

Saithe (*Pollachius virens*) in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds)

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 24 032 tonnes. ICES is not in a position to advise on the corresponding level of fishing effort.

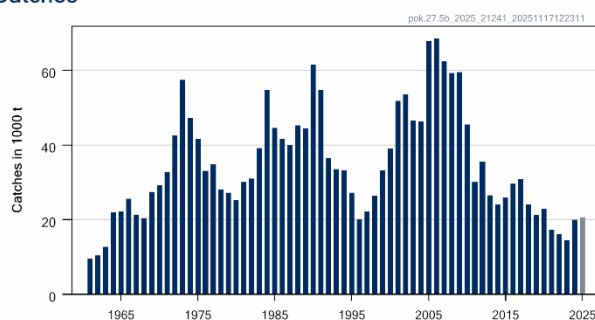
Non-fisheries conservation considerations

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

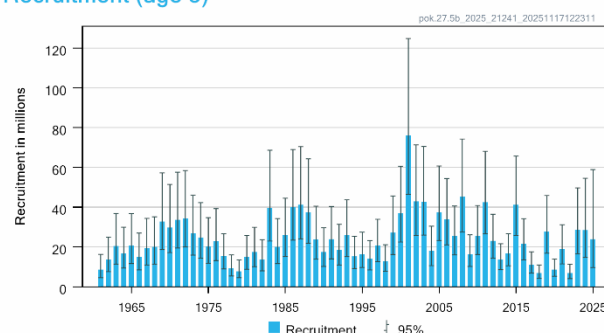
Stock development over time

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

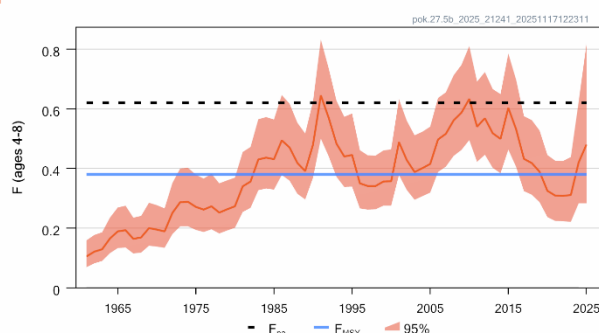
Catches



Recruitment (age 3)



F



SSB

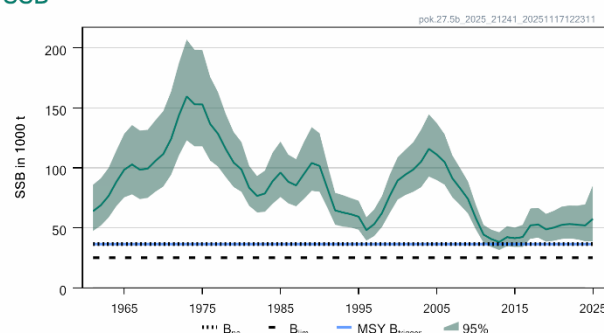


Figure 1 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Summary of the stock assessment. Catch in 2025, shaded in a lighter colour, is estimated for the full year based on reported catch in Q1–Q3, and used in the assessment to produce an estimate of F in 2025.

Catch scenarios

Table 1 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Assumptions made for the interim year and in the forecast.

Variable	Value	Notes
F _{ages 4–8} (2025)	0.49	Based on catch estimate of 20665 tonnes in 2025
Spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2026)	63521	in tonnes
R _{age 3} (2026 and 2027)	18934	Median of resampled estimates 2020–2024; in thousands
Landings (2025)	20665	Catch estimate for 2025 based on catch statistics to the end of September extrapolated to the entire year; in tonnes
Discards (2025)	0	Discarding is considered negligible; in tonnes

Table 2 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Annual catch scenarios. Weights are in tonnes.

Basis	Catch (2026)	F_{4-8} (2026)	SSB (2027)	% SSB change*	% advice change**
ICES advice basis					
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach: $F_{MSY} = 0.38$	24032	0.38	70895	12	-1
Other scenarios					
$F = 0$	0	0	93689	47	-100
$F = F_{2025}$	29515	0.49	65854	4	22
$F = F_{PA}$	35404	0.62	60816	-4	46

* SSB 2027 relative to SSB 2026 (63521 tonnes).

** Advice value for 2026 relative to advice value for 2025 as issued in 2024 (24281 tonnes).

The fishing mortality in 2025 differs slightly between the assessment ($F = 0.48$, based on catch-at-age data of 20 665 tonnes) and the forecast ($F = 0.49$).

Basis of the advice

Table 3 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). The basis of the advice.

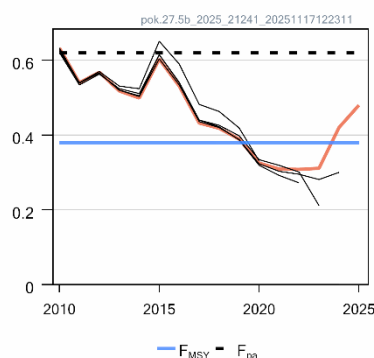
Advice basis	Maximum sustainable Yield (MSY) approach
Management plan	A management plan (Fiskidagaskipan og umsitingarættan, 2019) was implemented in 2021, but ICES has not been requested to evaluate it

Quality of the assessment

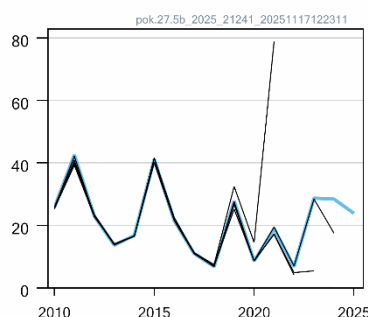
Starting with the summer survey in 2021, there was a change in survey vessel and a further change in survey footgear in the summer 2024 survey. The indices have not been adjusted for these changes and therefore may not be directly comparable.

There have been large changes in estimates of recruitment between assessments and a tendency to underestimate F in recent years.

F (ages 4-8)



Rec (age 3; Millions)



SSB (1000 t)

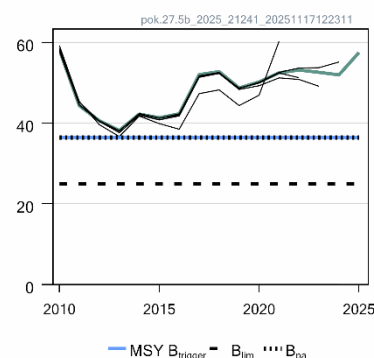


Figure 2

Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Historical assessment results. Results of the last five assessments are plotted, with the solid coloured line representing the current assessment. The plot does not show the line for fishing mortality that ends in 2021 because this year's assessment estimated fishing mortality in the current year (year y), while the last year in previous assessments was the last full calendar year (year $y-1$). The final year F in 2025 for the current assessment is based on estimated catch. The results for the 2021 assessment are prior to the interbenchmark and are not directly comparable to the results for the other years.

Issues relevant for the advice

In 2021, the Faroese authorities implemented a management plan (Fiskidagaskipan og umsitingarætlan, 2019) with a control rule that regulates the number of fishing days for cod, haddock, and saithe in the Faroe Plateau fishery. The management plan has not been evaluated by ICES; therefore, ICES bases its advice on the MSY approach.

ICES cannot quantify the relationship between effort and F for this stock.

Reference points

Table 4 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Reference points, values, and their technical basis. Weights are in tonnes.

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	MSY $B_{trigger}$	36 412	B_{loss} (spawning-stock biomass [SSB] in 2013)	ICES (2022)
	F_{MSY}	0.38	Stochastic simulations	ICES (2022)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	24 990	$B_{PA}/\exp(1.645 \times \sigma)$, where $\sigma = 0.229$	ICES (2022)
	B_{PA}	36 412	B_{loss}	ICES (2022)
	F_{PA}	0.62	F_{POS} , stochastic simulations (ICES, 2022): the F that leads to $SSB \geq B_{lim}$ with 95% probability	ICES (2022)
Management plan	SSB_{mgt}	Not applicable		

Basis of the assessment

Table 5 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	1 (ICES, 2023)
Assessment type	State-space model (SAM) using catches in the model and in the forecast (ICES, 2025)
Input data	Commercial catches (mainly Faroese catches, ages and length frequencies from catch sampling); Preliminary estimate of catch-at-age in the year (January to September) in which the assessment is carried out; Faroese bottom-trawl surveys FO-GFS-Q1 (G1264) and FO-GFS-Q3 (G3284); annual maturity data from FO-GFS-Q1 (G1264); natural mortality set at $M = 0.2$
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is considered negligible
Indicators	None
Other information	Interbenchmark in 2022 (ICES, 2022)

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 6 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). ICES advice, total allowable catches (TACs), and catch. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Agreed TAC*	ICES catch
1987	No increase in F	< 32000		40020
1988	No increase in F	< 32000		45285
1989	Reduction in F	< 40000		44477
1990	Reduction in F	< 41000		61628
1991	TAC	< 30000		54858
1992	Reduction in F	< 27000		36487
1993	Reduction in F	< 37000		33543
1994	TAC	< 26000	42000 **	33182
1995	TAC	< 22000	39000 **	27209
1996	TAC	< 39000	-	20029
1997	20% reduction in F from 1995 level	< 21000	-	22306
1998	30% reduction in effort from 1996/1997 level	-	-	26421
1999	F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 14000		33207
2000	F below than F_{PA} (0.28)	< 15000		39020
2001	Reduce fishing effort to generate F well below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 17000		51786
2002	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 28000		53546

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Agreed TAC*	ICES catch
2003	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 47000		46555
2004	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 48000		46355
2005	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 32000		67967
2006	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 24000		68465
2007	Average catch considerations	40000		62351
2008	Do not increase effort	-		57044
2009	Reduce fishing effort by around 20%	-		59558
2010	Reduce fishing effort by around 20%	-		45441
2011	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 38000		30084
2012	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{MSY} (0.28)	< 40000		35448
2013	$F < 0.28$	< 29100		26539
2014	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{MSY} (0.30)	< 29000		24103
2015	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{MSY} (0.30)	< 26000		25899
2016	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{MSY} (0.30)	< 36000		29672
2017	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach ($F \leq 0.30$)	≤ 46000		30852
2018	MSY approach ($F \leq 0.30$)	≤ 35003		24046
2019 ***	MSY approach	≤ 23967		21179
2020	MSY approach	≤ 35636		22920
2021	MSY approach	≤ 27368		17306
2022	MSY approach	≤ 37444		16119
2023	MSY approach	≤ 17843		14398
2024	MSY approach	≤ 15323		19911
2025	MSY approach	≤ 24281		
2026	MSY approach	≤ 24032		

* Not applicable since 1997.

** 01 September in the quota year to 31 August the following year.

*** Since 2019, fishing year equals to calendar year.

History of the catch and landings

Table 7 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Catch distribution by fleet in 2024 as estimated by ICES. All weights in tonnes.

Catch	Landings		Discards
19911	Pair trawls 97%	Other gears 3%	Negligible
	19911		

There are no reported catches in NEAFC regulatory areas.

Table 8 Saithe in Division 5.b. History of commercial catch and landings; official catches by country and ICES estimated catches are presented. Weights are in tonnes.

Year	Denmark	Estonia	Faroe Islands ^{^^}	France	Germany ^{^^}	Ireland	Netherlands	Norway	Portugal	UK	USSR/ Russian Fed. ^{***}	Greenland	Iceland	Total	ICES estimate [^]
1989			43624	**	29		22	51		9				43735	44477
1990	2		59821	**	15		67	46		33	30			60014	61628
1991			53321	**	32		65	103		84				53605	54858
1992			35979	120	5			85		172	12			36373	36487
1993			32719	75	2			32		704				33532	33543
1994			32406	19	1			156		589				33171	33182
1995			26918	10	41			10		221				27200	27209
1996			19267	12	3			16		633	18			19949	20029
1997		16	21721	9	5			67		460	28			22306	22306
1998			25995	17				53		356				26065	26421
1999			32439		100	0	160			508				33207	33207
2000			*	273	230	0	72		20	566				1161	39020
2001			49676	934	672	0	60		1	788				52131	51786
2002			55165	607	547	0	77		10	598				57004	53546
2003			47933	370	281	0	62		32	699				49377	46555
2004			48222	147	186		0	82	5	833	71			49546	46355
2005			71496	123	1		0	82		4354	210			76266	67967
2006	34		72169	315	49		0	35		1099	104	73		73878	68465
2007			66319	108	3		3	81		412	160	239		67325	62351
2008			63424	97	3		0	38		400	38	0		64000	59243
2009			63339	68	0		0	23		685	44	1	148	64308	59558
2010			48279	46			0	28		706	3			49062	45441
2011			32357	135						19				32511	30084
2012			38278	40								1		38319	35448
2013			28655	31						1	1			28688	26539
2014			25655	28				4		340				26027	24103
2015			27496	122				40		304				27961	25899
2016			30849	336			1	198		601				31986	29672
2017			32966	40				27		291				33325	30852
2018			25692	27				40		214		1		25973	24046
2019			22764	5				40		71			0	22877	21179

Year	Denmark	Estonia	Faroe Islands ^{^^}	France	Germany ^{^^}	Ireland	Netherlands	Norway	Portugal	UK	USSR/ Russian Fed. ^{***}	Greenland	Iceland	Total	ICES estimate [^]
2020			24334	20				38		352				24745	22920
2021			18684	63				20					3	18770	17306
2022			16599	68				7		747				17421	16119
2023			14973	29				6		510			3	15521	14398
2024			20912	15				42		510				21479	19911

* No official catches reported.

** Quantity unknown 1989–1991.

*** Catches up to 1990 are from USSR and, since 1991, from the Russian Federation.

[^] Includes catches from Division 2.a in Faroese waters, as reported to the Faroese Coast Guard.

^{^^} Catches from Germany in 1989 and 1990 are sum of catches from the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic.

^{^^^} Faroese catches are adjusted with a conversion factor and therefore they might not correspond to total landings

Summary of the assessment

Table 9 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Assessment summary. Weights are in tonnes, recruitment in thousands. “High” and “low” refer to 95% confidence intervals.

Year	Recruitment (age 3)			Spawning-stock biomass (SSB)			Total catch	Fishing pressure (ages 3–7)		
	Low	R	High	Low	SSB	High		Low	F	High
1961	4530	8585	16270	47430	63820	85875	9592	0.069	0.105	0.159
1962	7616	13808	25036	51853	68808	91308	10454	0.082	0.121	0.177
1963	11425	20524	36870	58660	76594	100012	12693	0.090	0.129	0.186
1964	9431	16801	29931	68193	88416	114637	21893	0.116	0.165	0.24
1965	11611	20653	36734	75467	98442	128410	22181	0.133	0.189	0.27
1966	8496	15136	26966	77930	102849	135735	25563	0.135	0.193	0.28
1967	10941	19401	34400	73970	98500	131164	21319	0.115	0.164	0.24
1968	11367	20005	35209	75007	99396	131714	20387	0.118	0.169	0.24
1969	18757	32785	57305	80182	105868	139781	27437	0.141	0.20	0.28
1970	17168	29726	51469	84419	111531	147351	29110	0.138	0.195	0.28
1971	19521	33540	57624	94246	124190	163649	32706	0.134	0.189	0.27
1972	20051	34227	58426	110352	143794	187372	42663	0.180	0.25	0.35
1973	15895	27058	46059	122972	159562	207038	57431	0.21	0.29	0.40
1974	14431	24711	42314	118014	153048	198483	47188	0.21	0.29	0.40
1975	11822	20279	34787	117945	152921	198268	41576	0.194	0.27	0.38
1976	13195	22766	39281	106129	136629	175893	33065	0.187	0.26	0.37
1977	8987	15487	26688	101075	128423	163170	34835	0.196	0.27	0.38
1978	5420	9335	16075	92310	115658	144911	28138	0.182	0.25	0.35
1979	4542	7834	13513	84053	104505	129934	27246	0.192	0.26	0.36
1980	8763	15054	25861	80068	98656	121558	25230	0.20	0.27	0.37
1981	10091	17371	29905	68315	83315	101609	30103	0.25	0.34	0.46
1982	7997	13763	23686	62958	76596	93188	30964	0.27	0.36	0.47
1983	22995	39743	68689	63313	78637	97670	39176	0.33	0.43	0.56
1984	11638	19982	34307	70099	88922	112800	54665	0.33	0.44	0.57
1985	15282	26094	44557	75723	96080	121909	44605	0.33	0.43	0.56
1986	23448	40227	69012	70414	88434	111064	41716	0.38	0.49	0.65
1987	24009	41145	70510	67962	85380	107261	40020	0.36	0.47	0.62
1988	21846	37477	64293	74086	94880	121512	45285	0.32	0.42	0.55
1989	13854	23690	40509	80906	104096	133934	44477	0.30	0.39	0.52
1990	10214	17425	29726	80074	101618	128958	61628	0.37	0.48	0.62
1991	14048	23823	40402	66861	83039	103131	54858	0.50	0.65	0.83
1992	10938	18542	31432	52589	64550	79233	36487	0.44	0.57	0.74
1993	15211	25803	43770	50995	62761	77241	33543	0.37	0.48	0.63
1994	9094	15218	25466	50310	61360	74837	33182	0.34	0.44	0.57
1995	9719	16332	27446	48413	59294	72621	27209	0.34	0.45	0.58
1996	8474	14014	23177	39317	48078	58791	20029	0.27	0.35	0.46
1997	12559	20648	33946	43156	53111	65363	22306	0.26	0.34	0.44
1998	7768	12816	21145	50827	62396	76597	26421	0.26	0.34	0.44
1999	16223	27210	45639	62481	76805	94413	33207	0.28	0.36	0.46
2000	22501	36945	60661	73512	89439	108816	39020	0.28	0.36	0.46
2001	46459	76159	124846	77381	94413	115194	51786	0.38	0.49	0.63
2002	25726	42850	71374	80071	98590	121392	53546	0.33	0.43	0.56
2003	25980	42814	70556	83867	105142	131815	46555	0.30	0.39	0.51
2004	10639	18004	30469	92755	115834	144655	46355	0.31	0.40	0.52
2005	23165	37512	60746	89815	111099	137428	67967	0.32	0.42	0.54
2006	21024	33830	54436	85993	104977	128151	68465	0.39	0.50	0.64
2007	16035	25521	40620	75506	91332	110475	62352	0.41	0.52	0.66
2008	27533	45233	74312	68980	82942	99730	59243	0.44	0.56	0.71
2009	10226	16330	26079	61916	74105	88692	59557	0.46	0.59	0.75
2010	16238	25757	40855	48782	58161	69342	45441	0.50	0.63	0.81
2011	26574	42545	68113	37470	44320	52422	30083	0.42	0.54	0.69
2012	14452	22966	36495	34021	40597	48444	35448	0.45	0.57	0.72

Year	Recruitment (age 3)			Spawning-stock biomass (SSB)			Total catch	Fishing pressure (ages 3–7)		
	Low	R	High	Low	SSB	High		Low	F	High
2013	8606	13661	21684	31476	38182	46316	26539	0.40	0.52	0.67
2014	10556	16801	26741	34717	42241	51397	24103	0.38	0.50	0.65
2015	25811	41200	65764	34060	41341	50180	25899	0.46	0.60	0.79
2016	13535	21521	34218	34097	42309	52499	29672	0.41	0.53	0.70
2017	6867	10984	17571	40941	52029	66120	30852	0.32	0.43	0.57
2018	4218	6802	10969	41766	52762	66654	24046	0.31	0.42	0.56
2019	16886	27849	45930	38496	48719	61656	21179	0.29	0.39	0.53
2020	5269	8579	13969	39257	50212	64223	22920	0.24	0.33	0.45
2021	11498	18934	31179	40688	52471	67665	17306	0.22	0.31	0.43
2022	4059	6782	11333	41177	53167	68649	16119	0.22	0.31	0.43
2023	16589	28724	49736	40373	52584	68487	14398	0.22	0.31	0.44
2024	14815	28420	54522	38816	51963	69564	19911	0.28	0.42	0.62
2025	9642	23847	58979	38571	57509	85744	20665*	0.28	0.48	0.82

* Catch estimate based on catch statistics to the end of September, extrapolated to the entire year.

Sources and references

Fiskidagaskipan og umsitingarætlan. Frágreiðing og tilmæli frá arbeiðsbólkinum at gera uppskot til umsitingarætlan og at eftirmeta skipanina í fiskiskapinum eftir botnfiski undir Føroyum (Fisheries management plan and harvest control rule for cod, haddock and saithe in Faroese waters) (in Faroese). 2019. 34 pp. https://lms.cdn.fo/media/12444/fiskidagaskipan-og-umsitingar%C3%A6tlan-fr%C3%A1grei%C3%B0ing-fr%C3%A1-arbei%C3%B0sb%C3%B3lki-mai-2019.pdf?s=k4aSmLc1W4eXb_RidnITC-WYwDA.

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