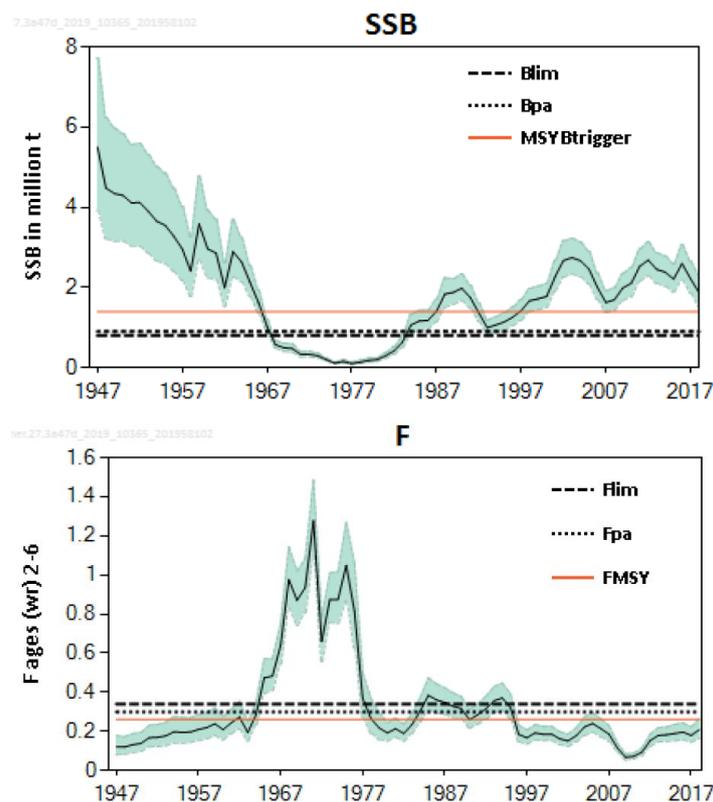


Pelagic fisheries in the Channel by the Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association (PFA)



1. Pelagic fisheries = Sustainable fisheries

In 2018, close to 90% of all our pelagic catches in the North Sea and the NE Atlantic were certified by Marine Stewardship Council (Blue MSC label). MSC certified fishing is determined by the health of the stocks, its impact on the marine environment and on how well the fisheries is managed. The PFA herring fishery was the first large-scale fishery in Europe certified by MSC in 2006 and has been certified since then. The latest ICES advice reports a herring spawning-stock biomass (SSB=stock size) fluctuated between 1.5 and 2.7 million tons between 1998 and 2018, and in all years it was above MSY¹ reference point (MSY Btrigger). Fishing mortality (F) has been below MSY since 1996. ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, allowed catches in 2020 for human consumption can be 418 649 tons.



Source: ICES advice for 2020

¹ In fisheries, the concept of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) is used to assess what a safe and healthy size of fish stocks is and how much can be sustainably captured annually. This is on average no more than that the natural growth of the fish population. In this way, long-term fishing can continue without damaging the fish stock.

2. All over the world pelagic fisheries is a large-scale operation

Pelagic species such as North Sea herring, mackerel, blue whiting, horse mackerel, sardines are wild caught (not to be farmed), highly migratory and swim in large, dense shoals. This means that the stocks we target are seasonally abundant in specific areas, in large quantities and high concentrations. As pelagic stocks are large, this means the catch quota are also large. Furthermore, often pelagic fisheries takes place far off shore and in bad weather conditions, which requires large vessels. All of this means that we target specific species in specific areas at specific times of the year. This is why the Channel herring, which is a sub stock of North Sea herring, is targeted in December in the Channel because at that time the quality of the herring is optimal for the market.

3. Only catch what is allowed, nothing more

As with all stocks under the EU Fisheries Policy also herring is managed by a system of overall Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and Quota per member state². Fisheries management allocates quota to various fishing zones, and accordingly a part of the herring TAC is allocated to the Channel and the Southern North Sea (ICES zone 4c and 7d).

The TAC 2019 for North Sea herring in ICES areas 4c/7d, by member state, in tons:	
Belgium	8 632
Denmark	800
Germany	530
France	10 277
The Netherlands	18 162
United Kingdom	3 950
Total EU TAC	42 351

The freezer trawlers of the PFA have been allocated herring quota by their respective flag member states and of course they only fish what they are allowed to catch. Nothing more.

4. Size of the vessel directly linked to processing and storage of the catch

Pelagic fisheries know in general two basic concepts. The Scottish, Irish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish and Swedish pelagic fleets catch the fish quickly in large quantities and land it fresh in ports for further processing and freezing on land. These vessels have very short fishing trips of only a few days. PFA-vessels under Dutch, French, English, German, Polish and Lithuanian flag freeze and store the fish at sea immediately after catching. The fisheries by both types of pelagic vessels is exactly the same – same nets and same acoustic technology. The only difference is that our vessels catch much less per day than the fresh pelagic trawlers because we are limited by what we can process and freeze per day. The fishing trips of PFA vessels are therefore longer and take in general 2-3 weeks.

In the EU member states 94 large scale pelagic fishing vessels are active. If we take also Norwegian, Icelandic and Faroe fisheries into account – targeting the same pelagic stocks – the number of large-scale fishing vessels is more than doubled to 214. The 17 freezer-trawlers of the PFA therefore represent 8% of this overall European large scale pelagic fleet.

² [https://www.pelagic-ac.org/media/pdf/Council%20regulation%20\(EU\)%202019-124.pdf](https://www.pelagic-ac.org/media/pdf/Council%20regulation%20(EU)%202019-124.pdf)

	number #	average engine power KW	total engine power KW		average length (LOA) m	average Gross Tonnage GT	total Gross Tonnage GT			
Norway	84	3.810	320.075	64%	38%	66	1.872	157.213	62%	33%
Iceland	20	4.597	91.930	18%	11%	74	2.512	50.244	20%	11%
Faroe Islands	16	5.565	89.041	18%	11%	76	2.828	45.251	18%	9%
Non-EU pelagic fleet (ex-Russia)	120		501.046	100%	59%			252.708	100%	53%
Great Britain	24	5.021	120.498	35%	14%	72	2.661	63.874	28%	13%
Denmark	27	2.212	59.722	17%	7%	55	1.274	34.404	15%	7%
Ireland	18	2.277	40.984	12%	5%	57	1.241	22.340	10%	5%
Netherlands	6	6.207	37.240	11%	4%	117	6.022	36.134	16%	8%
Germany	4	4.708	18.832	5%	2%	99	4.885	19.541	9%	4%
Poland	2	10.886	21.771	6%	3%	107	7.762	15.523	7%	3%
Sweden	7	2.283	15.978	5%	2%	52	1.036	7.250	3%	2%
Latvia	2	5.149	10.298	3%	1%	102	4.393	8.785	4%	2%
Lithuania	1	9.840	9.840	3%	1%	136	9.499	9.499	4%	2%
France	3	2.861	8.584	2%	1%	88	2.622	7.866	3%	2%
EU pelagic fleet	94		343.747	100%	41%			225.216	100%	47%
Pelagic fleet NE Atlantic	214		844.793			70		477.924		

source: fishfacts fo

5. Low impact on marine ecosystem

Our main target species are herring, mackerel, blue whiting and horse mackerel. These species constitute approximately 95% of our total pelagic catches. In small quantities we also target silversmelt, sardine and sprat. In addition, we occasionally have by-catches of, for example, hake, pollock and whiting. We can also sell these species for human consumption. We hardly have any unwanted bycatch in our pelagic fisheries. There is only a very minimal residual amount of fish that cannot be sold for human consumption. These may be too small or damaged fish. In 2017, this residual fish amounted to 1.5% of our catch. In 2018 this was even at a lower percentage of 0.9%.

The landing obligation applies to all our trawlers and accordingly all by-catches in EU-waters are frozen on board of our trawlers and counted against quota.

6. Large and small can co-exist

Fish is a natural product. Each type of fishery has the type of vessel or gear that suits it. Small pelagics inhabit the water column, not near the bottom or the shore, contrary to demersal fish (such as cod etc.). Large vessels are needed to catch small pelagic species off the coast, whereas small vessels due to their size operate in coastal areas. Pelagic fish knows relatively low market prices and economies of scale are therefore essential to survive in the business. This is the case almost anywhere in the world.

7. Continuous control ashore and at sea

Any fishing vessel can fish sustainable if strict standards are respected, maintained and controlled. The EU has implemented such standards, regulations and controls which are regarded as among the strictest ones in the world. Our vessels are regularly inspected at sea by EU member states fisheries control authorities. Each vessel records fishing activities daily through an electronic reporting system (ERS) and can be followed real time by a vessel monitoring system (VMS) and an automatic identification systems (AIS).

8. Historical ties with fishing in the Channel

Our pelagic vessels have been operating in the Channel area for a very long time. Before the second World War we were already targeting herring in the Channel. In the North Sea our herring fishery dates back to the 14th century.

9. Greatest nutritional value at the lowest climate costs

Our vessels are large because they have to process, freeze and store the catch on board and can thus deliver a high quality product and a great protein rich source of nutrition. A recent study (Hallstrom et al. 2018)³ concluded that: *“most seafoods (21 out of 37) are more nutritious than beef, pork and chicken. And that seafoods with the lowest climate impact and highest nutritional score (e.g. herring, mackerel, sprat and perch) should be promoted in dietary advice”*.

Different studies consistently give evidence that of all methods of producing animal protein, pelagic fisheries has the lowest emission of CO² per kilo produce (i.e. lowest carbon footprint).

10. Contribute to worldwide food security supply and at home

A large part of the world population depends on fish as their main source of healthy animal protein. As the world population grows, so does the demand for affordable, high-protein food. The PFA companies daily deliver millions of healthy, protein-rich, affordable meals to consumers all over the world. Historically, herring is consumed in all North Sea and Baltic coastal states. Since the introduction of sea-frozen products, herring and horse mackerel are as well exported to Japan. Since the 1970s an increasing part of our catch is exported to the poorer regions in Africa and Asia.

Close to 100% of our fish is caught for human consumption. A recent study⁴ (Parker et al., 2018) concludes that: *“the environmental benefit of low-carbon fisheries could be further realized if a greater proportion of landings were directed to human consumption rather than industrial uses”*.

Last but not least...

The members of the Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association catch fish in a sustainable manner, without causing damage to the seabed, without disturbing the marine ecosystem and based on effective fish stock management. Want to learn more? See for more information:

<https://issuu.com/pfafish/docs/pfa-en-web>

The Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association represents the interests of 10 European pelagic freezer-trawler companies, which fish for human consumption. PFA members are responsible, family-run companies, mostly going back to the late 19th century, who benefit from several generations of fishing experience, and operate currently a combined fleet of 17 vessels. They are vertically integrated companies involved in the catching, processing, distribution and export of pelagic fish. The association currently has members in France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and the UK. See for more information: <https://www.pelagicfish.eu>

³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652619313162>

⁴ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-018-0117-x>