Greater silver smelt (*Argentina silus*) in divisions 5.b and 6.a (Faroes grounds and west of Scotland)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches in 2026 should be no more than 18 441 tonnes.

Non-fisheries conservation considerations

ICES has not identified any conservation aspects other than those related to the commercial fisheries.

Stock development over time

Fishing pressure on the stock is at F_{MSY} and spawning-stock size is above MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{PA}, and B_{lim}.

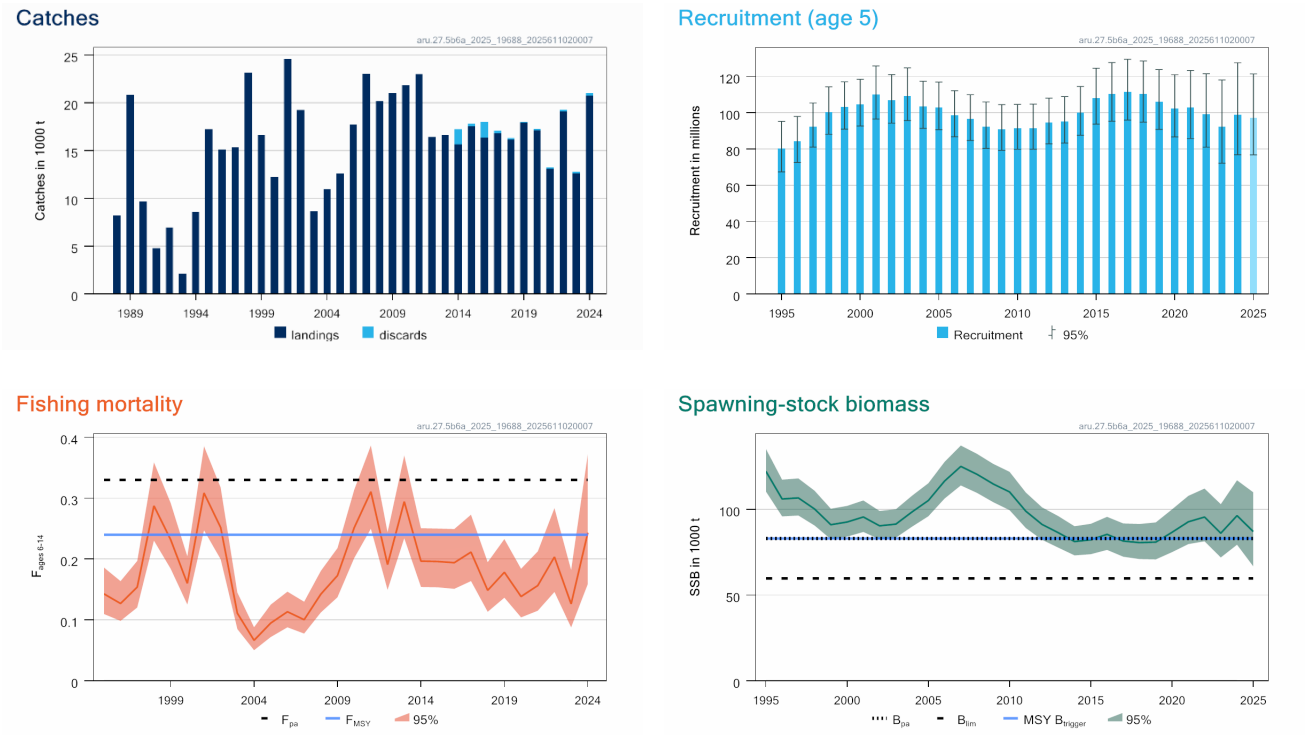

Figure 1 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Summary of the stock assessment with plots showing 95% confidence intervals. Catches, recruitment ($R_{age\ 5}$), fishing mortality ($F_{ages\ 6–14}$), and spawning-stock biomass (SSB). The assumed recruitment value for 2025 is shaded in a lighter colour.

Catch scenarios

Table 1 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Assumptions made for the interim year and in the forecast.

Variable	Value	Notes
$F_{ages\ 6–14}$ (2025)	0.232	Exploitation pattern as estimated for 2024 based on a catch of 19 047 tonnes for 2025
Spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2026)	83 157	Short-term forecast; in tonnes
$R_{age\ 5}$ (2025–2027)	97 045	Median recruitment, resampled from the years 2022–2024; thousands
Catch (2025)	19 047	Catch constraint based on the ratio of total allowable catch (TAC) to catch since 2010 (ICES, 2023a); in tonnes
Projected landings (2025)	-	ICES cannot estimate projected landings
Projected discards (2025)	-	ICES cannot estimate projected discards

Table 2 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Annual catch scenarios. All weights are in tonnes.

Basis	Total catch (2026)	Projected landings (2026)^^	Projected discards (2026)^^	F_{6-14} (2026)	$F_{Projected\ landings}$ (2026)^^	$F_{Projected\ discards}$ (2026)^^	Spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2027)	% SSB change*	% total allowable catch (TAC) change@	% advice change^	Probability SSB < B_{lim} in 2027 (%) ^^^
ICES advice basis											
MSY approach: F_{FMSY}	18 441	-	-	0.24	-	-	80 101	−3.7		−2.8	1
Other scenarios											
F = 0	0	-	-	0	-	-	96 843	16.5		−100	0
F = F_{sq} (2024)	18 111	-	-	0.23	-	-	80 663	−3.0		−4.5	5
F = F_{PA}	24 647	-	-	0.33	-	-	74 939	−9.9		30	6
SSB (2027) = MSY $B_{trigger}$	15 493	-	-	0.191	-	-	82 999	−0.190		−18.3	0
SSB (2027) = B_{lim}	42 490	-	-	0.65	-	-	59 730	−28		124	50
$F_{MSY\ lower}$ ***											
$F_{MSY\ upper}$ ***											
SSB (2027) = B_{lim}**											
SSB (2027) = B_{PA}**											
SSB (2027) = MSY $B_{trigger}$**											
SSB (2027) = SSB (2026) **											
SSB (2027) = B_{lim}**											

* SSB 2027 relative to SSB 2026.
^ Advice value for 2026 relative to advice value for 2025 (18 966 tonnes).
^^ ICES cannot estimate projected landings and discards.
^^^ The probability of SSB being below B_{lim} in 2027 presented as a percentage. This probability relates to the short-term probability of SSB < B_{lim} and is not comparable to the long-term probability of SSB < B_{lim} tested in simulations when estimating fishing mortality reference points.
** These catch scenarios were not calculated.
*** These reference points have not been estimated for this stock.
@ The percent change in TAC is not presented because the advice area and TAC unit do not match.

Basis of the advice

Table 3 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for greater silver smelt in this area

Quality of the assessment

Catch was updated for 2018–2023 based on revisions of catch data submitted to ICES in 2025, and the overall impact on the assessment and short-term forecast is considered negligible.

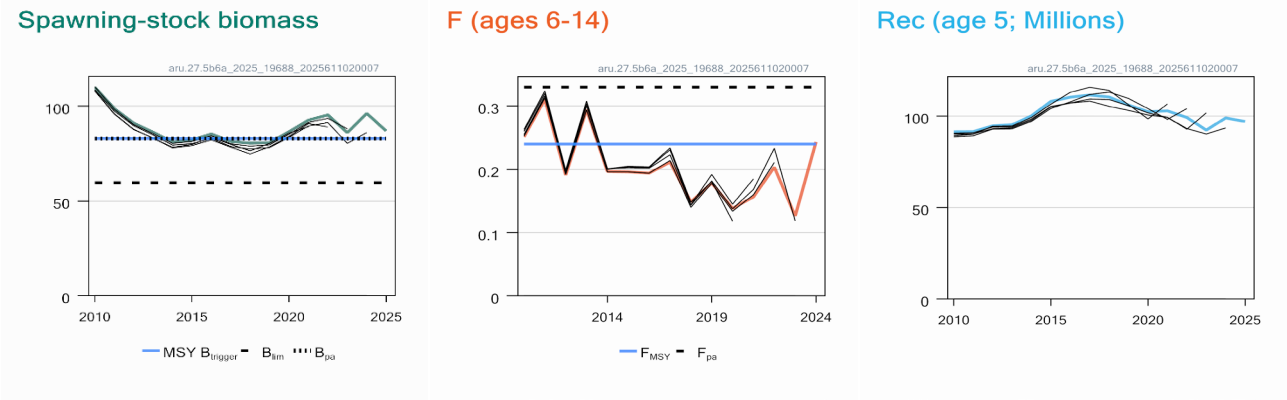

Figure 2 Greater silver smelt in division 5.b and 6.a. Historical assessment results. Final-year recruitment and biomass estimates are included.

Issues relevant for the advice

This stock is classified as Category 4 in the NEAFC categorization of deep-sea species/stocks (NEAFC, 2016). This implies that fisheries are primarily restricted to coastal state exclusive economic zones (EEZs); therefore, management measures are not taken by NEAFC unless complementary to coastal state conservation and management measures.

Management measures are set independently by the Faroe Islands in Division 5.b and by EU and UK for subareas 5–7.

Reference points

Table 4 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Reference points, values, and their technical basis. Weights are in tonnes.

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	MSY $B_{trigger}$	82 999	B_{PA}	ICES (2021)
	F_{MSY}	0.24	Stochastic simulations (EqSim) with segmented regression fixed at B_{lim}	ICES (2022)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	59 730	$B_{lim} = B_{pa}/exp(\sigma \times 1.645), \sigma = 0.2$	ICES (2021)
	B_{PA}	82 999	B_{loss}, lowest observed spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2014) from 2020 benchmark	ICES (2021)
	F_{PA}	0.33	The F that provides a 95% probability for SSB to be above B_{lim}	ICES (2022)
Management plan	F_{mgt}	Not applicable		
	B_{mgt}	Not applicable		

Basis of the assessment

Table 5 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	1 (ICES, 2023a)
Assessment type	Age-based analytical assessment (SAM model; Nielsen and Berg, 2014, ICES, 2025) that uses catches in the model and in the forecast*.
Input data	Commercial catches (mainly Faroese and Dutch catches, ages and length frequencies from catch sampling); indices from the Faroese groundfish summer survey (G3284), Faroese Deepwater survey (G2728), MSS Deepwater Slope Survey (G6642), and combined and standardized commercial CPUE from Faroe Islands and EU fleets; time invariant maturity ogive; natural mortalities set at 0.15 (ICES, 2023b)
Discards and bycatch	ICES can only quantify discards since 2014 and they are considered to be negligible since 2017
Indicators	None
Other information	Benchmark in 2020 (ICES, 2021)
Working group	Working Group on the Biology and Assessment of Deep-Sea Fisheries Resources (WGDEEP)

* View assessment in Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF)

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 6 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. ICES advice and official landings. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice^	Catch corresponding to advice	TAC Faroes in Faroese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)	EU TAC subareas 5–7	UK TAC subareas 5–7	ICES landings
2003	No fisheries unless data collection on (by)catch; no expansion unless proven to be sustainable	-		6 247		8 623
2004	Biennial	-		6 247		10 997
2005	No fisheries unless accompanied by programmes to collect data on both target and bycatch fish	-		5 310		12 606
2006	Biennial	-		5 310		17 699
2007	The fishery should not be allowed to expand unless it can be shown that it is sustainable	-		5 311		23 035
2008	Biennial	-		5 311		20 142
2009	Same advice as 2007	-		5 311		21 007
2010	Biennial	-	< 18 000	5 099		21 846
2011	The fishery should not be allowed to expand, and a reduction in catches should be considered	-	< 18 000	4 691		22 969
2012	No new advice, same as 2011		< 18 000	4 316		16 432
2013	Reduce catches by 10%	31 300	< 18 000	4 316		16 618
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	31 300	16 000	4 316		15 663
2015	No new advice, same as 2013	31 300	14 400	4 316		17 548
2016	Precautionary approach including PA buffer	10 030	13 000	4 316		16 330
2017	Biennial	10 030	11 500	3 884		16 806
2018	Precautionary approach	≤ 12 036	11 700	4 661		16 033
2019	Precautionary approach (same value as advised landings for 2018)	≤ 12 036	11 700	4 661		17 830
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 7 703	11 700	3 729		17 014
2021	Precautionary approach (same value as advised landings for 2020)	≤ 7 703	11 700	3 521	208	12 948
2022	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	≤ 24 493	18 000	10 976	650	18 849
2023	MSY approach	≤ 17 078	12 700	7 670	454	12 597
2024	MSY approach	≤ 17 695	12 800	7 929	469	20 509*
2025	MSY approach	≤ 18 966	13 700	8 495	503	

Year	ICES advice^	Catch corresponding to advice	TAC Faroes in Faroese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)	EU TAC subareas 5–7	UK TAC subareas 5–7	ICES landings
2026	MSY approach	≤ 18 441				

^ Until 2016, the advice was combined for subareas 1, 2, 4, 6–10, 12, and 14; and for divisions 3.a and 5.b.
* Preliminary.

History of the catch and landings

There are no reported catches in the NEAFC regulatory areas (RAs).

Table 7 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Catches inside and outside the NEAFC Regulatory Area (RA) as estimated by ICES. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	Inside the NEAFC RAs	Outside the NEAFC RAs	Total catches	Proportion inside the NEAFC RAs (%)
2022	0	19 092	19 092	0
2023	0	12 789	12 789	0
2024*	0	20 781	20 781	0

* Preliminary.

Table 8 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Catch distribution by fleet in 2024 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2024)	Landings	Discards
20 781 tonnes	100% trawl	Negligible (272 tonnes)
	20 509 tonnes	

Table 9 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. History of commercial landings; ICES estimated values are presented by country. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	Denmark	Faroe Islands	France	Germany	Iceland	Ireland	Lithuania	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	UK (EWNI)	UK (Scotland)	Russian Federation	Spain	Total
1988		287				3 040			4 884						8 211
1989		299				1 325		3 715	11 984			3 369	116		20 808
1990		3 574		14		110		5 870				112	3		9 683
1991		59	7					4 709				11			4 786
1992		1 439	1			100		4 964				466	4		6 974
1993		1 063						663				406			2 132
1994		960		43				6 217				1 375			8 595
1995		6 017		284				3 706				465	6 752		17 224
1996		9 495		1 384		295		3 953				3			15 130
1997		8 433		1 496		1 089		4 309							15 327
1998		17 570		464		405		4 696							23 135
1999		8 186	5	24		168		8 188			28	15			16 614
2000		3 713	83	403		3 178		3 436				247	1 185		12 245
2001		9 572	7	189		5 839		3 654				4 871	414		24 546
2002		7 058	1	150		3 035		4 014			424	4 280	264		19 226
2003		6 261		26		1		2 009				81	245		8 623
2004		3 441	147	652		46		5 460				549	702		10 997
2005		7 042	10	125		18		5 291				61	59		12 606
2006		12 606		213				4 841				3	35	1	17 699
2007		14 339		589				8 062	35				8	2	23 035
2008		15 921		10				4 186	6				19		20 142
2009		18 123		115				2 616	83			6	64		21 007
2010		18 627						3 139	7			60	13		21 846
2011		19 233						3 724			2	2	8		22 969

Year	Denmark	Faroe Islands	France	Germany	Iceland	Ireland	Lithuania	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	UK (EWNI)	UK (Scotland)	Russian Federation	Spain	Total
2012		12 525		538				3 248			5	5	111		16 432
2013	388	14 306		417				1 380					127		16 618
2014	711	11 242		1 018				2 332					360		15 663
2015		14 080	0	1 066	132			2 154	0				115		17 548
2016		13 179	0	267	345			2 526				0	13		16 330
2017	0	11 727		600	63			4 407	2				6		16 806
2018		12 087	8	1 001				2 763	5	1			168		16 033
2019	0	12 174	4	954	6	6		4 540		32			114	0	17 830
2020	0	12 045	8	384		0	114	4 330		111			22	0	17 014
2021	0	8 552	17	336	20	0		4 019		1		3		0	12 948
2022	4	9 408	1	728	15	4		8 664	0	21	6				18 849
2023	15	6 507	0	886		0	13	5 074		102		0		0	12 597
2024*		11 893		1 065		58		7 493							20 509

* Preliminary.

Table 10 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. History of ICES estimated discards are presented by country and area. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	Division 5.b				Division 6.a					Divisions 5.b and 6.a	
	France	Germany	Netherlands	UK (Scotland)	France	Germany	Netherlands	Spain	UK (Scotland)	Total	% of catch
2014		28			808	92			653	1 581	8.4
2015					161				109	270	1.5
2016	12				200				1 451	1 663	8.5
2017	31		0		217		9		14	270	1.6
2018	2				118				67	187	1.1
2019					13			9	64	86	0.5
2020				0			0	2	124	127	0.7
2021								0	156	157	1.2
2022								83	159	242	1.3
2023				0				104	88	192	1.5
2024*				4					268	272	1.3

* Preliminary.

Summary of the assessment

Table 11 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Assessment summary. Weights are in tonnes, recruitment in thousands. "High" and "Low" indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Year	Recruitment			Spawning-stock biomass			Landings	Discards	Fishing mortality		
	Low	Midpoint	High	Low	Midpoint	High			Low	Midpoint	High
	thousands			tonnes			tonnes				
1988							8211				
1989							20808				
1990							9683				
1991							4786				
1992							6974				
1993							2132				
1994							8 595				
1995	67399	80128	95262	110412	122241	135337	17224		0.110	0.143	0.186
1996	72549	84315	97989	95876.6	106064	117333	15130		0.098	0.127	0.164
1997	81083	92434	105375	96393.3	106685	118074	15327		0.120	0.154	0.197
1998	88116	100371	114330	90548.3	100206	110894	23135		0.23	0.29	0.36
1999	90951	103180	117054	82575.9	91051.5	100397	16614		0.184	0.23	0.29
2000	92634	104757	118465	84082.8	92636.8	102061	12245		0.125	0.160	0.20
2001	96524	110203	125821	86799.1	95564.6	105215	24546		0.25	0.31	0.39
2002	94270	106825	121052	82510.2	90417.4	99082.3	19226		0.200	0.25	0.32
2003	95642	109235	124760	83457.6	91398.5	100095	8623		0.085	0.111	0.145
2004	91380	103566	117378	89900.9	98539.8	108009	10997		0.050	0.067	0.088
2005	90644	102971	116974	95943.3	105166	115275	12606		0.072	0.095	0.125
2006	86711	98607	112134	106281	116521	127747	17699		0.088	0.113	0.147
2007	84690	96505	109968	113932	125057	137268	23035		0.078	0.100	0.130
2008	80342	92263	105952	109548	120424	132381	20142		0.112	0.142	0.181
2009	79236	90997	104504	104140	114776	126499	21007		0.137	0.173	0.22
2010	79870	91411	104621	99507.1	110152	121935	21846		0.20	0.25	0.31
2011	79914	91492	104747	89093.4	98929.2	109851	22969		0.25	0.31	0.39
2012	82836	94620	108080	82211.3	91211.9	101198	16432		0.149	0.191	0.24
2013	83268	95237	108926	77662	86389.2	96097	16618		0.23	0.29	0.37
2014	87572	100129	114488	73141	81220.8	90193.3	15663	1581	0.154	0.197	0.25
2015	93710	108036	124552	73843.1	82251.8	91618	17548	270	0.154	0.196	0.25
2016	95326	110318	127668	76344.2	85461.5	95667.6	16330	1663	0.151	0.194	0.25
2017	95985	111488	129494	72352.3	81505.5	91816.7	16806	270	0.164	0.21	0.27
2018	94820	110405	128551	71004.9	80603.3	91499.1	16112	187	0.113	0.149	0.195
2019	90791	106021	123807	70809.1	80899.2	92427.2	17910	86	0.137	0.178	0.23
2020	86649	102394	121002	75029.3	86634	100034	17141	127	0.104	0.139	0.184
2021	85747	102840	123340	79718.8	92744.8	107899	13085	157	0.115	0.156	0.21
2022	81018	99236	121550	81346.2	95516.7	112156	19068	242	0.146	0.20	0.28
2023	72149	92311	118106	71926.9	86099	103064	12597	192	0.088	0.126	0.182
2024	76809	98994	127587	79338.6	96346.9	117001	20785*	272*	0.159	0.24	0.37
2025	76744**	97045**	121430**	66711.6	87029.4	109967					

*Preliminary.
**Mean 2022–2024 recruitment from stochastic forecast.

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Download the stock assessment data and figures

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