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 on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the long-term management strategy agreed by UK, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and the European Union is applied, catches in 2026 should be no more than 533 914 tonnes.

Non-fisheries conservation considerations

Conservation aspects and associated management measures may exist at a national or regional level but were not reviewed by ICES.

Stock development over time

Fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY}. Spawning-stock size is below MSY $B_{trigger}$ and between B_{PA} and B_{lim}.

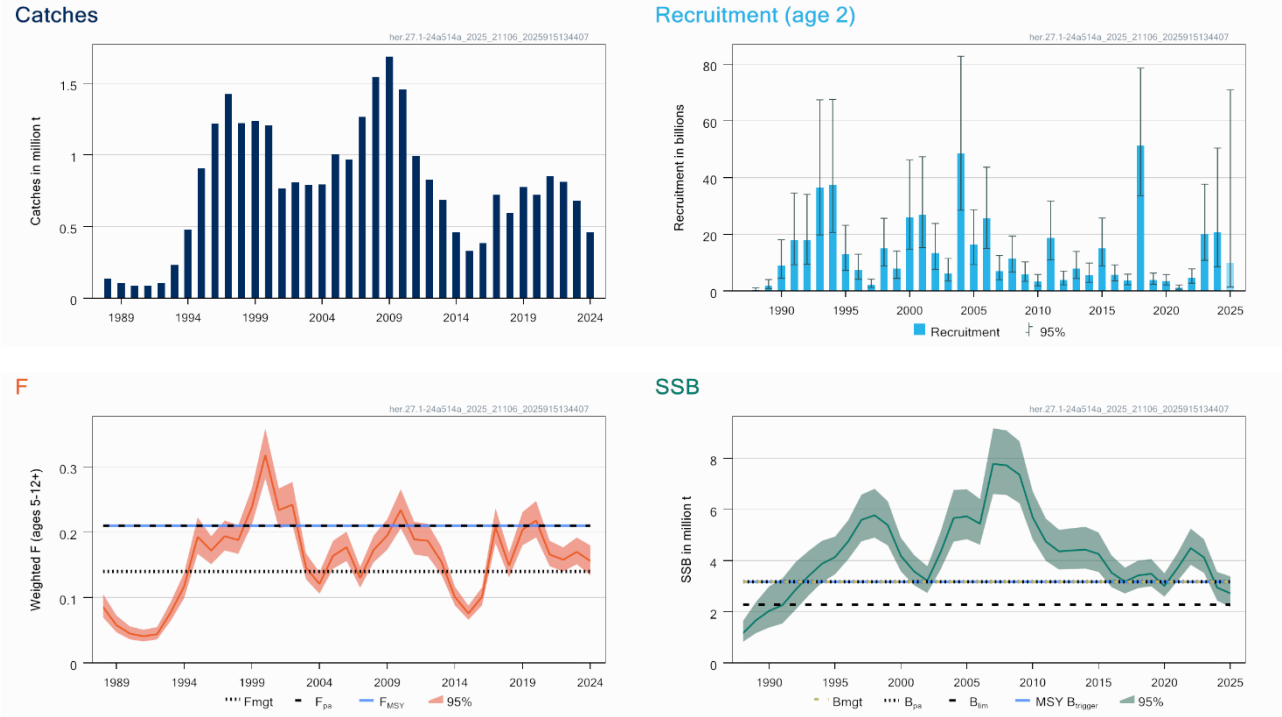

Figure 1 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5, and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Summary of the stock assessment. The assumed recruitment value for 2025 is shaded in a lighter colour.

Catch scenarios

Table 1 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Values in the forecast and for the interim year.

Variable	Value	Notes
$F_{ages\ 5–12+}$ (2025)	0.138	Based on assumed catches in 2025
Spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2026)	3.012	From the assessment model; million tonnes
$R_{age\ 2}$ (2025)	9.853	Median stochastic recruitment based on the years 1988–2024; billions
$R_{age\ 2}$ (2026)	9.489	Median stochastic recruitment based on the years 1988–2024; billions
Catch (2025)	435010	Sum of declared unilateral quotas from coastal states; tonnes

Table 2 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Annual catch scenarios. All weights are in tonnes.

Basis	Total catch (2026)	F (2026)	Spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2027)	% SSB change*	% catch change**	% advice change***	% probability of falling below B_{lim} in 2027
ICES advice basis							
Agreed management strategy^	533914	0.123	3823805	27	23	33	0.5
Other scenarios							
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach: $F_{MSY} \times SSB_{2026}/MSY\ B_{trigger}$	828441	0.199	3602227	19.6	90	106	1.8
F = 0	0	0	4241460	41	−100	−100	0
F_{PA}	867569	0.21	3570721	18.5	99	116	2
$SSB_{2027} = B_{lim}$^^	2473739	0.78	2286000	24	470	520	50
$SSB_{2027} = B_{PA} = MSY\ B_{trigger}$^^	1308259	0.33	3177000	5.5	200	230	10.8
$F = F_{2025}$	593409	0.138	3779317	25	36	48	1.1

* SSB_{2027} relative to SSB_{2026} (3 012 000 tonnes)
** Catch in 2026 relative to ICES assumed catch in 2025 (435 010 tonnes).
*** Advice value 2026 relative to advice value 2025 (401 794 tonnes).
^ According to the harvest control rule in the management strategy F(2026) = 0.123, since the SSB is forecasted to be between SSB_{mgt} and $SSB_{mgt\ lower}$ on 01 January 2026.
^^ SSB_{2027} values are the closest available approximation to B_{lim} and the estimated MSY $B_{trigger}$.

The advice for 2026 increases compared to 2025 because the incoming year classes (2021 and 2022) are estimated to be stronger than average. Because spawning-stock biomass (SSB) is predicted to be below the long-term management strategy $B_{trigger}$ at the start of 2026, the TAC constraint (-20%/+25%) in the management strategy does not apply.

Basis of the advice

Table 3 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Management strategy
Management strategy	A long-term management strategy was agreed by the European Union, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, and Russian Federation in 2018 (Agreed record of conclusions…, 2018) and subsequently by UK (Agreed record of conclusions…, 2020). ICES has evaluated the long-term management strategy and found it to be precautionary (ICES, 2018a). ICES has not conducted a full management strategy evaluation (MSE) with the updated reference points ($B_{trigger}$ and B_{lim}), but, provided the harvest control rule (HCR) advice is below that arising from ICES maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach, then precautionarity is assured

Quality of the assessment

The stock was benchmarked in 2025. In addition to changes in the model configuration, the new assessment model now includes radio-frequency identification (RFID) tagging data (as indices for ages 3–12+) and one new recruitment survey (ages 2 and 3) from the Norwegian and Russian Barents Sea ecosystem survey in August–October (BESS). The addition of new

data has improved the goodness of fit of the model, including the retrospective pattern, compared to the benchmark one (ICES, 2025b) Reference points have been updated; F_{MSY} has been revised upwards, and MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{PA}, and B_{lim} have been reduced.

The Barents Sea was not covered during the International Ecosystem Survey in the Nordic Seas (IESNS) in 2025 and there is therefore no data to inform the assessment on recruitment at age 2. The recruitment estimate for 2025 is therefore highly uncertain (Figure 1). This has however only a negligible impact on the advised catches for 2026, as at age 3 its contribution to the fishery and SSB is negligible.

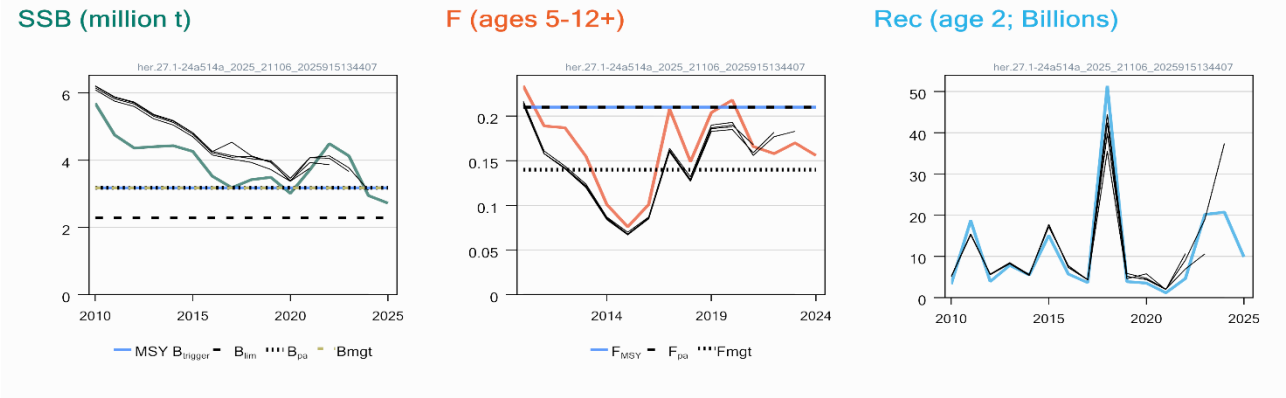

Figure 2 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Historical assessment results. The reference points were revised in 2025 following a benchmark, and only assessment results from the last year should be compared to the reference points indicated.

Issues relevant for the advice

Since 2013, catches have been consistently above the levels advised by ICES. The advice for 2026 is based on the target fishing mortality in the long-term management strategy agreed by the European Union, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, UK, and the Russian Federation; it does not consider the deviations from the long-term management strategy as evident from the sum of declared unilateral quotas. During the evaluation of the long-term management strategy (ICES, 2018a), a consistent overshooting of the total allowable catch (TAC) was not included in the simulations. Therefore, failing to adhere to the advised catches as derived from the application of the long-term management strategy may not be precautionary. Specifically, this may result in an increased risk for the stock to fall below B_{lim} and loss of catch in the long term.

A management strategy evaluation (MSE) evaluation with the updated reference points has not been undertaken, and the simulations do not account for catches consistently exceeding ICES advice. Nevertheless, the management strategy remains appropriate for the 2026 advice, as the probability of SSB falling below B_{lim} in 2027 is lower with the plan (p = 0.5%) than with the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach (p = 1.8%).

Reference points

Table 4 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Reference points, values, and their technical basis. F values correspond to fishing mortality weighted by the population numbers, for ages 5–12+.

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	MSY $B_{trigger}$	3.177	B_{PA}; in million tonnes	ICES (2025a)
	F_{MSY}	0.21	Stochastic simulations, capped to F_{P05}	ICES (2025a)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	2.286	Lowest spawning-stock biomass (SSB) that produced large recruitment, determined as SSB corresponding to the 1991 year class; in million tonnes	ICES (2025a)
	B_{PA}	3.177	Based on B_{lim} and assessment uncertainties. $B_{lim} \times \exp(1.645 \times s)$, with s = 0.2; in million tonnes	ICES (2025a)
	F_{PA}	0.21	F_{P05}; the F that leads to SSB ≥ B_{lim} with 95% probability	ICES (2025a)
EU–Faroes–Iceland–Norway–UK–Russian Federation long-term management strategy	B_{lim}	2.286	Precautionary harvest control rule (HCR) evaluated by management strategy evaluation (MSE) in 2018. Note it has not been fully tested whether it remains precautionary with the reference points updated in 2025; SSB values in million tonnes.	ICES (2018a, 2025a) Agreed record of conclusions… (2020)
	$B_{trigger}$	3.177		
	F_{mgt_lower}	0.05		
	F_{mgt}	0.14		

Basis of the assessment

Table 5 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	1 (ICES, 2023)
Assessment type	Age-based analytical model (SAM)*
Input data	Commercial catches-at-age (stock weight-at-age from surveys and, since 2009, from catch sampling). Four survey indices: Norwegian acoustic survey on spawning grounds in February/March (NASF [A7918]; 1988–1989, 1994–1996, 1998–2000, 2005–2008, 2015–2025); International Ecosystem Survey in the Nordic Seas (IESNS; A3675) covering the adult stock in the Nordic seas (1996–2025), and the juvenile stock in the Barents Sea (1991–2002, 2005–2007, 2009-2019, 2021,2024) the Norwegian and Russian Barents Sea ecosystem surveys in August-October (BESS [A5216]; 2004-2024) covering the juvenile stock in the Barents Sea and a time series of tagging indices based on RFID (TAGHER [S8417]; 2017-2024). Maturity ogive variable by year-class strength. Natural mortalities are fixed values from historical analyses (age 2 = 0.9; ages greater than 2 = 0.15).
Discards and bycatch	Not included, considered negligible
Indicators	None
Other information	This stock was benchmarked in 2025, reference points were updated (ICES, 2025a). A re-evaluation of the current management plan took place in 2018 (ICES, 2018a, 2018b), however, it has not yet been evaluated whether the HCR is precautionary with the updated reference points.
Working group	Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE; ICES, 2025b)

*View assessment in Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF)

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 6 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). ICES advice and landings. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Sum of agreed quotas	ICES catch
1987	Total allowable catch (TAC)	150000	115000	127306
1988	TAC	120000–150000	120000	135301
1989	TAC	100000	100000	103830
1990	TAC	80000	80000	86411
1991	No fishing from a biological point of view	0	76000	84683
1992	No fishing from a biological point of view	0	98000	104448
1993	No increase in F	119000	200000	232457

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Sum of agreed quotas	ICES catch
1994	Gradual increase in F towards $F_{0.1}$; TAC suggested	334000	450000	479228
1995	No increase in F	513000	900000*	905501
1996	Keep spawning-stock biomass (SSB) above 2.5 million tonnes	-	1425000*	1220283
1997	Keep SSB above 2.5 million tonnes	-	1500000	1426507
1998	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	-	1300000	1223131
1999	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	1263000	1300000	1235433
2000	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	≤ 1500000	1250000	1207201
2001	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	753000	850000	766136
2002	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	853000	850000	807795
2003	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	710000	711000*	789510
2004	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	825000	825000*	794066
2005	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	890000	1000000*	1003243
2006	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	732000	967000*	968958
2007	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	1280000	1280000	1266993
2008	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	1518000	1518000	1545656
2009	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	1643000	1643000	1687371
2010	Do not exceed the harvest control rule	1483000	1483000	1457015
2011	See scenarios in the 2010 advice	988000–1170000	988000	992997
2012	Follow the management plan	833000	833000	826000
2013	Follow the management plan	619000	692000*	684743
2014	Follow the management plan	418487	436893*	461306
2015	Follow the management plan	283013	328206*	328740
2016	Follow the management plan	≤ 316876	376612*	383174
2017	Follow the management plan	≤ 437364	805142*	721566
2018	Follow the management plan	≤ 384197	546448*	592899
2019	Follow the management strategy, F_{mgt} = 0.14 and B_{mgt} = 3.184 million tonnes	≤ 588562	773750*	777165
2020	Follow the management strategy, F_{mgt} = 0.14 and B_{mgt} = 3.184 million tonnes	≤ 525594	693915*	720937
2021	Follow the management strategy, F_{mgt} = 0.14 and B_{mgt} = 3.184 million tonnes	≤ 651033	881097*	851813
2022	Follow the management strategy, F_{mgt} = 0.14 and B_{mgt} = 3.184 million tonnes	≤ 598588	827963*	813834
2023	Follow the management strategy, F_{mgt} = 0.14 and B_{mgt} = 3.184 million tonnes	≤ 511171	692942*	680552
2024	Follow the management strategy	≤ 390010	446928*	460226
2025	Follow the management strategy	≤ 401794	435010*	
2026	Follow the management strategy	≤ 533914		

* There was no agreement on the TAC; the number is the sum of the declared unilateral quotas.

History of the catch and landings

Table 7 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Catch distribution by fleet in 2024 as estimated by ICES. All weights are in tonnes.

Catch (2024)	Landings		Discards
460 226	51% purse-seine	49% pelagic trawl	Discarding is considered to be negligible, but some slippage is known to occur
	460 226		

Table 8 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). History of commercial landings; ICES estimated values are presented for each country participating in the fishery. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	Norway	Russian Federation*	Denmark	Faroes	Iceland	Ireland	Netherlands	Greenland	UK	Germany	France	Poland	Sweden	Total
1986	19925	26000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	225256
1987	10841	18889	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	127306
1988	11507	20225	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	135301
1989	88707	15123	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	103830
1990	74604	11807	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	86411
1991	73683	11000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	84683
1992	91111	13337	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	104448
1993	19977	32645	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	232457
1994	38077	74400	-	2911	21146	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	479228
1995	52983	101987	30577	57084	174109	-	7969	2500	881	556	-	-	-	905501
1996	69916	119290	60681	52788	164957	19541	19664	-	46131	11978	-	-	22424	1220283
1997	86096	168900	44292	59987	220154	11179	8694	-	25149	6190	1500	-	19499	1426507
1998	74392	124049	35519	68136	197789	2437	12827	-	15971	7003	605	-	14863	1223131
1999	74064	157328	37010	55527	203381	2412	5871	-	19207	-	-	-	14057	1235433
2000	71350	163261	34968	68625	186035	8939	-	-	14096	3298	-	-	14749	1207201
2001	49503	109054	24038	34170	77693	6070	6439	-	12230	1588	-	-	9818	766136
2002	48723	113763	18998	32302	127197	1699	9392	-	3482	3017	-	1226	9486	807795
2003	47757	122846	14144	27943	117910	1400	8678	-	9214	3371	-	-	6431	789510
2004	47707	115876	23111	42771	102787	11	17369	-	1869	4810	400	-	7986	794066
2005	58080	132099	28368	65071	156467	-	21517	-	-	17676	0	561	680	1003243
2006	56723	120836	18449	63137	157474	4693	11625	-	12523	9958	80	-	2946	968958
2007	77908	162434	22911	64251	173621	6411	29764	4897	13244	6038	0	4333	0	1266993
2008	96160	193119	31128	74261	217602	7903	28155	3810	19737	8338	0	0	0	1545656
2009	10166	210105	32320	85098	265479	10014	24021	3730	25477	14452	0	0	0	1687371
2010	87111	199472	26792	80281	205864	8061	26695	3453	24151	11133	0	0	0	1457015
2011	57264	144428	26740	53271	151074	5727	8348	3426	14045	13296	0	0	0	992997
2012	49100	118595	21754	36190	120956	4813	6237	1490	12310	11945	0	0	705	826000
2013	35945	78521	17160	105038	90729	3815	5626	11788	8342	4244	0	0	23	684743
2014	26325	60292	12513	38529	58828	706	9175	13108	4233	669	0	0	0	461306
2015	17632	45853	9105	33031	42625	1400	5255	12434	55	2660	0	0	0	328740
2016	19750	50455	10384	44727	50418	2048	3519	17508	4031	2582	0	0	0	383174
2017	38938	91118	19037	98170	90400	3495	6679	12569	4358	5201	0	1	1155	721566
2018	33202	64185	17052	82062	83393	2428	4290	2465	2582	1989	0	0	425	592899
2019	43050	84364	21207	113945	108045	2775	5111	3190	1801	4188	0	1327	705	777165
2020	40943	74936	16523	103029	98173	2704	5060	3546	143	2969	0	1352	3065	720937
2021	48963	92841^	15854	114291	114299	1793	10939	6456	0	3365	0	1242	1101	851813
2022	44593	85870	15014	122083	112739	3209	3783	6818	9620	5600	0	0	3160	813834
2023	38930	74145	10237	90371	92197	1016	6119	6647	7607	2158	0	0	750	680552
2024	25900	49790	7422	58584	62967	2141	3097	5662	5843	2142	0	0	3575	460226

* USSR before 1992.

^ From ICES preliminary catch database.

Table 9 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Catches inside and outside the NEAFC regulatory areas (RAs), as estimated by ICES, as well as total landings. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	Inside the NEAFC Ras	Outside the NEAFC RAs	Total catches	Percentage inside the NEAFC RAs
2019	281092	496073	777165	36
2020	95322	625615	720937	13
2021*	20347	738626	758972	2
2022*	65015	662949	727964	10
2023	45342	635211	680552	7
2024	48462	411764	460226	11

* Without catches from the Russian Federation, which did not report catches inside/outside the NEAFC RAs for 2021 or 2022. In the past, around 50% of Russian catches were taken inside the NEAFC RAs.

Summary of the assessment

Table 10 Herring in subareas 1, 2, and 5 and in divisions 4.a and 14.a (Norwegian spring-spawning herring). Assessment summary. All weights are in tonnes and recruitment in thousands. F is the fishing mortality weighted by population numbers.

Year	Recruitment (age 2)			Spawning-stock biomass (SSB)			Total catch	Weighted F (ages 5–12+)		
	Low	Value	High	Low	Value	High		Low	Value	High
1988	193000	461000	1101000	823000	1162000	1641000	135301	0.070	0.086	0.106
1989	837000	1845000	4065000	1169000	1672000	2390000	103830	0.047	0.058	0.073
1990	4487000	9007000	18080000	1387000	2040000	3000000	86411	0.036	0.045	0.056
1991	9260000	17882000	34531000	1543000	2259000	3307000	84683	0.033	0.041	0.051
1992	9430000	17925000	34074000	2078000	2863000	3946000	104448	0.036	0.044	0.055
1993	19783000	36519000	67416000	2642000	3405000	4389000	232457	0.064	0.077	0.093
1994	20605000	37312000	67565000	3147000	3878000	4778000	479228	0.099	0.117	0.138
1995	7252000	12963000	23171000	3468000	4141000	4946000	905501	0.167	0.193	0.22
1996	4140000	7336000	12998000	4054000	4759000	5588000	1220283	0.151	0.172	0.194
1997	1261000	2299000	4191000	4755000	5595000	6584000	1426507	0.172	0.194	0.22
1998	8813000	15043000	25679000	4898000	5776000	6813000	1223131	0.167	0.188	0.21
1999	4440000	7907000	14081000	4594000	5391000	6326000	1235433	0.21	0.24	0.27
2000	14726000	26073000	46162000	3572000	4182000	4896000	1207201	0.28	0.32	0.36
2001	15291000	26908000	47348000	3039000	3582000	4224000	766136	0.21	0.23	0.27
2002	7612000	13472000	23844000	2736000	3218000	3786000	807795	0.21	0.24	0.28
2003	3484000	6326000	11488000	3641000	4318000	5119000	789510	0.128	0.146	0.168
2004	28480000	48553000	82772000	4741000	5665000	6769000	794066	0.106	0.121	0.139
2005	9339000	16352000	28632000	4839000	5733000	6793000	1003243	0.144	0.164	0.187
2006	15051000	25632000	43654000	4621000	5444000	6414000	968958	0.156	0.177	0.20
2007	3957000	7035000	12510000	6603000	7783000	9175000	1266993	0.115	0.130	0.147
2008	6722000	11417000	19392000	6569000	7730000	9097000	1545656	0.154	0.173	0.195
2009	3399000	5906000	10261000	6242000	7358000	8673000	1687371	0.173	0.195	0.22
2010	1828000	3269000	5846000	4827000	5695000	6718000	1457015	0.21	0.23	0.27
2011	11011000	18691000	31726000	3993000	4749000	5648000	992997	0.166	0.189	0.22
2012	2167000	3903000	7028000	3653000	4362000	5210000	826000	0.163	0.187	0.21
2013	4396000	7834000	13958000	3677000	4402000	5270000	684743	0.135	0.155	0.178
2014	3049000	5487000	9873000	3689000	4432000	5325000	461306	0.088	0.101	0.117
2015	8820000	15064000	25729000	3560000	4263000	5106000	328740	0.066	0.076	0.088
2016	3554000	5723000	9216000	2958000	3526000	4203000	383174	0.088	0.101	0.116
2017	2214000	3626000	5939000	2717000	3183000	3728000	721566	0.183	0.21	0.24
2018	33573000	51372000	78609000	2925000	3421000	4002000	592899	0.131	0.149	0.169
2019	2350000	3862000	6346000	2997000	3491000	4067000	777165	0.180	0.20	0.23
2020	2134000	3518000	5801000	2590000	3014000	3507000	720937	0.192	0.22	0.25
2021	630000	1161000	2141000	3205000	3715000	4307000	851813	0.148	0.166	0.187
2022	2749000	4628000	7792000	3837000	4491000	5257000	813834	0.140	0.158	0.177
2023	10807000	20173000	37653000	3521000	4129000	4842000	680552	0.151	0.170	0.192
2024	8532000	20739000	50414000	2438000	2948000	3564000	460226	0.134	0.156	0.180
2025		9853000*		2187000	2723000	3390000				

*Recruitment (age 2) is the medium stochastic recruitment based on the years 1988–2024

Sources and references

Agreed record of conclusions of fisheries consultations between Iceland, the European Union, the Faroe Islands, Norway and the Russian Federation on the management of the Norwegian spring-spawning (Atlanto-Scandian) herring stock in the North-East Atlantic in 2019. 2018 London, 6 November 2018. 6 pp.

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Download the stock assessment data and figures.

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