

SMALL PELAGICS MARKET ANALYSIS 2026: DENMARK



THE STRUGGLE FOR SUSTAINABLE HERRING AND MACKEREL CONTINUES, BUT CHANGES ARE UNDERWAY

CONSUMPTION OF SMALL PELAGIC SPECIES in Denmark is dominated by herring and mackerel. While Denmark has a rich herring fishing tradition going back to the Middle Ages, today most of the herring eaten on the Danish lunch tables are caught in the Northeast Atlantic, from the stock known either as Atlanto-Scandian herring or Norwegian spring spawning herring. This herring is favored in marinated herring products due to its size and fat content. Mackerel is also primarily fished in the Northeast Atlantic waters.

On page 13 of the global small pelagic yearbook, you can read about the fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic that are threatened by overfishing. For several years, the states fishing in the Northeast Atlantic have not been able to reach an agreement on how to share these vital stocks between them, leading to catches exceeding the scientific advice by over 30%, which has resulted in the loss of MSC certification in 2020. ICES has recommended a 77% quota reduction for Atlantic mackerel for 2026 and last year WWF also redlisted

both the Atlantic mackerel and the Atlanto-Scandian herring in their fish guide.

The Atlanto-Scandian herring stock collapsed in the 1970s, leading to a fishing ban from 1972 to 1976, and it took over 24 years for the stock to recover.

Despite the fact that the fish stocks are being exploited far beyond scientific advice and the fisheries have lost MSC certification, Danish producers and retailers have been slow to diversify to sustainable alternatives, thus contributing to the problem of overexploitation and lack of sharing agreement on these vital fish stocks.

However, there are positive developments. Recently Glyngøre and Coop have launched MSC certified marinated herring products, which is a step in the right direction. On page 22 of the global yearbook, you can read more about the sourcing changes European brands and retailers have made, to diversify away from mackerel. ●





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Find out more about our herring film:

<https://www.msc.org/uk/msc-small-pelagics-yearbook-uk-ireland-market-analysis>

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