

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 2027 should be no more than 22 865 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 below 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 2026 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
$F_{ages\ 6-14}$ (2026)	0.178	Exploitation pattern as estimated for 2025 based on a catch of 17 601 tonnes for 2026
Spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2027)	96 380	Short-term forecast; in tonnes
$R_{age\ 5}$ (2026–2028)	107 501	Mean recruitment, resampled from medians from the years 2023–2025; thousands
Catch (2026)	17 601	Catch constraint based on the ratio of total allowable catch (TAC) to catch since 2010 (ICES, 2023a); in tonnes
Projected landings (2026)	-	ICES cannot estimate projected landings
Projected discards (2026)	-	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 (2027)	Projected landings (2027)*	Projected discards (2027)*	F ₆₋₁₄ (2027)	F _{Projected landings} (2027)*	F _{Projected discards} (2027)*	Spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2028)	% SSB change**	% total allowable catch (TAC) change***	% advice change^	Probability SSB < B _{lim} in 2028 (%) ^^
ICES advice basis											
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach: F _{FMSY}	22 865	-	-	0.24	-	-	91 306	-5	-	24	0
Other scenarios											
F = 0	0	-	-	0	-	-	111 006	15	-	-100	0
F = F _{sq} (2026)	17 442	-	-	0.178	-	-	95 906	0	-	-5	0.1
F = F _{PA}	30 160	-	-	0.33	-	-	85 297	-11	-	64	0.4
F _{FMSY lower} ^^^	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
F _{FMSY upper} ^^^	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SSB (2028) = B _{lim}	61 490	-	-	0.83	-	-	59 730	-38	-	233	50
SSB (2028) = B _{PA}	32 891	-	-	0.37	-	-	82 999	-14	-	78	0
SSB (2028) = MSY B _{trigger}	32 891	-	-	0.37	-	-	82 999	-14	-	78	0
SSB (2028) = SSB (2027)	16 692	-	-	0.169	-	-	96 660	0	-	-9	0

* ICES cannot estimate projected landings and discards.

** SSB 2028 relative to SSB 2027 (96 380 tonnes).

*** The percent change in TAC is not presented because the advice area and TAC unit do not match.

^ Advice value for 2027 relative to advice value for 2026 (18 441 tonnes).

^^ 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 reference points have not been estimated for this stock.

The increase in advice is a result of an upward revision in stock size.

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. The current assessment estimates historical spawning-stock biomass (SSB) as higher than previous assessments.

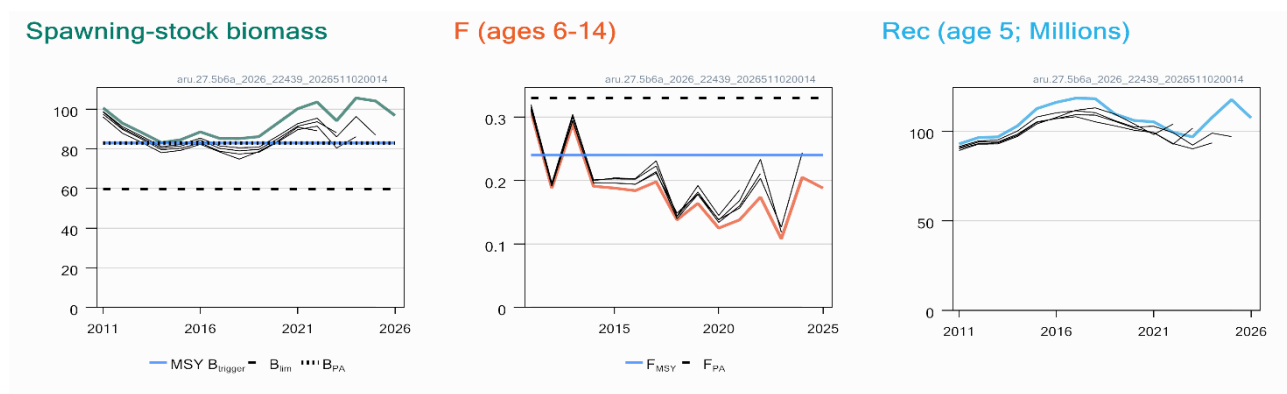


Figure 2 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Historical assessment results. Final-year recruitment and biomass estimates are included.

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 for Division 5.b and by EU and UK for subareas 5–7. This advice only applies to divisions 5.b and 6.a.

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 spawning-stock biomass (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, 2025)
Assessment type	Age-based analytical assessment (SAM model; Nielsen and Berg, 2014, ICES, 2026) 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, estimated as 2% in the last decade.
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	19 244*
2026	MSY approach	≤ 18 441	13 320	8 250	488	
2027	MSY approach	≤ 22 865				

[^] 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 areas (RAs) 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 (%)
2023	0	12 789	12 789	0
2024	0	20 781	20 781	0
2025*	0	20 118	20 118	0

* Preliminary.

Table 8 Greater silver smelt in divisions 5.b and 6.a. Catch distribution by fleet in 2025 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2025)	Landings	Discards
20 118 tonnes	100% trawl	3 tonnes
	20 115 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)	Russia	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
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

Year	Denmark	Faroe Islands	France	Germany	Iceland	Ireland	Lithuania	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	UK (EWNI)	UK (Scotland)	Russia	Spain	Total
2025*	0	12 998	43	911	152	269		5 061	84	594		0	3	0	20 115

* 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
2025*				2					1	3	0.02

* 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							8 211				
1989							20 808				
1990							9 683				
1991							4 786				
1992							6 974				
1993							2 132				
1994							8 595				
1995	67 090	79 811	94 945	110 554	122 290	135 272	17 224		0.110	0.143	0.186
1996	72 367	84 259	98 106	95 959	106 060	117 225	15 130		0.099	0.127	0.163
1997	81 493	93 273	106 757	96 465	106 654	117 920	15 327		0.121	0.154	0.196
1998	88 916	101 702	116 326	90 663	100 210	110 763	23 135		0.23	0.29	0.36
1999	91 843	104 539	118 989	82 858	91 256	100 504	16 614		0.184	0.23	0.29
2000	93 316	105 817	119 993	84 592	93 125	102 518	12 245		0.125	0.160	0.20
2001	97 612	111 530	127 432	87 504	96 288	105 953	24 546		0.25	0.31	0.38
2002	94 861	107 788	122 477	83 419	91 364	100 066	19 226		0.199	0.25	0.32
2003	96 496	110 352	126 198	84 528	92 475	101 170	8 623		0.085	0.111	0.144
2004	91 976	104 634	119 035	91 106	99 729	109 167	10 997		0.050	0.066	0.087
2005	91 414	104 234	118 853	97 269	106 447	116 492	12 606		0.071	0.094	0.123
2006	87 336	99 794	114 028	107 822	118 014	129 170	17 699		0.087	0.113	0.145
2007	85 551	97 930	112 100	115 625	126 720	138 880	23 035		0.077	0.100	0.129
2008	81 213	93 610	107 899	111 243	122 127	134 075	20 142		0.111	0.141	0.179
2009	80 358	92 498	106 471	105 857	116 560	128 345	21 007		0.136	0.171	0.22
2010	80 951	92 809	106 404	101 266	112 031	123 940	21 846		0.20	0.25	0.31
2011	81 084	92 958	106 571	90 778	100 728	111 769	22 969		0.25	0.31	0.38
2012	84 276	96 477	110 443	83 961	92 986	102 982	16 432		0.147	0.188	0.24
2013	84 461	96 899	111 169	79 488	88 207	97 883	16 618		0.23	0.29	0.36
2014	89 871	103 005	118 058	75 107	83 192	92 148	15 663	1 581	0.150	0.191	0.24
2015	97 692	112 700	130 013	76 196	84 647	94 034	17 548	270	0.148	0.188	0.24
2016	100 391	116 209	134 519	79 368	88 573	98 847	16 330	1 663	0.143	0.184	0.24
2017	102 011	118 536	137 738	75 974	85 266	95 694	16 806	270	0.154	0.198	0.25
2018	101 520	118 251	137 739	75 434	85 229	96 295	16 033	187	0.106	0.138	0.181
2019	94 348	109 717	127 589	75 845	86 174	97 909	17 830	86	0.126	0.164	0.21
2020	90 229	106 055	124 657	81 355	93 224	106 823	17 014	127	0.095	0.125	0.164
2021	88 507	105 305	125 293	87 034	100 287	115 557	12 948	157	0.103	0.138	0.184
2022	81 638	99 403	121 034	89 372	103 650	120 209	18 849	242	0.129	0.174	0.24
2023	77 560	96 907	121 082	80 128	94 211	110 769	12 597	192	0.078	0.108	0.149
2024	85 191	107 759	136 304	89 023	105 691	125 480	20 604	272	0.143	0.21	0.30
2025	88 119	117 734	157 303	85 061	104 178	127 591	20 115*	3*	0.127	0.188	0.28
2026	85 994**	107 501**	133 340**	76 537	96 843	122 327					

*Preliminary.

**Mean 2023–2025 recruitment from stochastic forecast

Sources and references

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