

## MSC Fishery Fact Sheet: Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association North Sea herring



<b>Latin name</b>	<i>Clupea harengus</i>
<b>Deutsch</b>	Hering
<b>English</b>	Atlantic herring
<b>Español</b>	Arenque
<b>Français</b>	Hareng de l'Atlantique
<b>Nederlands</b>	Haring

### Basic information

<b>Location</b>	North Sea and Eastern English Channel, within the EEZs of the EU and Norway
<b>Fishing gear</b>	Pelagic trawl
<b>Season</b>	Year round
<b>Quota / TAC</b>	120,000MT in 2008, 102,000MT in 2009
<b>Products</b>	whole, headed & gutted, fillets, portions, canned, chilled, coated, diced, frozen, frozen block, marinated, pickled, ready meals
<b>Date certified</b>	May 2006

### Background information

Herring is a pelagic species which is distributed widely throughout the North Sea. It produces eggs which are attached to gravelly areas on the seabed, suggesting an evolutionary origin of spawning in rivers. Due to specific substrate requirements, spawning occurs in small, discrete areas. Herring are plankton feeders, and an important food source for various demersal fish.

Herring fishing in the North Sea has been conducted for centuries by a variety of fleets. Following a stock collapse in the 1970s, the fishery is now controlled by quotas. The certified fishery comprises pelagic trawlers from the Netherlands, the UK, France and Germany. Trips last approximately three weeks, and all catch is frozen and boxed on-board.

**MSC webpage** <http://www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/certified/north-east-atlantic/pfa-north-sea-herring>



Photos © PFA



## Sustainability notes

**Stock levels** The North Sea herring spawning stock biomass increased gradually since the low levels of the mid 1990's, and until 2002 was above the defined precautionary level. Continued low recruitment since 2002, considered to be due to environmental influences rather than fishing, reduced the spawning stock biomass to below precautionary levels in 2006. As a result, the North Sea herring TAC has been reduced by over 50% since 2006.

**Environmental Impact** Bycatch in the North Sea pelagic herring fishery is considered to be low, at less than 5%, with mackerel the main bycatch species. The use of modern echosounders distinguishes the size and species of shoals, with mixed shoals being avoided as the fish are considered too small. Interactions with rare, protected or icon species, including cetaceans, seals, sharks and gannets, are, in general, considered to be exceptional.

**Management plan** The stock is managed through the EU Common Fisheries Policy, and also under a specific international agreement, the EU-Norway Agreement (December 1997). The International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) conducts annual stock assessments, and provides advice on management options to the EU. Given the current low recruitment situation, ICES has recommended a change from the existing management plan based on reference points to one based on appropriate fishing mortalities, in order to maintain the fishery at a sustainable level.

**Further notes** While bycatch is very low, the main bycatch species are subject to separate assessment and management measures. Seasonal closed areas are in place to protect herring spawning grounds and juveniles, and closures of the sprat fishery also protect herring juveniles. The ecosystem effects of herring fishing, including impacts on predators, are considered in the ICES multispecies model for the North Sea, and are considered to be well understood.

**Fishery Improvements** The PFA has voluntarily implemented various policies to promote sustainable fishing in their fleet. Member vessels are not permitted to deliberately discard marketable fish to make room for fish of higher commercial value that are caught later ('highgrading'). This is subject to strict monitoring and enforcement. The fishery is developing and using new technologies to further reduce bycatch, including sophisticated sonar to distinguish mackerel from horse mackerel, and excluder devices to keep bycatch of sharks, turtles and cetaceans exceptional events.

## Useful websites

**Suppliers:** [www.msc.org/where-to-buy/find-a-supplier](http://www.msc.org/where-to-buy/find-a-supplier)  
**Fishbase:** [www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?id=24](http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?id=24)

## Certificate holder

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