marine ecosystems.

ICES advice is used by the authorities to set a TAC for the Norway pout stock. Latest advice indicates that when the MSY approach is applied, catches from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024 should be no more than 20 583 tonnes. The catch forecast is for the period 1 October to 30 September, and ICES considers that this forecast sufficiently approximates the TAC period and that it can be used directly for management purposes for the period 1 November 2023–31 October 2024 (ICES 2023a,2023b).

Therefore, the primary mechanism by which total fishing mortality on the Norway pout stock is restricted comes in the form of Total Allowable Catches (TACs), which are set each year (ICES 2023b).

A3.2 Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.

Clause is met considering that:

In recent years, TAC and total catches have been below the ICES advice (ICES 2023b). This has been effective in maintaining the Norway pout spawning-stock size above to B_{pa} and B_{lim} reference points. Also, the TAC is not fully taken, likely due to targeting of other, more profitable species and bycatch regulations in place – mainly in relation to herring and whiting bycatch (ICES 2023b). TACs are within the specified ranges set out in ICES advice and catches are within the TAC for recent years (table 1).

Table 1. Norway pout in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a. History of ICES advice, agreed TACs, official catch, and ICES catch estimate from 2010-2024. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Predicted catch corresponding to advice^^	TAC Norway	TAC EU^	TAC UK^	Official catch (including bycatch of other species)	ICES catch
In-year*	Maintain SSB > B_{pa}	< 157000	128170	116279		57170	54525
2010	Maintain SSB > B_{pa}	< 307000	86000	76000			
In-year*	Maintain SSB > MSY $B_{escapement}$	< 434000		162950		137003	125955
2011	No directed fisheries	0					
In-year*	Maintain SSB > MSY $B_{escapement}$	< 6000	3150	4500		7282	6524
2012	No fisheries	0		0			
In-year*	No fisheries	0				30154	27073
In-year**	Maintain SSB > MSY $B_{escapement}$	< 101000	25000	70683			
2013	Maintain SSB > MSY $B_{escapement}$	< 458000 ($Catch_{2012}$ = 0) < 393000 ($Catch_{2012}$ = 101)	157000	165700		84969	82100
In-year*	Maintain SSB > MSY $B_{escapement}$	< 457000					
2014	Maintain SSB > MSY $B_{escapement}$	< 216000	108000	128250		47128	44170
In-year*	Maintain SSB > MSY $B_{escapement}$	< 108000	123000				
2015	Precautionary considerations (F = 0.6)	< 326000	178000	150000		63434	63400
2016	MSY approach (escapement biomass with F_{cap})	< 390000	210000	150000		62782	63400
2017	MSY approach (escapement strategy; probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} is less than 5%)	≤ 358471	204235	141950		33848	33933
2018	MSY approach (escapement strategy; probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} is less than 5%)	≤ 212531	90978	85265		36060	36147
2019	MSY approach (escapement strategy; probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} is less than 5%) with F_{cap} = 0.7	≤ 135459	82230	55000		100615	97654
2020	MSY approach (escapement strategy; probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} is less than 5%) with F_{cap} = 0.7	≤ 167105	98053	72500		131300	129497
2021	MSY approach (escapement strategy; probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} is less than 5%) with F_{cap} = 0.7	≤ 254038	127019	116555	11745	72486	71954
2022	MSY approach (escapement strategy; probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} is less than 5%)	≤ 118273	59137	49524	10204	35954	35724
2023	MSY approach (escapement strategy; probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} is less than 5%)	≤ 116823	58411	46973	11439		
2024	MSY approach (escapement strategy; probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} is less than 5%)	≤ 20583					

* Between 2008 and 2014, advice was provided in autumn, while the in-year advice was given in June on the basis of the first surveys and catches in the TAC year.
** Update of in-year advice in October 2012.
^ From 2018, the TAC for EU Member States and UK fishing in EU and UK waters is provided for the period 1 November of the previous year to 31 October of the current year. The EU TAC included UK up to 2020.
^^ Starting with the advice for 2016, ICES advice has been provided for the period 1 November of the previous year to 31 October of the current year.

A3.3 Commercial fishery removals are prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy (small quotas for research or non-target catch of the species in other fisheries are permissible).

Clause is met considering that:

ICES advised in 2005 real-time management of this Norway pout stock. In previous years, the advice was produced in relation to a precautionary TAC, which was set to 198 000 t in the EC zone and 50 000 t in the Norwegian zone. On basis of the real-time management advice from ICES, EU and Norway agreed to close the directed Norway pout fishery in 2005, first part of 2006, all of 2007 and in first part of 2011 and 2012. In 2005 and 2007, the TAC was 0 in the EC zone and 5000 t in the Norwegian zone, the latter to allow for bycatches of Norway pout in the directed Norwegian blue whiting fishery. (ICES 2023a). This situation shows that, historically, Commercial fishery removals have been prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point.

References

ICES (2023a). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5

ICES (2023b). Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21907857.v1
Standard clause 1.3.2.1.3

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.1.3, 1.3.2.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.2.1, 7.22 (e), 7.5.3
GSSI	D3.04, D6.01

A4	**Stock Status - Minimum Requirements**		
	A4.1	The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT: The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT: The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

A4.1 The stock is at or above the target reference point, OR IF NOT:
The stock is above the limit reference point or proxy and there is evidence that a fall below the limit reference point would result in fishery closure OR IF NOT:
The stock is estimated to be below the limit reference point or proxy, but fishery removals are prohibited.

Clause is met considering that the Spawning-stock size is above B_{pa} and B_{lim} (ICES 2023a, 2023b) (Figure 1).

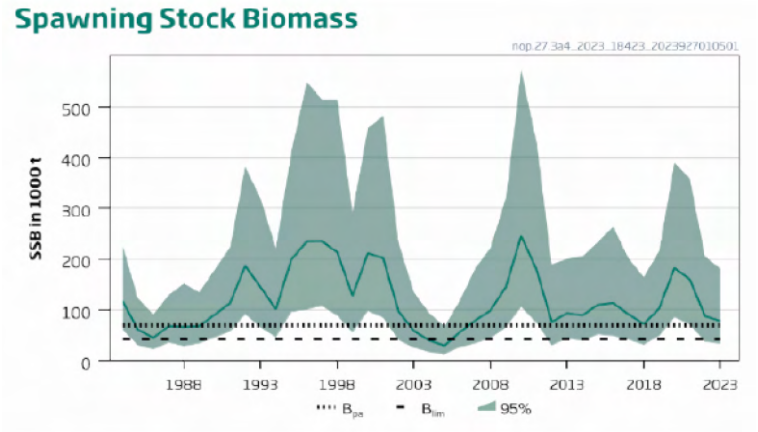

Figure 1. Norway pout in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a. Summary of the stock assessment. SSB is estimated at the beginning of quarter 4, and the recruitment is for quarter 3.

Spawning stock biomass (SSB) has since 2001 decreased continuously until 2005 but has in recent years increased again due to the strong 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2016-, 2018-, 2019- and 2020-year classes, and the lowered fishing mortality. This past year showed a slight decline in biomass; however, it still remains above the limit and target reference points. The stock biomass fell to a level well below B_{lim} in 2005 which is the lowest level ever recorded. By 1 January 2007 and 2008 the stock was at B_{pa} (= MSY Bescapement) (i.e., at increased risk of suffering reduced reproductive capacity), while the stock by 1 January 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 has been above B_{pa} (i.e., the stock show full reproductive capacity) (ICES 2023a).

The recruitment in 2010 was very low and at the same level as the low 2003- and 2004-year classes where these three-year classes are the lowest on record since the mid-1980s. The recruitment in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020 was high. Recruitment in 2011 and 2013 was also very low, and the recruitment in 2015, 2017, 2021 and 2023 was below long-term average (44 billion), but because of the strong 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019- and 2020-year classes and the about average 2022 year class the SSB has been well above B_{pa} (= MSY $B_{escapement}$) by 1 January 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 even with a high yearly TAC in 2014–2022 (up to 3rd quarter) considering growth, high natural mortality, and 20% maturation at age 1. The 2023 recruitment is about half (26 billion) of the long-term average (44 billion) and will reduce the stock biomass, but because of the strong 2020 and average 2022 recruitment the stock is expected to remain above B_{pa} by the end of 2023. (ICES 2023a).
References ICES (2023a). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5 ICES (2023b). Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) in Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (North Sea, Skagerrak, and Kattegat). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21907857.v1

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	**1.3.2.1.4**
FAO CCRF	**7.2.1, 7.2.2 (e)**
GSSI	**D6 01**

CATEGORY B SPECIES

Category B species are those which make up greater than 5% of landings in the applicant raw material, but which are not subject to a species-specific research and management regime sufficient to pass all Category A clauses. If there are no Category B species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted.

Category B species are assessed using a risk-based approach. The following process should be completed once for each Category B species.

If there are estimates of biomass (B), fishing mortality (F), and reference points

It is possible for a Category B species to have some biomass and fishing mortality data available. When sufficient information is present, the assessment team should use the following risk matrix to determine whether the species should be recommended for approval.

TABLE B(A) - F, B AND REFERENCE POINTS ARE AVAILABLE

Biomass is above MSY / target reference point	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
Biomass is below MSY / target reference point, but above limit reference point	Pass, but re-assess when fishery removals resume	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail

Biomass is below limit reference point (stock is overfished)	Pass, but re-assess when fishery removals resume	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Biomass is significantly below limit reference point (Recruitment impaired)	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
	Fishery removals are prohibited	**Fishing mortality is below MSY or target reference point**	**Fishing mortality is around MSY or target reference point, or below the long-term average**	**Fishing mortality is above the MSY or target reference point, or around the long-term average**	**Fishing mortality is above the limit reference point or above the long-term average (Stock is subject to overfishing)**

If the biomass / fishing pressure risk assessment is not possible

Initially, the resilience of each Category B species to fishing pressure should be estimated using the American Fisheries Society procedure described in Musick, J.A. (1999). This approach is used as the resilience values for many species and stocks have been estimated by FishBase and are already available online. For details of the approach, please refer to Appendix A. Determining the resilience provides a basis for estimating the risk that fishing may pose to the long-term sustainability of the stock. Table B(b) should be used to determine whether the species should be recommended for approval.

TABLE B(B) - NO REFERENCE POINTS AVAILABLE. B = CURRENT BIOMASS; B_{AV} = LONG-TERM AVERAGE BIOMASS; F = CURRENT FISHING MORTALITY; F_{AV} = LONG-TERM AVERAGE FISHING MORTALITY.

B > B_{av} and F < F_{av}	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail
B > B_{av} and F or F_{av} unknown	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
B = B_{av} and F < F_{av}	Pass	Pass	Fail	Fail
B = B_{av} and F or F_{av} unknown	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
B > B_{av} and F > F_{av}	Pass	Fail	Fail	Fail
B < B_{av}	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
B unknown	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
Resilience	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Very Low**

Assessment Results

Species Name		NA
B1	Species Name	
	Table used (Ba, Bb)	
	Outcome	
References		
Links		
MarinTrust Standard clause		1.3.2.2, 4.1.4
FAO CCRF		7.5.1
GSSI		D.5.01

CATEGORY C SPECIES

In a whole fish assessment, Category C species are those which make up less than 5% of landings, but which are subject to a species-specific management regime. In most cases this will be because they are a commercial target in a fishery other than the one under assessment.

Clause C1 should be completed for **each** Category C species. If there are no Category C species in the fishery under assessment, this section can be deleted. Where a species fails this Clause, it may be assessed as a Category D species instead, EXCEPT if there is evidence that it is currently below the limit reference point.

Species Name		Blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou)*	
C1	Category C Stock Status - Minimum Requirements		
	C1.1	Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
	C1.2	The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The blue whiting in the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters (subareas 1–9, 12, and 14) stock was benchmarked in 2012, and an interbenchmark protocol was conducted in spring of 2016. The last stock assessment was published in September 2023 by The International Council for exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE) Assessment was carried out using an Age-based analytical assessment (SAM) that uses catches and surveys in the model and in the forecast; thus, removals of the species are included in the stock assessment process (ICES 2023) (figure 1).

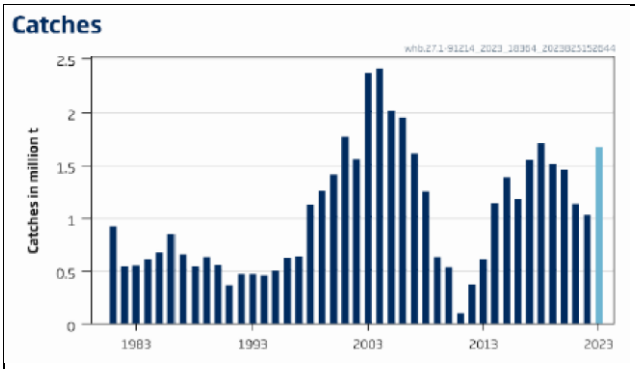

Figure 1. Blue whiting in subareas 1–9, 12, and 14. catches from 1981-2023, the catch estimate for 2023 is preliminary (ICES 2023).

C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The 2023 blue whiting assessment indicates that fishing pressure on the stock is above F_{MSY} and F_{pa} but below F_{lim} (figure 1), and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} ,and B_{lim} (figure 2). The catch advice is that when the long-term management strategy agreed by Norway, the European Union, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and the United Kingdom is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 1 529 754 tonnes (ICES 2023).

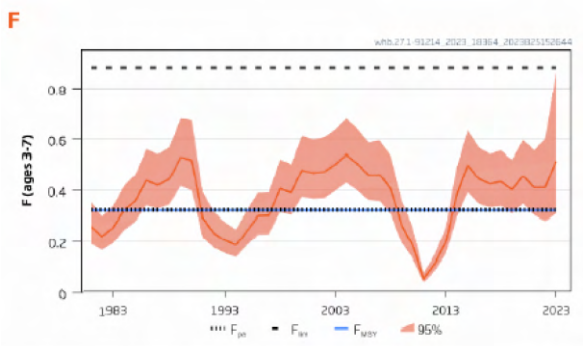

Figure 1. Blue whiting in subareas 1–9, 12, and 14 fishing pressure above F_{MSY} and F_{pa} but below F_{lim}. (ICES 2023)

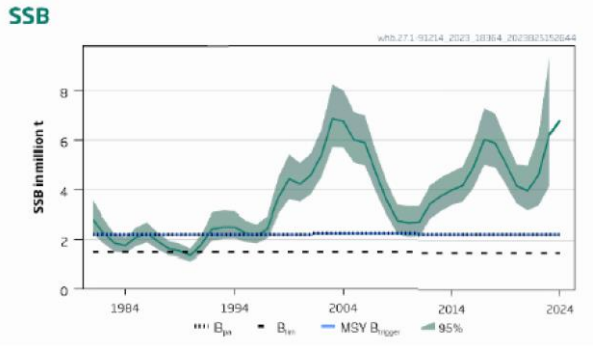

Figure 2. Spawning-stock size above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} ,and B_{lim} Blue whiting in subareas 1–9, 12, and 14 (ICES 2023)

References

ICES (2023). Blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*) in subareas 1–9, 12, and 14 (Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21856554.v1

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2
FAO CCRF	7.5.3
GSSI	D.3.04, D5.01

Species Name	**Saithe (*Pollachius virens)***	
C1	**Category C Stock Status - Minimum Requirements**	
	C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
	C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
	Clause outcome:	PASS

C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The Saithe in the North Sea, Rockall and West of Scotland, Skagerrak and Kattegat most recent assessment was published in June 2023 by The International Council for exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK).The assessment was carried out using an Age-based analytical assessment (SAM) that uses catches and surveys in the model and in the forecast; thus, removals of the species are included in the stock assessment process (ICES 2023a, 2023b) (figure 1).

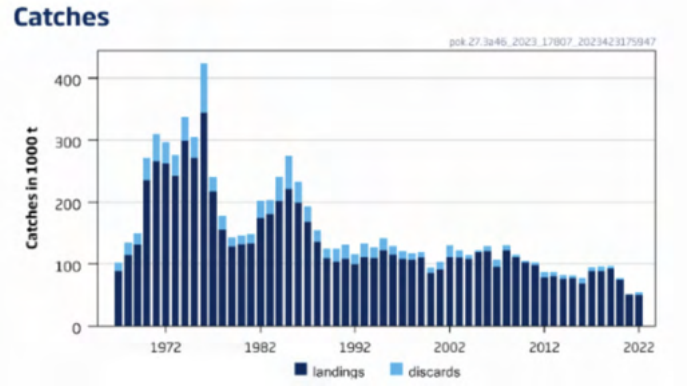

Figure 1. Saithe in subareas 4 and 6 and in Division 3.a. catches from 1978-2022 (ICES 2023b).

C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The 2023 Saithe assessment indicates that fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY} (figure 1), and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} ,and B_{lim} (figure 2). (ICES 2023b). The catch advice is that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 73,815 tonnes, which is 14,903 more tonnes than 2023 (58,912 tonnes). (ICES 2023b).

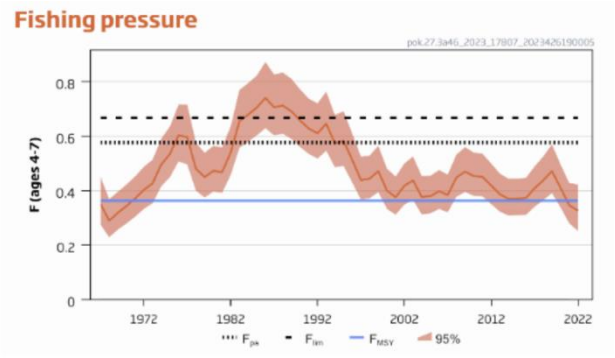

Figure 1. Saithe in subareas 4 and 6 and in Division 3.a. fishing pressure below the F_{MSY}. (ICES 2023b)

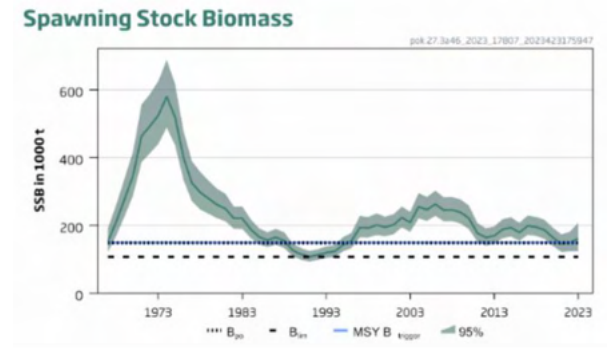

Figure 2. Spawning-stock size above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa}, and B_{lim} for Saithe in subareas 4 and 6 and in Division 3.a. (ICES 2023b)

References

ICES (2023a). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5

ICES (2023b). Saithe *(Pollachius virens*) in subareas 4 and 6, and in Division 3.a (North Sea, Rockall and West of Scotland, Skagerrak and Kattegat). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21841008.v1

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2
FAO CCRF	7.5.3
GSSI	D.3.04, D5.01

Species Name		**Herring (*Clupea harengus*) - autumn spawners**	
C1	**Category C Stock Status - Minimum Requirements**		
	C1.1	Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
	C1.2	The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

Herring in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel most recent assessment was published in May 2023 by The International Council for exploration of the Sea (ICES) Herring Assessment Working Group for the Area South of 62°N (HAWG). The assessment was carried out using an Age-based analytical assessment (SAM) that uses catches and surveys in the model and in the forecast; thus, removals of the species are included in the stock assessment process (ICES 2023) (figure 1).

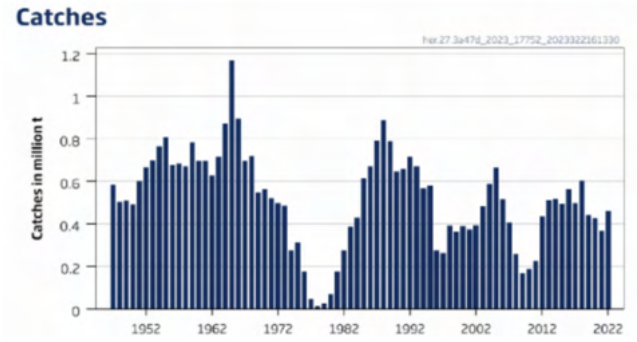

Figure 1. Herring in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners. Catches from 1947-2022 (ICES 2023).

C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The 2023 Herring assessment indicates that fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY} (figure 1), and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} ,and B_{lim} (figure 2). (ICES 2023b). The catch advice is that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 532,166 tonnes, which is 117,280 more tonnes than 2023 (414,886 tonnes). (ICES 2023).

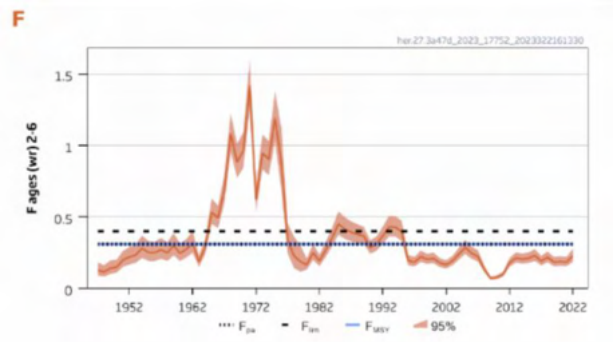

Figure 1. Herring in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners. Fishing pressure below the F_{MSY}. (ICES 2023b).

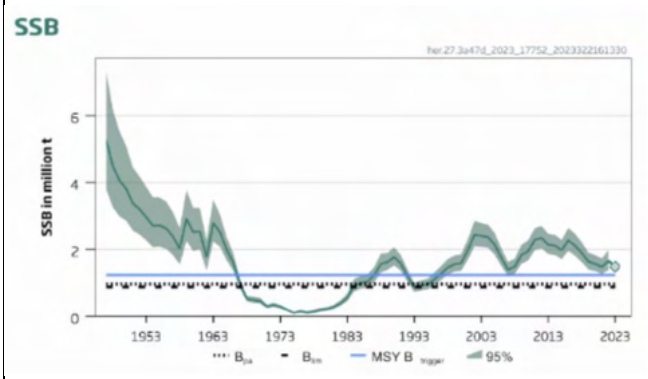

Figure 2. Spawning-stock size above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa}, and B_{lim} for Herring in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (ICES 2023).

References

ICES (2023). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in Subarea 4 and divisions 3.a and 7.d, autumn spawners (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21907947.v1

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2
FAO CCRF	7.5.3
GSSI	D.3.04, D5.01

Species Name	**Herring (*Clupea harengus*) – Norwegian spring spawners**	
C1	**Category C Stock Status - Minimum Requirements**	
C1.1	Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
C1.2	The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
	Clause outcome:	PASS

C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

Herring in the Northeast Atlantic and Arctic Ocean (ICES subareas 1, 2, and 5, and in divisions 4.a and 14.a) most recent assessment was published in November 2023 by The International Council for exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE). The assessment was carried out using a Statistical assessment model (XSAM) that uses commercial catches-at-age and surveys in the model and in the forecast; thus, removals of the species are included in the stock assessment process (ICES 2023) (figure 1).

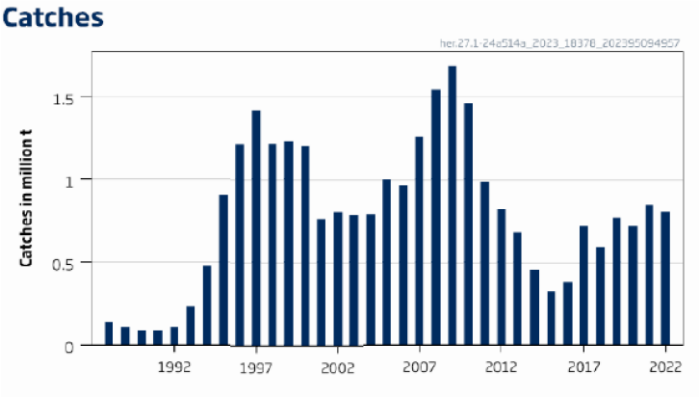

Figure 1. Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5, and in divisions 4.a and 14.a, Norwegian spring spawners. Catches from 1988-2022 (ICES 2023).

C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The 2023 Herring assessment indicates that fishing pressure on the stock is above F_{MSY} and between F_{pa} and F_{lim} (figure 1), and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} ,and B_{lim} (figure 2). The catch advice is that when the long-term management strategy agreed by the UK, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and the European Union is applied, catches in 2024 should be no more than 390 010 tonnes (ICES 2023).

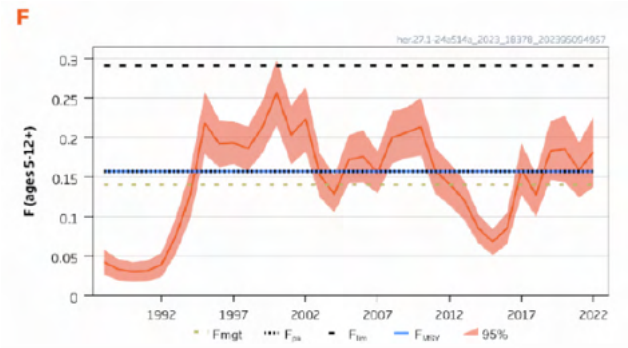

Figure 1. Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5, and in divisions 4.a and 14.a, Norwegian spring spawners. Fishing pressure above the F_{MSY} and between F_{pa} and F_{lim} (ICES 2023).

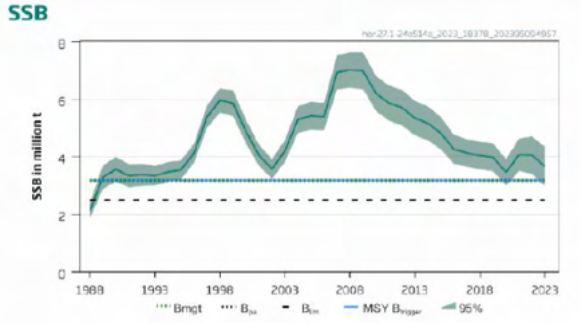

Figure 2. Spawning-stock size above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa}, and B_{lim} for Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5, and in divisions 4.a and 14.a, Norwegian spring spawners (ICES 2023).

References

ICES (2023). Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subareas 1, 2, and 5, and in divisions 4.a and 14.a, Norwegian spring-spawning herring (Northeast Atlantic and Arctic Ocean). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21856509.v1

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2
FAO CCRF	7.5.3
GSSI	D.3.04, D5.01

Species Name		**Whiting (*Merlangius merlangius)***	
C1	**Category C Stock Status - Minimum Requirements**		
	C1.1	Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
	C1.2	The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The Whiting in the North Sea and Eastern English Channel most recent assessment was published in June 2023 and updated in October by The International Council for exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK).The current assessment is formally classified as an update assessment, and it was carried out using an Age-based analytical assessment (SAM) that uses catches and surveys in the model and in the forecast; thus, removals of the species are included in the stock assessment process (ICES 2023a, 2023b) (figure 1).

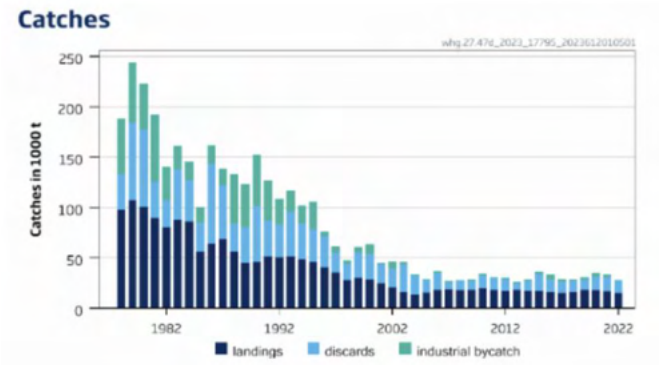

Figure 1. Whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d catches from 1978-2022 (ICES 2023b).

C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The 2023 Whiting assessment indicates that fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY} (figure 1), and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} ,and B_{lim} (figure 2). (ICES 2023b). The catch advice is that when the MSY approach is applied, total catches in 2024 should be no more than 128,290 tonnes, which is 18,118 more tonnes than 2023 (110,172tonnes).

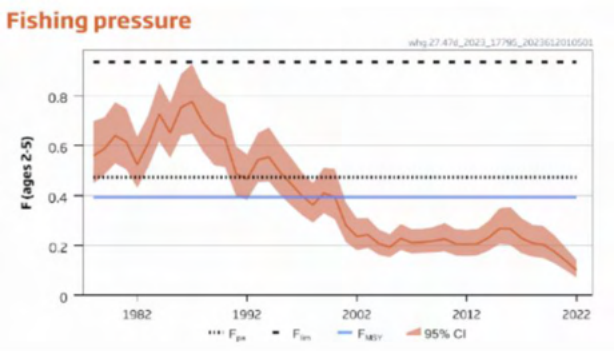

Figure 1. Whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d fishing pressure below the F_{MSY}. (ICES 2023b)

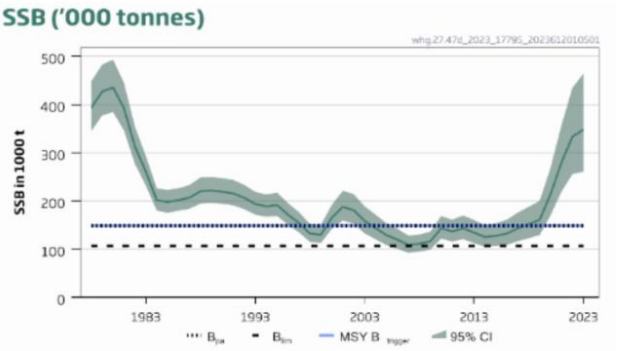

Figure 2. Spawning-stock size above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa}, and B_{lim} for Whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (ICES 2023b)

References

ICES (2023a). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5

ICES (2023b). Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d (North Sea and eastern English Channel). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21864324.v2

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2
FAO CCRF	7.5.3
GSSI	D.3.04, D5.01

Species Name	**Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*)**	
C1	**Category C Stock Status - Minimum Requirements**	
C1.1	Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
C1.2	The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.	PASS
	Clause outcome:	PASS

C1.1 Fishery removals of the species in the fishery under assessment are included in the stock assessment process, OR are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The Haddock in the North Sea, West of Scotland, and Skagerrak was most recently benchmarked in early 2022 at the Benchmark Workshop on North Sea and Celtic Sea Stocks (ICES 2023a). The last stock assessment was published in June 2023 by The International Council for exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). Assessment was carried out using an Age-based analytical assessment (SAM) that uses catches and surveys in the model and in the forecast; thus, removals of the species are included in the stock assessment process (ICES 2023a, 2023b) (figure 1).

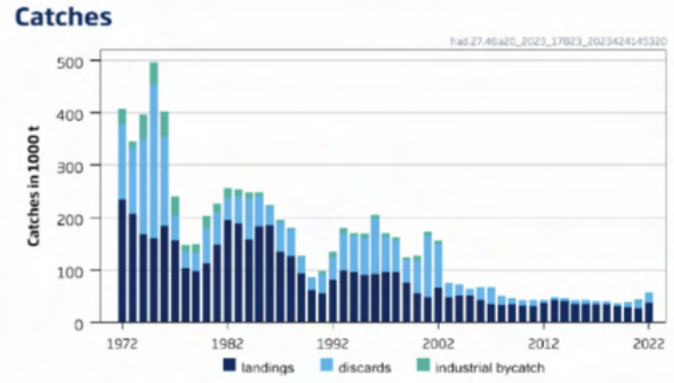

Figure 1. Haddock in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 catches from 1972-2022 (ICES 2023b).

C1.2 The species is considered, in its most recent stock assessment, to have a biomass above the limit reference point (or proxy), OR removals by the fishery under assessment are considered by scientific authorities to be negligible.

Clause is met considering that:

The 2023 haddock assessment indicates that fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY} (figure 1), and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} ,and B_{lim} (figure 2). (ICES 2023b). The catch advice is that when the MSY approach is applied, total catches in 2024 should be no more than 149,024 tonnes, which is 22,513 more tonnes than 2023 (126,511 tonnes).

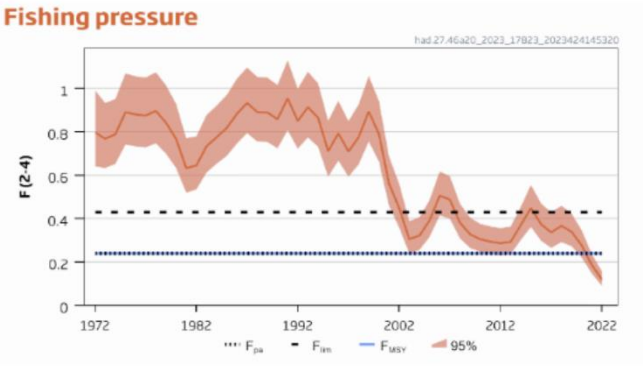

Figure 1. Haddock in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 fishing pressure below the F_{MSY}. (ICES 2023b)

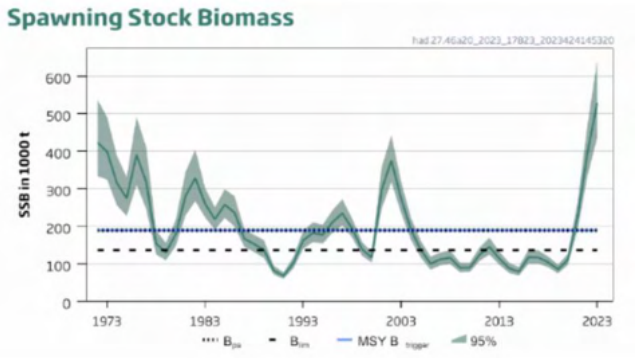

Figure 2. Spawning-stock size above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} ,and B_{lim} for Haddock in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision20. (ICES 2023b)

References

ICES (2023a). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5

ICES (2023b). Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) in Subarea 4, Division 6.a, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, West of Scotland, Skagerrak). ICES Advice: Recurrent Advice. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21840795.v1

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2
FAO CCRF	7.5.3
GSSI	D.3.04, D5.01

CATEGORY D SPECIES

Category D species are those which make up less than 5% of landings and are not subject to a species-specific management regime. In the case of mixed trawl fisheries, Category D species may make up the majority of landings. The comparative lack of scientific information on the status of the population of the species means that a risk-assessment style approach must be taken

D1	Species Name	Greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*)	
	Productivity Attribute	**Value**	**Score**
	Average age at maturity (years)	3.3 years[1]	1
	Average maximum age (years)	13.5 years[1]	2
	Fecundity (eggs/spawning)	6,000 – 24,500[1]	2
	Average maximum size (cm)	70 cm[1]	1
	Average size at maturity (cm)	23.1 cm[1]	1
	Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner[1]	1
	Mean trophic level	3.3[1]	3
		Average Productivity Score	**1.57**
	Susceptibility Attribute	**Value**	**Score**
	Availability (area overlap)	10-30% overlap	2
	Encounterability (the position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear)	High overlap with fishing gear	3
	Selectivity of gear type	Individuals < size at maturity are frequently caught	3
	Post-capture mortality	Retained[2]	3
		Average Susceptibility Score	**2.75**
		PSA Risk Rating (From Table D3)	**PASS**
		Compliance rating	**PASS**

Further justification for susceptibility scoring (where relevant)

According to fecundity value, score could be 1 or 2 given the wide range of the fecundity. A score of 2 was given considering a precautionary approach, however, no matter if the score is 1 or 2, the final value does not change.

Area overlap: The fishery occurs in the northwestern North Sea, especially at the Fladen Ground and along the edge of the Norwegian Trench in the northeastern part of the North Sea[2]. The grater silver smelt distributions is in the Eastern Atlantic: deeper parts of North Sea and across the Wyville Thomson ridge to Denmark Strait. Western Atlantic: Davis Strait to George's Bank in Canada. Arctic Ocean: east to Finnmark, Norway, Barents Sea[1] (figure 1). This implies an overlap of approximately 10 to 30% since Norway pout fishery stock under assessment occurs in a small proportion of the distribution of the greater silver smelt (figure 2).

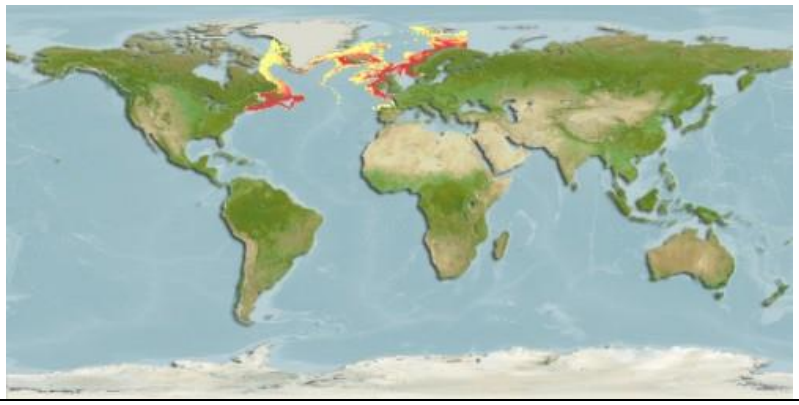

Figure 1. Greater silver smelt distribution. [1]

Figure 2. Norway pout fishery under assessment occurs in subarea 4 and division 3.a (red square).[4]

Encounterability: Greater silver smelt is a bathypelagic species that prefer depths of 182.8-255.9 m 1 , and Norway pout is found at depths between 50 and 300 m. [2]

Selectivity of gear type: Individuals < size at maturity are frequently caught, since Norway pout fishery uses small mesh trawls (16-31 mm). [3]

References

1 https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Argentina-silus.html

2. ICES (2023). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5

3. Grimaldo, E., Brinkhof, J., Herrmann, B., Cerbule, K., Grimsmo, L., & Pettersen, H. (2023). Improved bycatch reduction in the mixed demersal trawl fishery for Norway pout (Trisopterus esmarkii). Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science, 281, 108189. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272771422004474

4 FAO (2023). Atlantic, Northeast (Major Fishing Area 27). https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/area/27/en

Standard clauses 1.3.2.2

D1	Species Name	Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*)	
	Productivity Attribute	**Value**	**Score**
	Average age at maturity (years)	4.5 years[1]	1
	Average maximum age (years)	19 years[1]	3
	Fecundity (eggs/spawning)	12,700 – 740,000 [1]	2
	Average maximum size (cm)	70 cm[1]	1
	Average size at maturity (cm)	27 cm[1]	1
	Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner[1]	1
	Mean trophic level	3.7[1]	3
		Average Productivity Score	**1.71**
	Susceptibility Attribute	**Value**	**Score**
	Availability (area overlap)	10-30% overlap	2
	Encounterability (the position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear)	High overlap with fishing gear	3
	Selectivity of gear type	Individuals < size at maturity are frequently caught	3
	Post-capture mortality	Retained[2]	3
		Average Susceptibility Score	**2.75**
		PSA Risk Rating (From Table D3)	**PASS**
		Compliance rating	**PASS**

Further justification for susceptibility scoring (where relevant)

According to fecundity value, score could be 1 or 2 given the wide range of the fecundity. A score of 2 was given considering a precautionary approach, however, no matter if the score is 1 or 2, the final value does not change.

Area overlap: The fishery occurs in the northwestern North Sea, especially at the Fladen Ground and along the edge of the Norwegian Trench in the northeastern part of the North Sea[2]. The horse mackerel distributes in the Eastern Atlantic: from Madeira, the Straits of Gibraltar and Canary and Cape Verde Islands to South Africa; northward extending into the Mediterranean Sea and along the Atlantic coasts of Europe to Norway [1] (figure 1). This implies an overlap of approximately 10 to 30% since Norway pout fishery stock under assessment occurs in a small proportion of the distribution of the horse mackerel (figure 2).

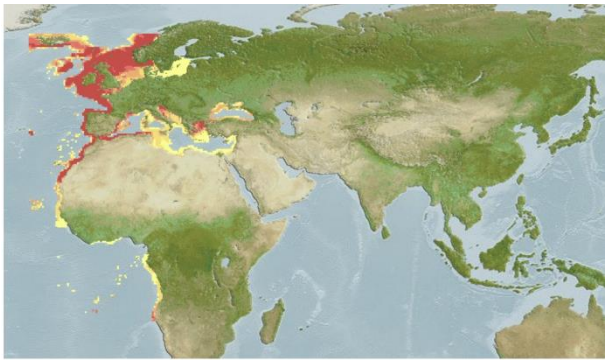

Figure 1. Horse mackerel distribution. [1]

Figure 2. Norway pout fishery under assessment occurs in subarea 4 and division 3.a (red square).[4]

Encounterability: Horse mackerel is a marine; pelagic-neritic; oceanodromous species that inhabits on a depth range of 0 - 1050 m, but usually can be found at 100 - 200 m. [1], and Norway pout is found at depths between 50 and 300 m. [2]

Selectivity of gear type: Individuals < size at maturity are frequently caught, since Norway pout fishery uses small mesh trawls (16-31 mm). [3]

References

1 https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Trachurus-trachurus.html

2 ICES (2023). Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK). ICES Scientific Reports. Report. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22643143.v5

3 Grimaldo, E., Brinkhof, J., Herrmann, B., Cerbule, K., Grimsmo, L., & Pettersen, H. (2023). Improved bycatch reduction in the mixed demersal trawl fishery for Norway pout (Trisopterus esmarkii). Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science, 281, 108189. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272771422004474

4 FAO (2023). Atlantic, Northeast (Major Fishing Area 27). https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/area/27/en

Standard clauses 1.3.2.2

Table D2 - Productivity / Susceptibility attributes and scores.

Productivity attributes	High productivity (Low risk, score = 1)	Medium productivity (medium risk, score = 2)	Low productivity (high risk, score = 3)
Average age at maturity	<5 years	5-15 years	>15 years
Average maximum age	<10 years	10-25 years	>25 years
Fecundity	>20,000 eggs per year	100-20,000 eggs per year	<100 eggs per year
Average maximum size	<100 cm	100-300 cm	>300 cm
Average size at maturity	<40 cm	40-200 cm	>200 cm
Reproductive strategy	Broadcast spawner	Demersal egg layer	Live bearer
Mean Trophic Level	<2.75	2.75-3.25	>3.25

Susceptibility attributes	Low susceptibility (Low risk, score = 1)	Medium susceptibility (medium risk, score = 2)	High susceptibility (high risk, score = 3)
Areal overlap (availability) Overlap of the fishing effort with the species range	<10% overlap	10-30% overlap	>30% overlap
Encounterability The position of the stock/species within the water column relative to the fishing gear, and the position of the stock/species within the habitat relative to the position of the gear	Low overlap with fishing gear (low encounterability).	Medium overlap with fishing gear.	High overlap with fishing gear (high encounterability). Default score for target species
Selectivity of gear type Potential of the gear to retain species	a Individuals < size at maturity are rarely caught	a Individuals < size at maturity are regularly caught.	a Individuals < size at maturity are frequently caught
	b Individuals < size at maturity can escape or avoid gear.	b Individuals < half the size at maturity can escape or avoid gear.	b Individuals < half the size at maturity are retained by gear.
Post-capture mortality (PCM) The chance that, if captured, a species would be released and that it would be in a	Evidence of majority released post-capture and survival.	Evidence of some released post-capture and survival.	Retained species or majority dead when released.

condition permitting subsequent survival			

D3		Average Susceptibility Score		
		1 - 1.75	1.76 - 2.24	2.25 - 3
Average Productivity Score	1 - 1.75	PASS	PASS	PASS
	1.76 - 2.24	PASS	PASS	TABLE D4
	2.25 - 3	PASS	TABLE D4	TABLE D4

D4	Species Name	NA	
	Impacts On Species Categorised as Vulnerable by D1-D3 - Minimum Requirements		
	D4.1	The potential impacts of the fishery on this species are considered during the management process, and reasonable measures are taken to minimise these impacts.	
	D4.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the species.	
		Outcome:	

Evidence

D4.1: The potential impacts of the fishery on this species are considered during the management process, and reasonable measures are taken to minimise these impacts.

D4.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the species.

References

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.2.2, 4.1.4
FAO CCRF	7.5.1
GSSI	D.5.01

FURTHER IMPACTS

The three clauses in this section relate to impacts the fishery may have in other areas. A fishery must meet the minimum requirements of all three clauses before it can be recommended for approval.

F1	Impacts on ETP Species - Minimum Requirements		
	F1.1	Interactions with ETP species are recorded.	PASS
	F1.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species.	PASS
	F1.3	If the fishery is known to interact with ETP species, measures are in place to minimise mortality.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

F1.1 Interactions with ETP species are recorded.

Clause is met considering that:

The Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) was established in 2007 and collates and analyses information from across the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent sea areas (Baltic,Mediterranean and Black Seas) related to the bycatch of protected, endangered and threatened (PET) species, including marine mammals, seabirds, turtles and sensitive fish species in commercial fishing operations. (ICES 2023a)

There are several legislative instruments in ICES Member Countries, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and other European Union law concerning bycatch of PETS and their record. ICES obtains data on PETS bycatch through an annual data call. These data are mainly collected during at-sea observations carried out for the purposes of fisheries monitoring in accordance with the EU Data Collection Framework Regulation 2017/1004 (DCF). While the collection of protected species bycatch data through the DCF as part of the Multiannual Plan (DC-/EU-MAP) may facilitate targeted sampling of métiers of concern. (ICES 2023a)

Through the 2023 data call, 23 countries out of 25 responded and submitted data on fishing and sampling effort, and bycatch observations for 2022. In the Greater North Sea ecoregion, 416 marine mammals (6 species), 175 birds (17 species), 8657 elasmobranchs (24 species), 219075 teleosts (27 species), 2 lamprey (2 species) and 782 deep sea holocephalians (1 species) were reported from 3595 days at sea (table 1). (ICES 2023a)

Table 1. summary of reported fishing and monitoring days (for metiers with reported bycatch only) and number of bycaught specimens and incidents by taxon in 2022, provided through the ICES WGBYC 2023 data call by ecoregion for all reported species. (ICES 2023a)

Ecoregion	Fishing Effort (das)	Total Observed Effort (das)	Monitoring Coverage (%)		Mammals	Birds	Reptiles	Elasmobranchii	Teleostei	Chondrostei	Petromyzonti	Holocephali
Greater North Sea	526147.78	3595.47	0.68	Incidents	161	108		1212	2322	2		72
				Individuals	416	175		8657.4	219075	2		782
				Species	6	17		24	27	2		1

Data for 2022 consisted of monitoring information collected by several different methods (at-sea observers, electronic monitoring, port observers, vessel crew observers, and logbooks). Overall, there has been a temporal change in the proportions of 'monitoring method' data reported to WGBYC, from primarily at-sea-observers in 2017, to vessel crew

observers in 2019, and to logbook data in 2021 and 2022. Considering that Norway pout fishery is nearly exclusively performed by Danish and Norwegian vessels, figure 1 shows monitoring methods used by these two countries.

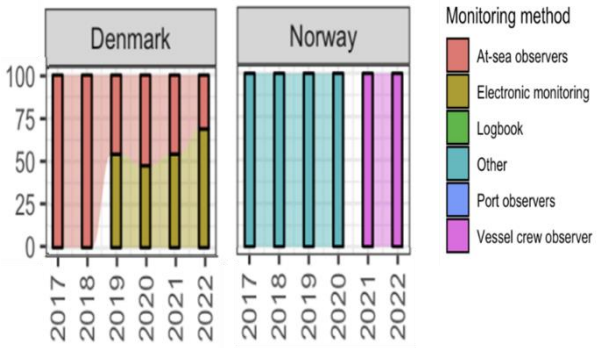

Figure 1. Total monitored (observed) days at sea reported by Denmark and Norway for each monitoring method (2017-2022). (ICES 2023a)

F1.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative effect on ETP species.

Clause is met considering that:

ICES WGBYC has reported on the monitoring of different taxonomic groups in relation to spatial bycatch risk of ETP species and fishing effort to inform coordinated sampling plans. This produces a combined risk score for all ETP species for a gear operating in an area in association with the total reported fishing effort to give an overall risk score for that gear/area combination. The Greater North Sea ecoregion is not an area of particular bycatch concern with an average combine risk score of 1.9 (ICES 2023b), however bycatch rates of these species were mainly recorded in other gears and areas. No specific reference is made to trawl fisheries in the North Sea or the Norwegian sea. No interactions with marine mammals or protected seabirds have been reported by this specific fishery either.

A Norwegian reference fleet is used by the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) to collect data on interactions with bycatch and ETP species in order to assess the impact of Norwegian fisheries on those species. For the larger vessels (>28m vessel length) the fisheries prioritised in the High-seas Reference Fleet include, among others, the industrial trawl fisheries targeting sandeel, Norwegian pout and blue whiting for fish-meal production. Landing data for that fleet operating to the south of latitude 62°N and in the North Sea, is provided by the IMR for the period 2015-2018. The only ETP species identified in the catch of this fishery is spurdog (IMR 2020).

Spurdog (Squalus acanthias):

In 2007, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species categorized spurdog globally as 'Vulnerable' (Finucci et al. 2020), although the most recent assessment of spurdog in European waters lists spurdog as 'Endangered' (Ellis et al. 2015; Nieto et al., 2015).

In 2007, Norway introduced a general ban on target fisheries for spurdog in the Norwegian economic zone and in international waters of ICES subareas 1–14, with the exception of a limited fishery for small coastal vessels. Bycatch could be landed and sold as before. All directed fisheries were banned from 2011, although there is still a bycatch allowance. From October 2011, bycatch should not exceed 20% of total landings on a weekly basis. Since 4 June 2012, bycatch must not exceed 20% of total landings over the period 4 June–31 December 2012. Norwegian Regulation J-250-2013 specifically protects basking sharks, spurdogs, portbeagle and silky sharks (From 1 January 2013, bycatch must not exceed 15% of total landings on a half calendar

year basis. Live specimens can be released, whereas dead specimens must be landed. From 2011, the regulations also include recreational fisheries. Norway has a 70 cm minimum landing size (first introduced in 1964). (ICES 2023c)

A zero TAC for spurdog for EU vessels was introduced in 2011. Since 2011 the annual Norwegian landings, which land significantly more spurdog than other countries, have been fluctuating between 217–409 tonnes, with reported landings of 367 tonnes in 2021. During this same year, total reported landings (all countries fishing in the Northeast Atlantic) were 539 tonnes and discards 639 tonnes. In 2020, ICES advised that "when the precautionary approach is applied, there should be no targeted fisheries on this stock in 2021 and 2022. Based on medium-term projections, annual catches at the recent assumed level (2,468 tonnes) would allow the stock to increase at a rate close to that estimated with zero catches. Any possible provision for the landing of bycatch should be part of a management plan, including close monitoring of the stock and fisheries". (ICES 2023c)

The last assessment for Spurdog in the Northeast Atlantic carried out by the ICES Working group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF) occurred in 2023. Since 2023, ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2023 and 2024 should be no more than 17 353 tonnes and 17 855 tonnes, respectively, being this the first spurdog non-zero quota advice since 2009 indicating that the stock is gradually recovering after directed commercial fishing was stopped. (ICES 2023c).

On this basis, the direct effects of the fishery are highly likely not to have a significant negative impact on this ETP species; also, the most recent surveillance report for the North Sea, Skagerak and Kattegat sandeel, sprat and Norway pout fishery MSC Certificate do not report any interaction of the fishery with ETP species (MRAG 2022).

F1.3 If the fishery is known to interact with ETP species, measures are in place to minimise mortality.

Clause is met considering that:

As indicate above, measures to reduce the bycatch of spurdog has been set in the area, including a zero TAC in all EU regulated waters. All alive individuals must be released. According to ICES, the annual catches at the recent assumed level would allow the stock to increase at a rate close to that estimated with zero catches (ICES 2023c).

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Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.1
FAO CCRF	7.2.2 (d)
GSSI	D4.04, D.3.08

F2	**Impacts on Habitats - Minimum Requirements**		
	F2.1	Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management decision-making process.	PASS
	F2.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats.	PASS
	F2.3	If the fishery is known to interact with physical habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

F2.1 Potential habitat interactions are considered in the management decision-making process.

Clause is met considering that:

Norway pout is a demersal fish; thus, the small meshed trawls may generate impacts in the seabed (Bigné et al. 2019), however Norway and the EU have a number of regulations to protect marine habitats from fisheries.

In Norway regulations are stablish by the Marine Resources Act and the Nature Diversity Act. the Marine Resources Act indicates that the Ministry shall evaluate which types of management measures are necessary to ensure sustainable management of wild living marine resources, where the ecosystem approach should take into account habitats and biodiversity. (Directorate of Fisheries 2024a). The Nature Diversity Act has the objective of maintain the diversity of habitat types within their natural range and the species diversity and ecological processes that are characteristic of each habitat type. (Norway Government 2024).

The EU regulations includes the Natura 2000 network, designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, (92/43/EEC, 2009/147/EC), which aims to maintain and restore habitats that support a number of species that form qualifying features to these designations. The habitat directive states: “This network, composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, shall enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range” (article 3) and further: “For special areas of conservation, Member States shall establish the necessary conservation measures involving, if need be, appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans, and appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual measures which correspond to the ecological requirements of the natural habitat types in Annex I and the species in Annex II present on the sites” (article 6). (Council Directive 1992). Also, Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures also contemplates in its article 21 the introduction of measures to minimise the impacts of fishing gear on sensitive habitats. (Regulation EU 2019).

F2.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on physical habitats.

Clause is met considering that:

Physical disturbance of benthic habitats by mobile bottom-trawl fishing gear in the > 12 m vessel category is evaluated using vessel monitoring system (VMS) and logbook data and provides information on the extent of the pressure, its magnitude, and potential impact on the seabed habitats and associated benthic communities. Results show that this pressure varies geographically across the ecoregion (ICES 2022).

The impact of the trawl on the bottom comes from the doors, from the middle-weight (when used), and from the ground rope (Eigaard et al. 2016). The doors and the weight produce trawl tracks on the bottom, while the rope interacts with organisms on the bottom and possibly produce a cloud of mud. The targeted species are fish are living off (not on) the sea bed, therefore, the fishery does not need to scrape the fish off the bottom. This indicates that there is little incentive for the fishery to interact strongly with the bottom, as it will only result in increased fuel costs; also, gear riggings do not use any kind of tickling chains or bobbins on the footrope of the trawl, and consequently the gear has a low surface impact. (MRAG 2017).

Norway pout is benthopelagic species often found just off the bottom on deep mud habitats. Generally, otter trawling is known to cause only causes subtle changes in the benthic community on mud habitats (Sanchez et al. 2000), with a short-term (2-5 days) negative effect but a longer-term positive effect (Kaiser et al. 2006). Impacts are clearly much smaller than beam trawling. (MRAG 2017).

F2.3 If the fishery is known to interact with physical habitats, there are measures in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.

Clause is met considering that:

A number of management measures have been established in Norwegian water to protect the habitat:

- Norwegian regulation J-61-2019 regulating bottom gears to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems (https://fiskeridir.no/Yrkesfiske/Regelverk-og-reguleringer/J-meldinger/Kommende-J-meldinger/J-61-2019)
- Trawling is forbidden within the majority of the 12 nautical mile limit from Norwegian baselines (in some instances, this limit is set at 6 nautical miles). Much of the cold-water coral reefs are located within this limit
- Norwegian Regulation J-40-2016 – which applies to all the Norwegian EEZ establishes in its article 2 that when a trawl vessel catches more than 30 kgs of coral or 400 kg of sponges in a single haul, the vessel shall stop fishing and move position at least 2 nautical miles in order to avoid such catches. The incident must be reported to the Directorate of Fisheries
- Regulation J-40-2016 requires that when fishing in a “new fishing area” in the Norwegian EEZ or the Svalbard, vessels must have a special permit from the Directorate of Fisheries
- Fishing below 1000 m within the Norwegian EEZ is banned in order to protect deep-water sensitive habitats and species.

Existing EU technical measures such as the closed Norway pout box, minimum mesh size in the fishery, and bycatch regulations to protect other species have been maintained for all directed fishing in EU waters. Norwegian vessels fishing for the stock in EU and Norway waters are obliged to use a sorting grid to reduce unwanted bycatch and discarding of juvenile Norway pout. The closed Norway pout box will guarantee no vessel (trawler or pelagic gear) will interact with the seabed as all fishing operations are prohibited when the box is closed. (ICES 2023)

References

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Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005. http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/1241/oj

Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.2
FAO CCRF	6.8
GSSI	D.2.07, D.6.07, D3.09

F3	**Ecosystem Impacts - Minimum Requirements**		
	F3.1	The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process.	PASS
	F3.2	There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.	PASS
	F3.3	If one or more of the species identified during species categorisation plays a key role in the marine ecosystem, additional precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals.	PASS
		Clause outcome:	PASS

F3.1 The broader ecosystem within which the fishery occurs is considered during the management decision-making process.

Clause is met considering that:

The effects of the Norway pout fishery on the ecosystem may include physical disturbance, interaction with ETP species, bycatch of non-target species, ghost fishing and most importantly, the impacts of removal of Norway pout on dependent predators (covered in more detail in F3.3).

Physical disturbance as result of the bottom-trawl interaction (section F2) and the interaction with ETP species (section F1); are regulated to minimize the impact of the fishery in the ecosystem. In order to protect other species (cod, haddock, whiting, saithe and herring as well as mackerel, squids, flatfish, gurnards, Nephrops) there is a row of technical management measures in force for the small-meshed fishery in the North Sea such as the closed Nor-way pout box, bycatch regulations, minimum mesh size, and minimum landing size (ICES 2023a).

Abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear is a significant problem in all fisheries. These gears continue to catch or trap fish, birds, and mammals for a long time. This is known as ghost fishing. Ghost fishing is more problematic in deeper waters because of lower rates of biofouling and tidal scouring so gears continue to fish effectively. The magnitude of ghost fishing in the Norwegian Sea is not quantified (ICES 2022). Norway and the EU promotes the report of gear loss and gear retrieval projects in order to reduce the risk of new losses and to increase the possibility of recovery it (Directorate of Fisheries 2024) (EC 2018).

F3.2 There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.

Clause is met considering that:

As described in section F1 and F2 of this report, interaction with ETP species and physical disturbance of the seabed as consequence of the Norway pout fishery is low. In order to protect other species (cod, haddock, whiting, saithe and herring as well as mackerel, squids, flatfish, gurnards, Nephrops) there is a row of technical management measures in force for the small-meshed fishery in the North Sea such as the closed Norway pout box, bycatch regulations, minimum mesh size, and minimum landing size (Nielsen et al. 2016, ICES 2023a).

Bycatch of herring, saithe, cod, haddock, whiting, and monkfish at various levels in the small meshed fishery in the North Sea and Skagerrak directed towards Norway pout has been documented, however, bycatches of these species have been relatively low in the recent decade, and in general, the bycatch levels have decreased in the Norway pout fishery over the years. Furthermore, according to the latest WGNSSK in 2023, review of scientific documentation show that gear selective devices can be used in the Norway pout fishery, significantly reducing bycatches of juvenile gadoids, larger gadoids, and other non-target species. Sorting grids are at present used in the Norwegian and Danish fishery (partly implemented as management measures for the larger vessels), but modification of the selective devices and their implementation in management is still ongoing. Existing technical measures such as the closed Norway pout box, minimum mesh size in the fishery, and bycatch regulations to protect other species have been maintained. Norwegian trawlers have not been allowed to fish Norway pout in British zone (previous EU sone) in 2021, 2022 and 2023 (ICES 2023a).

All this, in addition to the effective Norway pout management fishery (section M and A), indicates that the fishery does not have a significative negative impact on the marine ecosystem where the fishery occurs.

F3.3 If one or more of the species identified during species categorisation plays a key role in the marine ecosystem, additional precaution is included in recommendations relating to the total permissible fishery removals.

Clause is met considering that:

ICES WGNSSK indicates: “Norway pout is a short-lived species and most likely a one-time spawner. The population dynamics of Norway pout in the North Sea and Skagerrak are very dependent on changes caused by recruitment variation and variation in predation or other natural mortality, and less by the fishery. Recruitment is highly variable and influences SSB and total stock biomass (TSB) rapidly because of the short life span of the species. Only limited knowledge is available on the influence of environmental factors, such as temperature, on the recruitment (Nielsen et al., 2016). Norway pout natural NSF Confidential mortality is likely influenced by spawning and maturity having implications for its age specific availability to predators in the ecosystem and the fishery (Nielsen et al., 2012). On this basis, Norway pout should be managed as a short-lived species.

With present fishing mortality levels in recent years the status of the stock is more determined by natural processes and less by the fishery, and in general the fishing mortality on 0-group Norway pout is low.

This stock is among other an important food source for the species saithe, haddock, cod, whiting, and mackerel and predation mortality is significant. Especially the more recent high abundance of saithe predators and the more constant high stock level of northern mackerel as likely predators on smaller Norway pout are likely to significantly affect the Norway pout population dynamics. Interspecific and intraspecific density patterns in Norway pout mortality and maturity have been documented. Natural mortality levels by age and season used in the stock assessment do include the predation mortality levels estimated for the stock, and in the 2012 Inter-benchmark assessment revised values for natural mortality have been used based on the results from Nielsen et al. (2012). Biological interactions with respect to intra-specific and inter-specific relationships for Norway pout stock dynamics and important predator stock dynamics have been also reviewed”. (ICES 2023a)

And concludes: “There is a need to ensure that the stock remains high enough to provide food for a variety of predator species. It is advised that bycatches of other species should also be considered in management of the fishery. Also, it is advised that existing measures to protect other species should be maintained”. (ICES 2023a)

The key role of the species is taking into consideration when recommending total permissible fishery removals.

References

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Links	
MarinTrust Standard clause	1.3.3.3

FAO CCRF	7.2.2 (d)
GSSI	D.2.09, D3.10, D.6.09

SOCIAL CRITERION

In addition to the scored criteria listed above, applicants must commit to ensuring that vessels operating in the fishery adhere to internationally recognised guidance on human rights. They must also commit to ensuring there is no use of enforced or unpaid labour in the fleet(s) operating upon the resource.

Appendix A - Determining Resilience Ratings

The assessment of Category B species described in this assessment report template utilises a resilience rating system suggested by the American Fisheries Society. This approach was chosen because it is also used by FishBase, and so the resilience ratings for many thousands of species are freely available online. As described by FishBase, the following is the process used to arrive at the resilience ratings:

"*The American Fisheries Society (AFS) has suggested values for several biological parameters that allow classification of a fish population or species into categories of high, medium, low and very low resilience or productivity (Musick 1999). If no reliable estimate of r_m (see below) is available, the assignment is to the lowest category for which any of the available parameters fits. For each of these categories, AFS has suggested thresholds for decline over the longer of 10 years or three generations. If an observed decline measured in biomass or numbers of mature individuals exceeds the indicated threshold value, the population or species is considered vulnerable to extinction unless explicitly shown otherwise. If one sex strongly limits the reproductive capacity of the species or population, then only the decline in the limiting sex should be considered. We decided to restrict the automatic assignment of resilience categories in the Key Facts page to values of K, t_m and t_{max} and those records of fecundity estimates that referred to minimum number of eggs or pups per female per year, assuming that these were equivalent to average fecundity at first maturity (Musick 1999). Note that many small fishes may spawn several times per year (we exclude these for the time being) and large live bearers such as the coelacanth may have gestation periods of more than one year (we corrected fecundity estimates for those cases reported in the literature). Also, we excluded resilience estimates based on r_m (see below) as we are not yet confident with the reliability of the current method for estimating rm. If users have independent r_m or fecundity estimates, they can refer to Table 1 for using this information*."

Parameter	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Threshold	0.99	0.95	0.85	0.70
r_{max} (1/year)	> 0.5	0.16 - 0.50	0.05 - 0.15	< 0.05
K (1/year)	> 0.3	0.16 - 0.30	0.05 - 0.15	< 0.05
Fecundity (1/year)	> 10,000	100 - 1000	10 - 100	< 10
t_m (years)	< 1	2 - 4	5 - 10	> 10
t_{max} (years)	1 - 3	4 - 10	11 - 30	> 30

[Taken from the FishBase manual, "Estimation of Life-History Key Facts", http://www.fishbase.us/manual/English/key%20facts.htm#resilience]

Glossary

Non-target: Species for which the gear is not specifically set, although they may have immediate commercial value and be a desirable component of the catch. OECD (1996), Synthesis report for the study on the economic aspects of the management of marine living resources. AGR/FI(96)12

Target: In the context of fishery certification, the target catch is the catch of stock under consideration by the unit of certification – i.e. the fish that are being assessed for certification and ecolabelling. (GSSI)

MarinTrust Fishery Assessment Peer Review Template

This section comprises a summary of the fishery being assessed against version 2 of the MarinTrust Standard.

Fishery under assessment	Whole fish Fishery Assessment Norway Pout (Trisopterus esmarkii), FAO 27, ICES Subarea 4 and Division 3.a (North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat)
Management authority (Country/State)	**Norway/EU**
Main species	Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*)
Fishery location	FAO 27 Atlantic Northeast, ICES Subarea 4 (North Sea) and Division 3.a (Skagerrak and Kattegat)
Gear type(s)	Small-meshed trawls
Overall recommendation. (Approve/ Fail)	APPROVE

Summary: in this section, provide any additional information about the fishery that the reviewers feel is significant to their decision.
The assessment is consistent with MT Requirements, referenced accurately with the most recent evidence available and explanations provided substantiate the scores and outcomes provided. Species categorisation is described and referenced to most recent evidence in 2022 landings. M clauses are substantiated and provided with references for both Norwegian and EU (Danish fisheries). Cat A SPECIES (Norway Pout) are documented consistent with MT requirements with succinct and accurate accounts provided to justify scores for each A clauses. There are no other A or B species since the only Type 1 species identified is Norway pout. Type 2 species consist of both C (blue whiting, saithe, herring (autumn spawners), whiting, haddock) and D species (greater silver smelt and Horse mackerel) are documented consistently with references and tables for CAT D species in the PSA and explanations that justify the outcomes. A note is made regarding the increasing representation of blue whiting in the catches (Table 1 from MRAG 2023, DNV, 2022, 2021), currently assessed as Cat C and it does appear that the assessor understands that this may be of note to maintain under review.

General Comments on the Draft Report provided to the peer reviewer
The internal peer reviewer notes that The report was edited in response to the initial internal peer review feedback, including changes to the species categorisation section. The peer reviewer considers all original concerns to have been addressed indicating that the peer review process is working effectively. The assessment is consistent with the MT requirements, with detailed explanation and updated references published since the 2023 assessment.

Summary of Peer Review Outcomes

Peer reviewers should review the fishery assessment report with the primary objective of answering the key questions listed in the table below. Where the situation is more complicated, reviewers may instead answer "See Notes".

	YES	NO	See Notes
A – Fishery Assessment			
1. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MarinTrust fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?	Y		
2. Does the Species Categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?	Y		
3. Are the scores in the following sections accurate (i.e. do the scores reflect the evidence provided)?			
Section M - Management	Y		
Category A Species	Y		
Category B Species	Y		
Category C Species	Y		
Category D Species	Y		
Section F – Further Impacts	Y		

Detailed Peer Review Justification

Peer reviewers should provide support for their answers in the boxes provided, by referring to specific scoring issues and any relevant documentation as appropriate.

Detailed justifications are only required where answers given are one of the 'No' options. In other (Yes) cases, either confirm 'scoring agreed' or identify any places where weak rationales could be strengthened (without any implications for the scores).

Boxes may be extended if more space is required.

1. Is the scoring of the fishery consistent with the MarinTrust standard, and clearly based on the evidence presented in the assessment report?
Scoring is consistent with the MT Standard and clearly based on the available evidence with consistent referencing and succinct summaries of the data that justifies the scores given.
Certification body response
No comments

2. Has the fishery assessment been fully completed, using the recognised MARINTRUST fishery assessment methodology and associated guidance?
Yes, the fishery has been correctly assessed in accordance with the assessment methodology and associated guidance.

The assessor identifies Norway Pout as a Cat A species since enough data are collected to assess the stock each year. The stock is assessed by ICES using a MSY approach and an Age-based analytical assessment, and there are stablish B_{lim} and B_{pa} reference points to estimate the spawning-stock size under a precautionary approach.

All other species are assessed as Type 2 species including Blue whiting, saithe, herring, whiting and haddock were assessed as category C given they are subject to a management regime specifically aimed, with established reference points and an annual TAC stablish each year. Horse mackerel and greater silver smelt were assessed as category D since they do not have a management plan in place, neither reference point.

The Peer Reviewer is in agreement.
Note the comment regarding Blue whiting

Certification body response

No comments

3. Does the Species Categorisation section of the report reflect the best current understanding of the catch composition of the fishery?

Yes, the categorisation section refers to the most recent available information provided by the scientific bodies (ICES) and information compiled in recent MSC assessment reports from MRAG and DNV.

The assessor identifies Norway Pout as a Cat A species since enough data are collected to assess the stock each year. The stock is assessed by ICES using a MSY approach and an Age-based analytical assessment, and there are stablish B_{lim} and B_{pa} reference points to estimate the spawning-stock size under a precautionary approach.

All other species are assessed as Type 2 species including Blue whiting, saithe, herring, whiting and haddock were assessed as category C given they are subject to a management regime specifically aimed, with established reference points and an annual TAC stablish each year. Horse mackerel and greater silver smelt were assessed as category D since they do not have a management plan in place, neither reference point.

The peer reviewer notes the increasing trend in % Blue whiting appearing in the catches (based on the available references provided) representing 9% of catch in 2020 (referring to ICES Report stating '*The Norway pout fishery is a mixed commercial, small-meshed fishery conducted nearly exclusively by Denmark and Norway directed towards Norway pout as one of the target species together with Blue Whiting in the Norwegian fishery'*.

Blue whiting is noted in collated table from various references as representing 9% of catch in 2020 and >5% in previous years since 2016 in the table presented of combined data.

A clarification could be provided as to how relevant this is in balance of information specific to Norwegian catches caught in the Norwegian small mesh trawl fishery. The data is derived from a combination of EU Danish and Norwegian records which appear to represent midwater trawl gear.
The peer reviewer is not 100% certain that the small mesh gear used by this fishery is the same gear as that used to derive the data (mid-water trawl) and clarification may be helpful just to make sure.

The assessor also identifies that bycatch species have been relatively low in the recent decade and have decreased over the years due to management measures that have been enforced in the fishery (ICES 2023a) and may wish to confirm if blue whiting is a target or bycatch species in the Norway pout fishery. This may be something to keep under review based on future catch composition data available.

All said, the peer reviewer is not disagreement with the approach taken by the assessor.

One final note: If there were any ambiguity, another consideration could be to request the onsite auditor to enquire during the audits on the factories that share the assessment, as there are 6 factories and between them, further details may be forthcoming on the catch composition landed to each by this fishery.

Pelagia Egersund Sildoljefabrikk, Prima Protein AS, Pelagia Bodø Sildoljefabrikk, TripleNine Vedde AS, Pelagia Karmsund Fiskemel, Pelagia Målöy Sildoljefabrikk, Pelagia Karmsund Protein AS.

Certification body response

The presented catch data from 2016-2018 represent the catch composition for Norway pout with bottom (small mesh) trawl gear in the North East Atlantic (ICES 4 and Skagerrak, ICES 3.a.) by Norwegian vessels, where it is recognized that bycatch is composed mainly by blue whiting and horse mackerel (DNV 2022). 2020 data are catches in Norwegian Norway pout fishery by Norwegian vessels, but in this case, data are from bottom and midwater trawls are combined as "trawls" (DNV 2021). This information had been added to clarify the pertinence of the data in the species categorisation rationale in Table 5.

3M. Are the scores in "Section M – Management" clearly justified?

(M1 CLAUSES) Evidence and explanations are provided for scores under Section M which provides clear justification for this Section including for Norwegian and EU Denmark fisheries on Norway Pout, identifying the management agencies (Directorate of Fisheries, Norway) mechanisms for data submission to ICES for stock assessment purposes, stakeholder inclusion, reference to legal instruments and public commitments to sustainability.

(M2 CLAUSES): Scores are clearly justified.
Monitoring and control mechanisms are clearly described and the agencies responsible for carrying out these functions (Directorate and Coast Guard) for both Norway and EU. The framework and legal provisions for sanctions and fines is clearly defined. The assessor identifies that there are no reports or evidence to raise suspicion of non-compliance in the fishery, identifying the actions undertaken under the Norwegian Resources Act and that since catches are below TAC, there is little incentive for misreporting of catches in the fishery. The assessor provides a thorough description of the active monitoring of both Norwegian and foreign vessels in Norwegian waters by the FMC and that VMS transmitters on Norwegian vessels must be approved by the Directorate and installed only by those authorized by the Directorate. Norwegian vessels involved in fishing operations 15m and above are required to comply with position reporting. This also includes vessels of 12m (Norway and EU) when operating in the Skagerrak area.

Certification Body Response

No comments

3A. Are the "Category A Species" scores clearly justified?

Norway Pout is clearly justified as a Cat A species using references from the initial assessment in 2023 and substantial and detailed evidence is provided for clauses A1-A4, including references to the most recent ICES advice on fishing opportunities, catch and effort 9th October 2023 publication. Key items noted:

- Each year the ICES Working Group on the Assessment of Demersal Stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak (WGNSSK) conduct a stock assessment using an Age-based analytical assessment (quarterly SAM model, called SESAM).
- Stock status relative to reference points are available.
- The ICES advice provides an indication of the volume of fishery removals which is appropriate for the current stock status in the form of recommended catches in the upcoming year
- The assessor provides a thorough description of the ICES INTERNAL/ external review procedures that stock assessments are subjected too.
- The assessment is made publicly available.
- total fishing mortality on the Norway pout stock is restricted comes in the form of Total Allowable Catches (TACs), which are set each year
- TACs are within the specified ranges set out in ICES advice and catches are within the TAC for recent years (below TAC in recent years).
- historically, Commercial fishery removals have been prohibited when the stock has been estimated to be below the limit reference point.
- Spawning-stock size is above B_{pa} and B_{lim}

Certification body response

No comments

3B. Are the "Category B Species" scores clearly justified?

There are no Cat B species identified.

Certification body response

No comments

3C. Are the "Category C Species" scores clearly justified?

Several species are identified under Cat C

- Blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou)*
- Saithe (*Pollachius virens)*
- Herring (*Clupea harengus*) - autumn spawners
- Herring (*Clupea harengus*) - autumn spawners
- Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus)*
- Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus)*

In all cases, fishery stocks for Cat C species are subject to separate stock assessment processes and considered in the fishery removals associated with Norwegian pout fisheries and in all cases stock biomasses are above Blim (and above Bmsy) in the most recent assessments.

Scores are clearly justified.

Certification body response
No comments

3D. Are the "Category D Species" scores clearly justified?
There are two Cat D species identified: Greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*) Horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*) The Assessor provides justification for categorising as D – *'since the greater silver smelt do not have any agreed precautionary management plan in these areas and biomass estimates used an acoustic index from the Norwegian Continental Slope Deep Sea Survey in spring only from Subarea 2 (ICES 2023c). And also, that there is no management plan for horse mackerel in this area and no reference points are defined for this stock in terms of absolute values (ICES 2023d)'.* Concerning Greater silver smelt Productivity data was derived from Fishbase and Susceptibility data (availability/encounter ability) scores were deduced from Fishbase and references available from ICES working group (WGNSSK) on demersal stocks, Grimaldo et.al 2023 and FAO. The assessor chose a precautionary approach to score fecundity (wide range overlapping a score of 1 and 2 which the peer reviewer considers is an appropriate approach. Concerning Horse mackerel, similar productivity scores are derived from FishBase and Susceptibility scores deduced from a combination of Fishbase, ICES, FAO and Grimaldo et.al 2023 data. Scores are clearly justified in both species and Table D outcome does not require Table D4 scoring. Minor note reference to figure in Horse mackerel page 13 states Figure 1 Greater silver smelt distribution and should read Horse mackerel.
Certification body response
The change has been made in figure 1 from Greater silver smelt to Horse mackerel.

3F. Are the scores in "Section F – Further Impacts" clearly justified?
The scores in this section are justified by the assessor, with information from the ICES 2023 referring to the WFBYC of Protected Species in the NE Atlantic, operational since 20007. In the 2023 data call, for the Greater North Sea ecoregion, 416 marine mammals (6 species), 175 birds (17 species), 8657 elasmobranchs (24 species), 219075 teleosts (27 species), 2 lamprey (2 species) and 782 deep sea holocephalians (1 species) were reported from 3595 days at sea which refers to 2022 data. The assessor references Danish and Norwegian observation methods, being more specific to fisheries including the Norway Pout fishery by these nations. Data from Norway in 2021 and 2022 appears to be entirely from vessel crew observations and for Denmark, are split between electronic monitoring and at sea observation. No substantial evidence of negative effects by the

fishery on ETP species are identified and risk based outcomes for gears and likely ETP species encountered for the area where these fisheries operate are low.
The assessor identified that the only ETP species identified in the catch of this fishery is spurdog (IMR 2020), data from the Norwegian reference fleet of IMR to collect data on interactions with bycatch and ETP species in order to assess the impact of Norwegian fisheries on those species. For the larger vessels (>28m vessel length) the fisheries prioritised in the High-seas Reference Fleet include, among others, the industrial trawl fisheries targeting sandeel, Norwegian pout and blue whiting for fish-meal production. Measures in place include; Norway; introduced a general ban on targeted fisheries for spurdog in the EEZ and international waters of ICES SUBAREAS 1-14. A bycatch allowance is in place for other fisheries and caught specimens must be returned alive if viable or landed if dead. There is a zero TAC for the species in EU. An ICES stock assessment was recently conducted and ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2023 and 2024 should be no more than 17 353 tonnes and 17 855 tonnes, respectively. The direct effects of the fishery are unlikely to have a negative impact on the stock recovery. Recent MSC reports on the North Sea, Skagerak and Kattegat sandeel, sprat and Norway pout fishery do not report any interaction of the fishery with ETP species (MRAG 2022).
The peer reviewer agrees with the scores and Section F is clearly justified.

Certification body response

No comments

Optional: General comments on the Peer Review Draft Report

No further comments deemed necessary.

Certification body response

No comments