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 2027 should be no more than 26 374 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}.

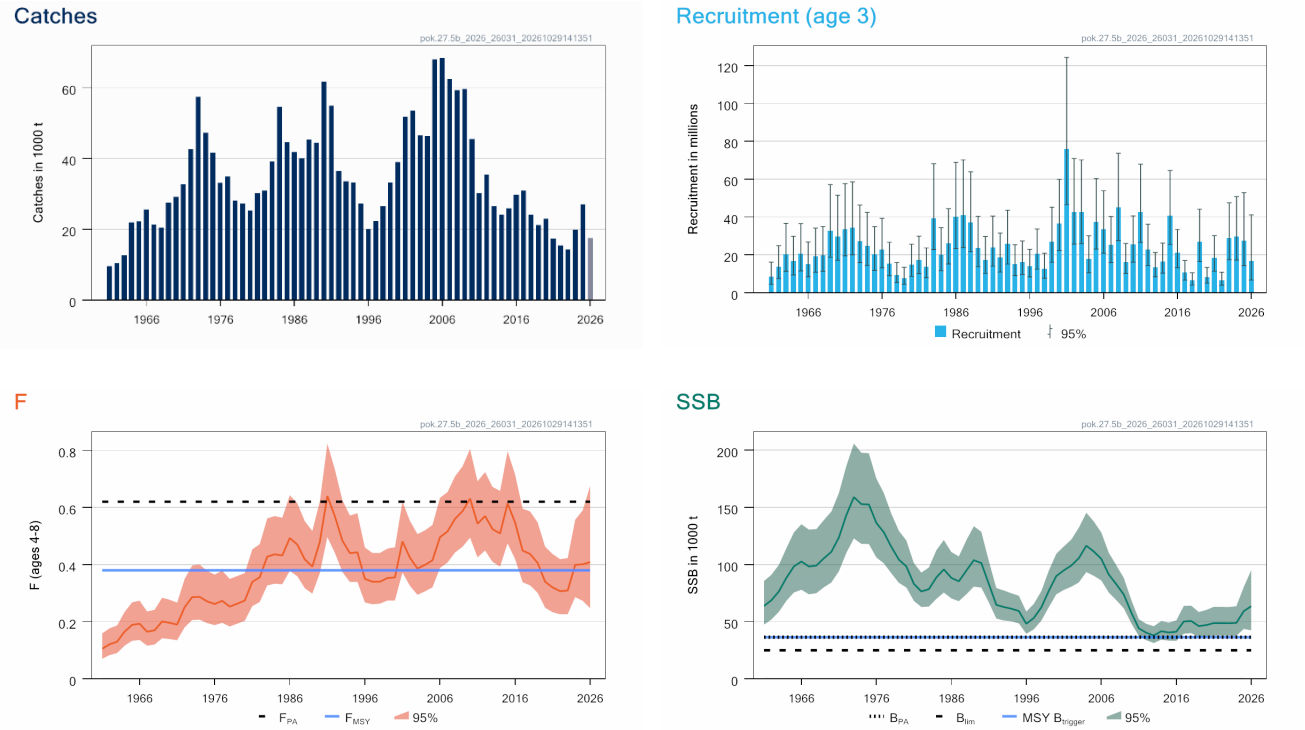


Figure 1 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Summary of the stock assessment. Catch in 2026, shaded in a lighter colour, is estimated for the full year based on reported catch in Q1–Q3 and is used in the assessment to produce an estimate of F in 2026.

Catch scenarios

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

Variable	Value	Notes
$F_{ages\ 4–8}$ (2026)	0.41	Based on catch estimate of 17 540 tonnes in 2026
Spawning-stock biomass (SSB; 2027)	70 930	In tonnes
$R_{age\ 3}$ (2027 and 2028)	27 606	Median of resampled estimates 2021–2025; in thousands
Landings (2026)	17 540	Catch estimate for 2026 based on catch statistics to the end of September extrapolated to the entire year; in tonnes
Discards (2026)	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 (2027)	$F_{4–8}$ (2027)	SSB (2028)	% SSB change*	% advice change**	% probability of SSB ≤ Blim (2028)
ICES advice basis						
Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach: F_{MSY} = 0.38	26 374	0.38	75 359	7	10	11
Other scenarios						
F = 0	0	0	101 067	43	−100	0.06
F = F_{2026}	28 405	0.42	73 607	4	18	14
F = F_{PA}	38 873	0.62	63 934	−9	62	62

* SSB 2028 relative to SSB 2027 (70 930 tonnes).
** Advice value for 2027 relative to advice value for 2026 as issued in 2025 (24 032 tonnes).

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 umsitingarætlan, 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.

This year's assessment is consistent with last year's assessment.

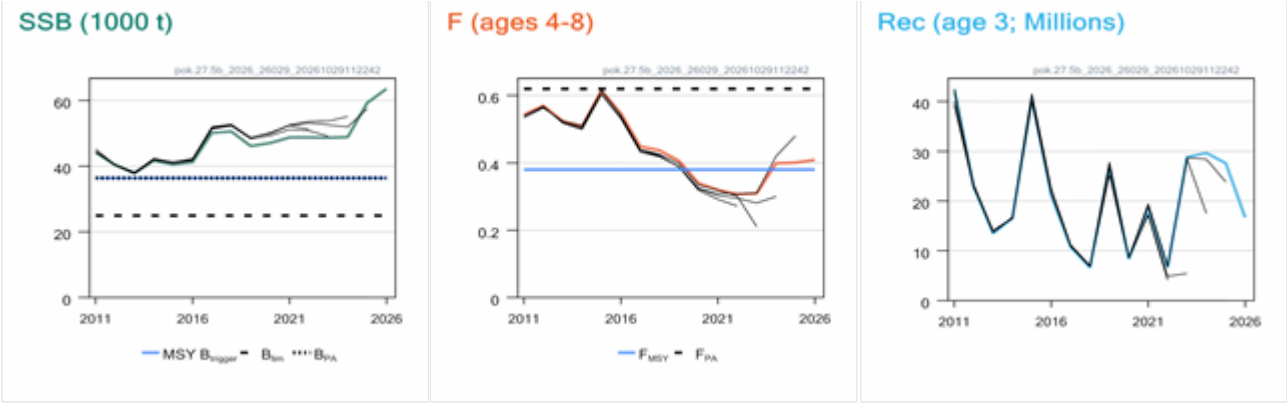


Figure 2 Saithe in Division 5.b (Faroes grounds). Historical assessment results. Results of the last five assessments are plotted, with the solid coloured line representing the current assessment. The final year F in 2026 for the current assessment is based on extrapolated catch.

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_{P05}, stochastic simulations (ICES, 2022): the F that leads to SSB ≥ 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, 2025)
Assessment type	State-space model (SAM) using catches in the model and in the forecast (ICES, 2026)
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	< 32 000		40 020
1988	No increase in F	< 32 000		45 285
1989	Reduction in F	< 40 000		44 477
1990	Reduction in F	< 41 000		61 628
1991	TAC	< 30 000		54 858
1992	Reduction in F	< 27 000		36 487
1993	Reduction in F	< 37 000		33 543
1994	TAC	< 26 000	42 000 **	33 182
1995	TAC	< 22 000	39 000 **	27 209
1996	TAC	< 39 000	-	20 029
1997	20% reduction in F from 1995 level	< 21 000	-	22 306
1998	30% reduction in effort from 1996/1997 level	-	-	26 421
1999	F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 14 000		33 207
2000	F below than $_{PA}$ (0.28)	< 15 000		39 020
2001	Reduce fishing effort to generate F well below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 17 000		51 786
2002	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 28 000		53 546
2003	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 47 000		46 555
2004	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 48 000		46 355
2005	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 32 000		67 967
2006	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 24 000		68 465
2007	Average catch considerations	40 000		62 351
2008	Do not increase effort	-		57 044
2009	Reduce fishing effort by around 20%	-		59 558
2010	Reduce fishing effort by around 20%	-		45 441

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Agreed TAC*	ICES catch
2011	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{PA} (0.28)	< 38 000		30 084
2012	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{MSY} (0.28)	< 40 000		35 448
2013	F < 0.28	< 29 100		26 539
2014	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{MSY} (0.30)	< 29 000		24 103
2015	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{MSY} (0.30)	< 26 000		25 899
2016	Reduce fishing effort to generate F below F_{MSY} (0.30)	< 36 000		29 672
2017	Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) approach (F ≤ 0.30)	≤ 46 000		30 852
2018	MSY approach (F ≤ 0.30)	≤ 35 003		24 046
2019 ***	MSY approach	≤ 23 967		21 179
2020	MSY approach	≤ 35 636		22 920
2021	MSY approach	≤ 27 368		17 382
2022	MSY approach	≤ 37 444		15 400
2023	MSY approach	≤ 17 843		14 297
2024	MSY approach	≤ 15 323		19 904
2025	MSY approach	≤ 24 281		27 108
2026	MSY approach	≤ 24 032		
2027	MSY approach	≤ 26 374		

* 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 2025 as estimated by ICES. Weights in tonnes.

Catch	Landings		Discards
27 108 tonnes	Pair trawls 98%	Other gears 2%	Negligible
	27 108 tonnes		

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					16	18783	17382
2022			16599	38				8						16645	15400
2023			15406	37				6					3	15452	14297
2024			20912	8				42		510				21472	19904
2025			28645	12				58		541				29256	27108
2026															

* 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. 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 4-8)		
	Low	R	High	Low	SSB	High		Low	F	High
1961	4529	8571	16222	47375	63659	85541	9592	0.070	0.105	0.159
1962	7603	13766	24924	51850	68721	91081	10454	0.083	0.121	0.177
1963	11395	20444	36677	58640	76488	99768	12693	0.090	0.130	0.187
1964	9427	16774	29848	68156	88278	114340	21893	0.116	0.165	0.23
1965	11577	20565	36531	75471	98339	128136	22181	0.133	0.189	0.27
1966	8490	15101	26859	77913	102677	135313	25563	0.136	0.193	0.27
1967	10899	19295	34159	73940	98268	130600	21319	0.116	0.165	0.24
1968	11342	19936	35042	74918	99084	131046	20387	0.120	0.170	0.24
1969	18753	32740	57161	80024	105452	138962	27437	0.142	0.20	0.28
1970	17199	29759	51492	84287	111110	146471	29110	0.139	0.196	0.28
1971	19533	33551	57627	94044	123664	162612	32706	0.135	0.190	0.27
1972	20094	34307	58572	110116	143248	186349	42663	0.180	0.25	0.35
1973	15972	27204	46333	122752	158984	205912	57431	0.21	0.29	0.40
1974	14477	24798	42478	118081	152844	197840	47188	0.21	0.29	0.40
1975	11876	20379	34970	117893	152558	197416	41576	0.195	0.27	0.38
1976	13225	22817	39365	106152	136422	175324	33065	0.188	0.26	0.37
1977	9006	15516	26731	101001	128148	162593	34835	0.196	0.27	0.38
1978	5426	9341	16079	92263	115469	144512	28138	0.183	0.25	0.35
1979	4551	7846	13526	83993	104336	129605	27246	0.193	0.26	0.36
1980	8718	14970	25703	79851	98331	121088	25230	0.20	0.27	0.37
1981	10109	17389	29913	68182	83137	101372	30103	0.25	0.34	0.45
1982	8010	13779	23704	62839	76440	92985	30964	0.27	0.36	0.47
1983	22841	39457	68162	63168	78463	97461	39176	0.33	0.43	0.56
1984	11675	20035	34380	69928	88702	112516	54665	0.33	0.44	0.57
1985	15235	26012	44410	75478	95779	121542	44605	0.33	0.43	0.56
1986	23416	40160	68877	70305	88331	110980	41716	0.38	0.49	0.64
1987	23905	40956	70168	67902	85312	107187	40020	0.36	0.47	0.62
1988	21715	37239	63862	73936	94696	121286	45285	0.32	0.42	0.55
1989	13809	23606	40356	80666	103818	133615	44477	0.30	0.39	0.52
1990	10234	17454	29769	79780	101308	128646	61628	0.37	0.48	0.62
1991	14085	23888	40513	66777	83005	103176	54858	0.50	0.64	0.82
1992	10988	18622	31561	52705	64726	79489	36487	0.44	0.57	0.73
1993	15180	25729	43611	51031	62826	77347	33543	0.37	0.48	0.63
1994	9087	15187	25382	50320	61388	74890	33182	0.34	0.44	0.57
1995	9723	16316	27378	48473	59378	72737	27209	0.34	0.44	0.58
1996	8427	13910	22963	39386	48157	58881	20029	0.27	0.35	0.46
1997	12504	20522	33683	43303	53293	65586	22306	0.26	0.34	0.44
1998	7721	12716	20943	50903	62522	76791	26421	0.26	0.34	0.44
1999	16142	27009	45194	62636	77046	94771	33207	0.27	0.35	0.46
2000	22336	36582	59912	73909	89961	109500	39020	0.27	0.36	0.46
2001	46524	76027	124239	77746	94913	115870	51786	0.37	0.48	0.62
2002	25762	42745	70922	80567	99129	121967	53546	0.33	0.42	0.55
2003	26018	42730	70176	84266	105567	132253	46555	0.29	0.39	0.51
2004	10622	17889	30126	93339	116483	145365	46355	0.31	0.40	0.52
2005	23134	37356	60322	90115	111408	137733	67967	0.32	0.42	0.54
2006	20937	33608	53948	85971	104933	128077	68465	0.39	0.50	0.63
2007	15985	25387	40320	75395	91210	110341	62352	0.41	0.52	0.65
2008	27497	45028	73738	68803	82738	99494	59243	0.44	0.56	0.71

Year	Recruitment (age 3)			Spawning-stock biomass (SSB)			Total Catch	Fishing pressure (ages 4-8)		
	Low	R	High	Low	SSB	High		Low	F	High
2009	10271	16369	26086	61614	73768	88319	59557	0.46	0.59	0.74
2010	16193	25633	40576	48590	57963	69144	45441	0.49	0.63	0.81
2011	26625	42522	67910	37350	44181	52261	30083	0.43	0.54	0.69
2012	14424	22873	36270	33799	40348	48166	35448	0.45	0.57	0.72
2013	8508	13476	21345	31290	37954	46036	26539	0.41	0.52	0.67
2014	10425	16547	26262	34258	41674	50695	24103	0.39	0.51	0.66
2015	25493	40579	64591	33420	40568	49245	25899	0.47	0.61	0.80
2016	13309	21104	33464	33231	41236	51169	29672	0.42	0.55	0.72
2017	6726	10723	17096	39442	50197	63885	30852	0.34	0.45	0.60
2018	4112	6604	10607	39972	50587	64021	24046	0.33	0.44	0.59
2019	16488	26990	44184	36401	46156	58524	21179	0.30	0.41	0.55
2020	5146	8316	13438	36746	47074	60304	22920	0.25	0.34	0.46
2021	11399	18560	30218	37727	48770	63047	17382	0.23	0.32	0.44
2022	4059	6654	10910	37776	48777	62983	15400	0.23	0.31	0.42
2023	17493	28826	47501	37686	48675	62868	14297	0.23	0.31	0.42
2024	17328	29675	50821	37609	48894	63564	19904	0.29	0.40	0.56
2025	14417	27606	52860	43659	59265	80450	27108	0.27	0.40	0.59
2026*	6772	16691	41135	42430	63586	95291	17540	0.25	0.41	0.68

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

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