

Blue ling (*Molva dypterygia*) in subareas 6, 7, and 12 and in Division 5.b (Celtic Seas, western Hatton Bank, and Faroes grounds)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach is applied, catches should be no more than 6 536 tonnes in each of the years 2027 and 2028. This advice only applies to Division 5.b, subareas 6 and 7, and Division 12.b. ICES does not give advice for blue ling in divisions 12.a and 12.c.

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 below the $F_{MSY\ proxy}$, and the stock-size index is above $I_{trigger}$.

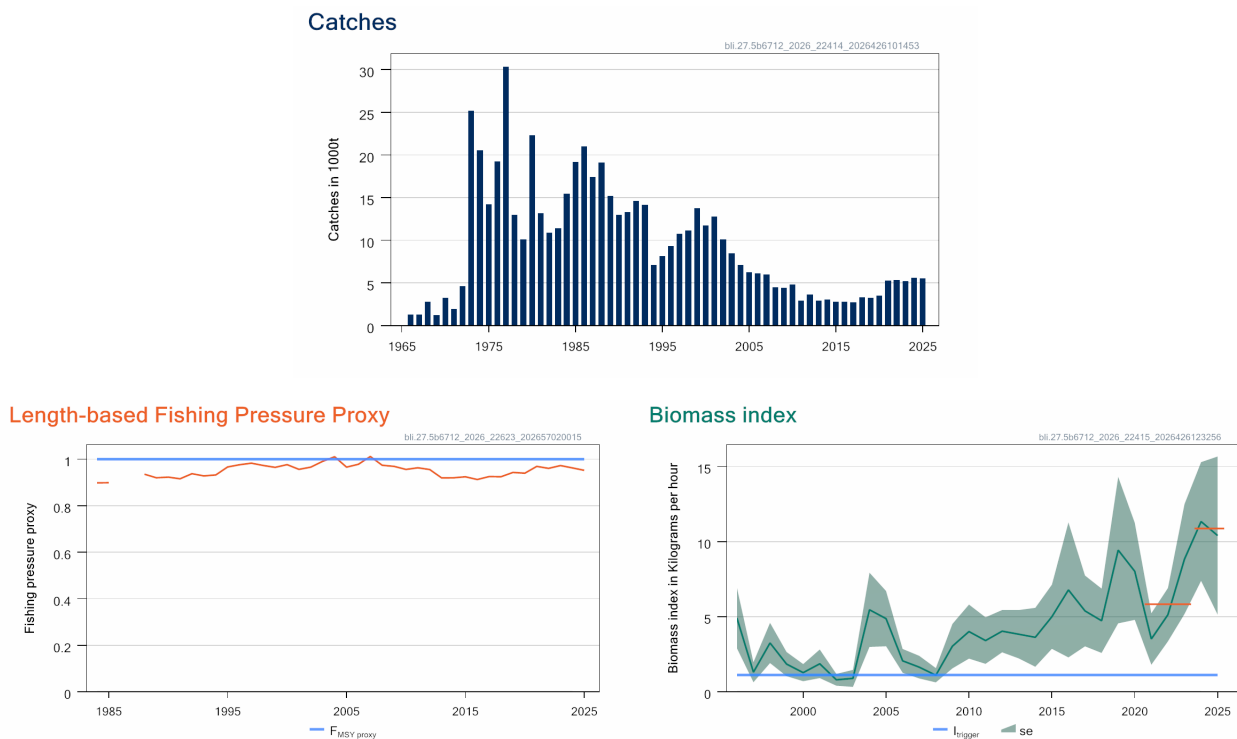


Figure 1 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. Summary of the stock assessment. Top: catches over time. Bottom left: the fishing pressure proxy $L_F=M/L_{mean}$ (inverse of the indicator ratio, f) from the length-based indicator (LBI) method is used for the evaluation of the exploitation status. Bottom right: standardized biomass index (and standard error) from the Faroese summer groundfish survey on the Faroe plateau (G3284; $kg \cdot hr^{-1}$). The horizontal orange lines indicate the average biomass index for 2024 to 2025 and for 2021 to 2023.

Catch scenarios

The ICES framework for Category 3 stocks was applied (r_{fb} rule, method 2.1, ICES, 2025). The standardized biomass index from the Faroese summer groundfish survey on the Faroe plateau was used as an indicator of stock development. The advice is based on the average recent catches (2023–2025), multiplied by the ratio of the last two index values (Index A) and the mean of the three preceding years available (Index B), a ratio of observed mean length in the landings relative to the target mean length, a biomass safeguard, and a precautionary multiplier. The stability clause was considered and applied to limit the increase in catch advice to 20% compared to the average catch in the reference period (2023–2025). Discards are considered negligible.

Table 1 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. The basis for the catch scenarios*. Catches and landings are in tonnes.

Catch last three years A_y (average 2023–2025)	5 447 tonnes	
Stock biomass trend		
Index A (2024, 2025)	10.9 kg. hr ⁻¹	
Index B (2021, 2022, 2023)	5.8 kg. hr ⁻¹	
r: Index ratio (A/B)	1.86	
Fishing pressure		
Mean catch length ($L_{\text{mean}} = L_{2025}$)	94.3 cm	
MSY proxy length ($L_{F=M}$)	89.8 cm	
Fishing pressure proxy ($L_{F=M}/L_{\text{mean}}$)	0.95	
f: multiplier for relative mean length in catches ($L_{\text{mean}}/L_{F=M}$)	1.05	
Biomass safeguard		
Last index value (I_{2025})	10.4 kg. hr ⁻¹	
Index trigger value ($I_{\text{trigger}} = I_{\text{loss}} \times 1.4$)	1.12 kg. hr ⁻¹	
b: multiplier for index relative to trigger $\min \{I_{2025}/I_{\text{trigger}}, 1\}$	1	
Precautionary multiplier to maintain biomass above B_{lim} with 95% probability		
m: multiplier (generic multiplier based on life history)	0.95	
RFB calculation**	10 131 tonnes	
Stability clause (+20%/–30% compared to A_y , only applied if $b \geq 1$)	Applied	1.2
Discard rate	Negligible	
Catch advice for 2027 and 2028 ($A_y \times$ stability clause)	6 536 tonnes	
Projected landings corresponding to advice***	6 536 tonnes	
% advice change [^]	–41%	

* The figures in the table are rounded. Calculations were done with unrounded inputs, and computed values may not match exactly when calculated using the rounded figures in the table.

** Formula [$A_{y+1} = A_y \times r \times f \times b \times m$]

*** [Advised catch for 2027 and 2028] \times [1 – discard rate].

[^] Advice value for 2027 and 2028 relative to the 2026 catch advice (11 170 tonnes).

The advice has decreased by 41% because of a change in the assessment method.

Basis of the advice

Table 2 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. 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 blue ling in this area

Quality of the assessment

In 2026, the retrospective performance of the previous assessment model was not acceptable, and it was therefore rejected (ICES, 2026).

Because the rfb-rule was applied for the first time, the average catch for last three years was used as starting value (A_y) (ICES, 2026). Only length distributions from trawl catches are used. A substantial and variable proportion of catches come from longline fisheries, from which length samples are not available and this may affect the current assessment. The Faroese summer groundfish survey on the Faroe plateau [G3284] was considered most reliable and representative indicator of biomass even though it does not cover the entire distribution area.

In recent years, there has been no fishing in Subarea 12 outside of Division 12.b (ICES, 2026). Historical catches may include catch from divisions 12.a and 12.c.

Issues relevant for the advice

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

The assessment and advice only apply to Division 5.b, subareas 6 and 7, and Division 12.b. Divisions 12.a and 12.c are considered a separate component, and ICES does not provide advice for this component because of a current lack of information.

Existing spatial and seasonal management measures are considered to be effective in protecting spawning aggregations.

There is still uncertainty on the stock structure for this widely distributed species.

Reference points

Table 3 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. Reference points, values, and their technical basis.

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	I_{trigger}	1.12	Biomass index trigger value (I_{trigger}), defined as $I_{\text{trigger}} = I_{\text{loss}} \times 1.4$, where I_{loss} is the lowest observed historical survey index value (2002)	ICES (2026)
	$F_{\text{MSY proxy}}$	$L_{\text{mean}} / L_{F=M} = 1^*$	Relative value from length-based indicator (LBI) analysis, assuming $M/K = 1.5$. $L_{F=M}$ is based on L_c (length at 50% of modal abundance), which varies each year.	ICES (2026)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	Not defined		
	B_{PA}	Not defined		
	F_{PA}	Not relevant		
Management plan	SSB_{mgt}	Not applicable		
	F_{mgt}	Not applicable		

*No fishing mortality reference points are defined for this stock in terms of absolute values. The LBI estimated values of the ratio $L_{\text{mean}}/L_{F=M}$ are used to estimate exploitation status relative to the proxy MSY reference point.

Basis of the assessment

Table 4 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. The basis of the assessment.

ICES stock data category	3 (ICES, 2025)
Assessment type	Trend from a biomass index and length-based indicator (ICES, 2026)*
Input data	Total international landings. Standardized biomass index from the Faroese summer groundfish survey on the Faroe plateau [G3284]. Growth parameters: $L_{\text{inf}} = 125$ cm; $k = 0.152$ years ⁻¹ (ICES, 2026). Available length data are from Faroese and French commercial trawl landings since 1984.
Discards and bycatch	Not included; discarding is considered negligible
Other information	Last benchmarked in 2014 (ICES, 2015). The benchmarked model was rejected in 2026.
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 5 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. ICES advice, total allowable catches (TACs), and landings estimates. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	EU quota in 5.b (Faroese waters)*	EU and UK TAC in subareas 6 and 7**	Faroese quota in subareas 6 and 7	Norwegian quota in divisions 2.a and 5.b and subareas 4, 6, and 7	EU and UK TAC Inter. Waters 12	ICES landings in Division 5.b and subareas 6, 7 and 12
2003	No direct fisheries [^]	-	3 240	3 678	940	-		8 467
2004	Biennial [^]	-	3 240	3 678	900	-		7 127
2005	No direct fisheries [^]	-	3 240	3 137	900	200		6 250
2006	Biennial [^]	-	3 065	3 137	400	200		6 151
2007	No direct fisheries	-	3 065	2 510	200	160		6 002
2008	Biennial	-	3 065	2 009	200	150		4 504
2009	No direct fisheries	-	3 065	2 009	150	150		4 433
2010	Biennial	-	2 700	1 732	150	150		4 809
2011	No direct fishery and effort to limit bycatch. A reduction in catches should be considered.	-	0	2 032	0	150	815	2 916
2012	No new advice, same as 2011		0	2 031	0	150	815	3 648
2013	Average catch 2008 to 2011	3 900	0	2 540	0	150	774	2 929
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	3 900	1 500	2 540	***	***	697	3 043
2015	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach	< 5 046	1 500	5 046	***	***	558	2 760
2016	No new advice, same as 2015	< 5 046	2 100	5 046	***	***	446	2 763
2017	MSY approach	≤ 11 314	2 000	11 314	***	***	357	2 701
2018	MSY approach	≤ 10 763	2 000	10 763	***	***	286	3 334
2019	MSY approach	≤ 11 778	1 885	11 778	***	***	229	3 278
2020	MSY approach	≤ 11 150	1 885	11 150	***	***	137	3 491
2021	MSY approach	≤ 11 522	0	11 522	***	***	96	5 290
2022	MSY approach	≤ 10 859	0	10 859	***	***	77	5 308
2023	MSY approach	≤ 10 952	0	10 952	***	***	77	5 187
2024	MSY approach	≤ 10 972	0	10 972	***	***	62	5 624
2025	MSY approach	≤ 11 197	0	11 159	***	***	38	5 529
2026	MSY approach	≤ 11 170	0	11 132	***	***	38	
2027	MSY approach	≤ 6 536						
2028	MSY approach	≤ 6 536						

* Quota of ling and blue ling combined.

** From 2011, TAC in EU waters and international waters of Division 5.b and subareas 6 and 7.

*** Included in EU TAC.

[^] Advice for blue ling in the Northeast Atlantic (not split by different assessment units).

History of catch and landings

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

Table 6 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. Catch distribution by fleet in 2025 as estimated by ICES. All weights are in tonnes.

Catch (2025)	Landings			Discards
5 558 tonnes	16% longline	77% bottom trawl	8% other gears	28 tonnes
	5 529 tonnes			

Table 7 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. History of of ICES estimated landings by country. All weights are in tonnes (time-series revised in 2024 following the addition of Subarea 12).

Year	Estonia	Faroes	France	Germany	Iceland	Ireland	Lithuania	Norway	Poland	Russia	Spain	UK-E and W	UK-SCO	unallocated	Total
1966		0	839	0		0	0	450		0		0	0		1289
1967		0	0	1043		0	0	273		0		0	0		1316
1968		0	0	1838		0	0	949		0		0	0		2787
1969		0	0	309		0	0	910		0		0	0		1219
1970		0	0	348		0	0	2894		0		0	0		3242
1971		0	0	1367		0	0	572		0		0	0		1939
1972		0	696	2730		0	0	1217		0		0	0		4643
1973		51	18080	3009		0	0	4028		0		4	0		25 172
1974		76	15390	3026		0	0	1916		0		167	0		20 575
1975	0	19	7147	4469	0	0	0	2549	0	0		9	0		14 193
1976	0	61	15937	1714	0	0	0	1535	0	0		1	0		19 248
1977	0	29	14953	1340	0	0	0	967	0	12500		560	0		30 349
1978	0	433	8922	3242	0	0	0	347	0	0		56	0		13 000
1979	0	1090	6399	1871	0	0	0	448	0	0		279	0		10 087
1980	0	1223	8378	12204	0	0	0	481	0	0		0	1		22 287
1981	0	1529	4243	7146	0	0	0	276	0	0		0	1		13 195
1982	0	2889	4536	3171	0	0	0	216	0	0		99	1		10 912
1983	0	4396	6144	271	0	0	0	606	0	0		13	2		11 432
1984	0	7343	7449	397	0	0	0	243	0	0		5	0		15 437
1985	0	4501	14126	253	0	0	0	323	0	0		2	0		19 205
1986	0	6756	13760	243	0	0	0	248	0	0		9	2		21 018
1987	0	3920	12645	553	0	0	0	298	0	0		4	10		17 430
1988	0	8289	10464	89	0	0	0	237	0	0	0	11	15	0	19 105
1989	0	4388	10022	75	0	0	0	685	0	0	0	0	16	0	15 186
1990	0	1374	10118	115	0	0	0	1369	0	0	0	0	3	0	12 979
1991	0	1763	11018	60	0	0	0	412	0	0	0	7	72	0	13 332
1992	0	3858	9866	27	0	0	0	828	0	0	0	6	45	0	14 630
1993	0	2975	10222	271	0	3	0	319	0	0	0	114	221	0	14 125
1994	0	1691	4242	156	0	74	0	313	0	0	437	13	143	0	7069
1995	0	2283	4168	191	0	14	0	182	0	0	405	104	796	0	8143
1996	0	1587	4753	99	0	0	0	202	0	0	966	103	1609	0	9319
1997	0	1146	6220	8	1	10	0	150	0	0	601	1039	1609	0	10 784
1998	0	1202	6893	6	122	22	0	88	0	0	539	486	1762	0	11 120
1999	0	2105	5584	6	796	41	0	152	0	0	1121	353	3601	0	13 759
2000	0	1766	5747	97	14	89	0	512	0	1	579	606	2343	0	11 754

Year	Estonia	Faroes	France	Germany	Iceland	Ireland	Lithuania	Norway	Poland	Russia	Spain	UK-E and W	UK-SCO	unallocated	Total
2001	85	1649	3627	13	2	819	16	680	0	0	1276	525	4110	0	12 802
2002	0	1101	3140	4	0	579	28	638	0	3	1561	250	2767	0	10 071
2003	5	2472	3687	1	0	30	66	344	16	2	1141	26	677	0	8467
2004	3	1475	3960	1	0	20	38	52	1	25	880	15	657	0	7127
2005	0	1655	3082	0	0	13	9	122	0	15	770	11	573	0	6250
2006	0	1939	3037	0	0	5	2	106	0	20	554	10	478	0	6151
2007	0	1881	3213	0	0	2	1	253	0	37	438	17	160	0	6002
2008	0	975	2501	0	0	0	2	110	0	122	580	2	212	0	4504
2009	0	978	2547	0	0	0	0	83	0	1	478	0	346	0	4433
2010	0	1539	2453	0	0	0	0	160	0	0	297	0	360	0	4809
2011	0	1167	1480	0	0	0	0	104	0	0	91	0	74	0	2916
2012	0	1015	1609	0	0	0	0	102	0	5	443	0	47	427	3648
2013	0	575	1715	0	0	0	0	132	0	3	223	0	205	76	2929
2014	0	880	1741	0	0	0	0	53	0	0	81	3	285	0	3043
2015	0	703	1119	0	0	0	0	366	0	0	189	11	372	0	2760
2016	0	1113	1086	0	0	1	0	111	0	0	171	0	281	0	2763
2017	0	854	1048	1	0	0	0	60	0	0	93	1	644	0	2701
2018	0	969	1290	0	0	0	0	237	0	0	102	0	736	0	3334
2019	0	638	1624	0	0	0	0	155	0	0	142	0	719	0	3278
2020	0	799	1569	0	0	0	0	121	0	0	287	0	715	0	3491
2021	0	848	1955	0	0	0	0	305	0	0	375	0	1807	0	5290
2022	0	639	1781	0	0	0	0	353	0	0	393	0	2142	0	5308
2023	0	575	1424	0	0	0	0	485	0	0	422	0	2281	0	5187
2024	0	500	2004	0	0	0	0	385	0	0	434	0	2302	0	5624
2025	0	488	1534	0	0	1	0	69	0	0	625	0	2813	0	5529

Table 8 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. History of ICES estimated landings by area. Weights are in tonnes. Time-series revised in 2024 following the addition of Subarea 12.

Year	Division 5.b	Subarea 6	Subarea 7	Subarea 12	Total
1966	1 269	20			1 289
1967	1 244	72			1 316
1968	2 661	126			2 787
1969	1 101	118			1 219
1970	3 066	176			3 242
1971	1 924	15			1 939
1972	3 933	710			4 643
1973	7 147	18 025			25 172
1974	3 798	16 777			20 575
1975	6 186	8 007			14 193
1976	12 938	6 310			19 248
1977	21 318	9 031			30 349
1978	4 898	8 102			13 000
1979	4 878	5 209			10 087
1980	10 019	12 268			22 287
1981	5 027	8 168			13 195
1982	6 457	4 455			10 912
1983	5 724	5 708			11 432
1984	8 094	7 343			15 437
1985	6 054	13 151			19 205
1986	7 821	13 197			21 018
1987	7 139	10 291			17 430
1988	9 526	9 294	22	263	19 105
1989	5 266	9 556	294	70	15 186
1990	4 799	7 405	223	552	12 979
1991	2 962	9 011	212	1 147	13 332
1992	4 702	8 550	407	971	14 630
1993	2 836	7 632	321	3 336	14 125
1994	1 644	4 334	339	752	7 069
1995	2 440	4 900	230	573	8 143
1996	1 602	6 564	365	788	9 319
1997	2 798	7 186	383	417	10 784
1998	2 584	7 497	601	438	11 120
1999	2 931	9 085	390	1 353	13 759
2000	2 524	8 352	284	594	11 754
2001	2 114	9 178	835	675	12 802
2002	2 024	6 053	676	1 318	10 071
2003	3 815	3 338	122	1 192	8 467
2004	2 700	3 459	63	905	7 127
2005	2 575	2 891	74	710	6 250
2006	2 850	2 733	67	501	6 151
2007	3 296	2 188	164	354	6 002
2008	2 060	1 846	34	564	4 504
2009	1 461	2 649	11	312	4 433
2010	2 244	2 478	37	50	4 809
2011	1 469	1 343	49	55	2 916
2012	1 424	1 548	44	632	3 648
2013	1 121	1 519	35	254	2 929
2014	1 523	1 409	31	80	3 043
2015	1 128	1 542	78	12	2 760
2016	1 496	1 228	10	29	2 763
2017	1 154	1 513	6	28	2 701
2018	1 339	1 967	4	24	3 334
2019	1 108	2 121	39	10	3 278

Year	Division 5.b	Subarea 6	Subarea 7	Subarea 12	Total
2020	1 475	1 975	28	13	3 491
2021	1 634	3 637	14	5	5 290
2022	1 507	3 796	5	0	5 308
2023	1 950	3 230	7	0	5 187
2024	1 935	3 684	5	0	5 624
2025	1 442	4 086	2	0	5 529

Table 9 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. Landings inside and outside the NEAFC regulatory area (RAs) as estimated by ICES. Time-series revised in 2024 following the addition of Subarea 12.

Year	Inside the NEAFC RAs (tonnes)	Outside the NEAFC RAs (tonnes)	Total landings (tonnes)	Proportion inside the NEAFC RAs (%)
2023	0	5187	5187	0
2024	0	5624	5624	0
2025	0	5529	5529	0

Summary of the assessment

Table 10 Blue ling in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b. Assessment summary. Standardized biomass index from the Faroese summer groundfish survey on the Faroe plateau in kg. hr⁻¹. High and Low refer to ± standard error. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	Biomass index			Fishing pressure proxy ($L_{F=M}/L_{mean}$)	ICES landings
	Low	Value	High		
1966					1289
1967					1316
1968					2787
1969					1219
1970					3242
1971					1939
1972					4643
1973					25172
1974					20575
1975					14193
1976					19248
1977					30349
1978					13000
1979					10087
1980					22287
1981					13195
1982					10912
1983					11432
1984				0.90	15437
1985				0.90	19205
1986					21018
1987					17430
1988				0.94	19105
1989				0.92	15186
1990				0.92	12979
1991				0.92	13332
1992				0.94	14630
1993				0.93	14125
1994				0.93	7069
1995				0.97	8143
1996	2.9	4.93	6.95	0.98	9319
1997	0.64	1.31	1.98	0.98	10784
1998	1.91	3.26	4.6	0.97	11120
1999	1.04	1.85	2.66	0.96	13759

Year	Biomass index			Fishing pressure proxy ($L_{F=M}/L_{mean}$)	ICES landings
	Low	Value	High		
2000	0.71	1.28	1.85	0.98	11754
2001	0.91	1.87	2.83	0.96	12802
2002	0.41	0.80	1.2	0.97	10071
2003	0.33	0.90	1.47	0.99	8467
2004	2.99	5.46	7.94	1.01	7127
2005	3.03	4.87	6.72	0.97	6250
2006	1.27	2.06	2.86	0.98	6151
2007	0.89	1.64	2.4	1.01	6002
2008	0.63	1.11	1.59	0.97	4504
2009	1.56	3.04	4.52	0.97	4433
2010	2.21	4.01	5.82	0.96	4809
2011	1.86	3.41	4.97	0.96	2916
2012	2.63	4.04	5.45	0.96	3648
2013	2.23	3.84	5.45	0.92	2929
2014	1.67	3.63	5.6	0.92	3043
2015	2.86	5.00	7.14	0.92	2760
2016	2.29	6.79	11.28	0.91	2763
2017	3.03	5.39	7.75	0.93	2701
2018	2.59	4.73	6.88	0.92	3334
2019	4.56	9.44	14.32	0.94	3278
2020	4.79	8.02	11.26	0.94	3491
2021	1.80	3.52	5.24	0.97	5290
2022	3.36	5.14	6.92	0.96	5308
2023	5.18	8.84	12.5	0.97	5187
2024	7.38	11.3	15.3	0.96	5624
2025	5.14	10.4	15.7	0.95	5529

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[Download the stock assessment data and figures](#)

Recommended citation: ICES. 2026. Blue ling (*Molva dypterygia*) in subareas 6–7 and 12 and in Division 5.b (Celtic Seas, Faroes grounds, and western Hatton Bank). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2026. ICES Advice 2026, bli.27.5b6712, <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.30931964>