

Stock Annex: Herring (*Clupea harengus*) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea)

Stock specific documentation of standard assessment procedures used by ICES.

Stock:	Herring (<i>Clupea harengus</i>) in subdivisions 25–29 and 32, excluding the Gulf of Riga (central Baltic Sea) (her.27.25-2932)
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Main revision:	The section ‘assessment model configuration/model options chosen’ has been clarified with regards to the setting of ‘Catchability independent of age for ages’ in the DOS-XSA and in the FLR-XSA.
Last revised by	(WGBFAS/Tomas Gröhsler)

A. General

A.1. Stock definition

The stock comprises mainly spring-spawning herring and a small autumn-spawning population. Spring-spawning occurs at the coast with a temporal gradient from south to north. After spawning, individuals migrate to the deep basins for feeding. In addition, migrations between subareas of the Baltic have been observed (Aro, 1989). Since 2005, the stock has been managed together in units SD 25–27, 28.2, 29 and 32 (EC and Russian quotas).

A.2. Fishery

A.2.1 General description

Pelagic stocks in the Baltic Proper (subdivisions 25–29, 32) are mainly taken in pelagic trawl fisheries, of which the majority take herring and sprat simultaneously. But coastal gillnetters and purse-seine fisheries targeting herring for consumption also exists. The estimates of pelagic catch compositions are based on logbooks and landing declarations. Discarding at sea is not considered to be a problem for this stock. The major part of the catch is historically taken by Sweden, Poland, and Finland. Landings of central Baltic herring caught in the Gulf of Riga are included in the assessment.

A.2.2 Fishery management regulations

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A.3. Ecosystem aspects

Drastic changes in the weight-at-age (WAA) of herring have been observed since the late 1980s (Parmanne *et al.*, 1994; Cardinale and Arrhenius, 2000). A decrease was observed in almost all age groups and in all open areas of the Central Baltic, with the exception of the most northerly (Cardinale and Arrhenius, 2000). The low WAA has had dramatic effects on the biomass and the catches of herring. Additionally, the poor condition of the fish (i.e. low fat content) has important implications on the marketing for human consumption (Raid and Lankov, 1995).

Three different hypotheses have been put forward to explain the decrease in WAA of Baltic herring, which include (i) a reduction in selective predation of cod on smaller herring (Sparholt and Jensen, 1992; Beyer and Lassen, 1994), (ii) an influx of slow-growing individuals from the northern areas, and (iii) a real decrease in growth rates due to changes in stock size and feeding environment.

The latter hypothesis has been also supported by Flinkman *et al.* (1998) showing changes in WAA in the Northern Baltic to be related to the mesozooplankton species composition. For the Central Baltic, Horbowy (1997) modelled growth of herring in relation to the biomass of *Mysis mixta*. Similarly Szypula *et al.* (1997) stressed the importance of the macrozooplankton fraction in the diet of planktivores. Other studies have shown the importance of the copepod *Pseudocalanus* sp. for nutrition of Baltic herring (Davidyuka, 1996, Möllmann *et al.*, 2003). Low salinity conditions have negatively affected the stock development of this copepod (Möllmann *et al.*, 2003), which is the most important food item for open-sea herring in spring. The increased competition with the sprat stock has been indicated as another crucial factor in the decrease of herring growth, operating via top-down regulation and density-dependent mechanisms (Cardinale and Arrhenius, 2000; Casini *et al.*, 2006).

B. Data

B.1. Commercial catch

The sampling for age composition is considered adequate. Most countries provide age composition of their major landings (landed in their waters by quarter and Subdivision). The landings for which age composition was missing represented about 15% of the total landings in 2011. Denmark, Sweden, and Poland use fisheries independent sampling to estimate the landing figures for herring and sprat from trawl fisheries. In this fishery the logbook data may not be sufficient and the sampling is used to increase accuracy in the input data.

B.1.1 Landings data

B.1.1.1. Country XX landings

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B.1.1.1.1. Data coverage and quality

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B.1.1.2. Country ZZ landings

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B.1.1.2.1. Data coverage and quality

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B.1.2. Discards estimates

B.1.2.1. Country XX landings

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B.1.2.1.1. Data coverage and quality

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B.1.2.2. Country ZZ landings

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B.1.2.2.1. Data coverage and quality

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B 2.3. Recreational catches

B 2.3.1. Country XX data

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B 2.3.2. Country ZZ data

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B.2. Biological sampling

Weight at age in the stock is assumed to be the same as weight-at-age in the catch. No survey information from the first quarter is available, which could be used as the mean weight in the stock.

The proportion of natural mortality before spawning (M_{prop}) is set at 0.30 and the proportion of fishing mortality before spawning (F_{prop}) is set at 0.35.

B.2.1. Maturity

The proportions mature at age were 0 for age 1, 0.7 for age 2, 0.9 for age 3 and 1 for older.

B.2.2. Natural mortality

Natural mortalities were derived by SMS -runs performed by WGSAM and are used in the assessment for the years 1974–2011 (WGSAM 2012). As the SMS has not been updated each year, the estimates of M for the assessments between 2012 and 2014, were chosen as 2011 from the SMS model, i.e. 2012, 2013, 2014 = 2011 (ICES, 2015a). In the assessment 2015 natural mortality values for 2012–2015 were estimated from the regression of mean M values taken from SMS against Eastern Baltic cod SSB in 1974–2011 (ICES, 2016).

B 2.3. Length and age composition of landed and discarded fish in commercial fisheries

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B.3. Surveys

The revised stock abundance estimates from the Baltic International Acoustic Survey (BIAS) were available for the years 1991–2011. The data were revised by WGBIFS experts (further details see Annex H4). The estimates for the years 1993, 1995 and 1997 were excluded due to an incomplete coverage of the standard survey area. There was less than 4% decrease in the recalculated BIAS tuning fleet index for Central Baltic herring in the SD 25–27, 28.2 and 29 due to the corrections made in the database. The BIAS tuning fleet index for Central Baltic herring recruitment in the SD 25–27, 28.2 and 29 has now been area corrected and a correction of the rectangle assignments was performed. Due to these changes, the herring recruitment indices increased quite substantially in some years (e.g. 1991 and 2002).

Also new BIAS tuning fleet indices for testing with two new Central Baltic herring assessment units were evaluated and provided for benchmark assessment. These new dataserie s include the BIAS tuning fleet index (numbers in millions) for Central Baltic herring in the ICES Subdivisions 25–27, BIAS tuning fleet index (numbers in millions) for Central Baltic herring in the ICES Subdivisions 28.2 and 29, and corresponding recruitment tuning fleets for both of these areas. The internal consistency of these new tuning fleets is worse compared to the BIAS tuning fleet index for Central Baltic herring as one assessment unit.

An alternative dataserie s for Central Baltic herring was presented with the exclusion of the data from the inconsistently covered area of ICES Subdivision 29N. That new tuning fleet had somewhat better internal consistency compared to the ones that include SD29N herring data.

Additionally, the inclusion of the herring acoustic data from SD 32 to the tuning dataserie s was tested. The internal consistency of these tuning fleets was very poor and the inclusion of the SD 32 data would lead to an opposite trend of Central Baltic herring abundance. On this basis, it was decided to postpone the testing of these new tuning fleets, including the acoustic data from SD 32, until the next benchmark assessment of the Central Baltic herring.

Two acoustic time-series were selected for the final assessment of Central Baltic herring: BIAS tuning fleet index for Central Baltic herring in the SDs 25–27, 28.2 and 29 for the years 1991–2011, and BIAS tuning fleet index for Central Baltic herring recruitment (age 0) in the SD 25–27, 28.2 and 29 for the years 1991–2011. For the calculation of these dataserie s all the data from the ICES Subdivision 29 were included. Index values for the years 1993, 1995, and 1997 were excluded from both time-series.

B.3.1. Survey design and analysis

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B.3.2. Survey data used

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B.4. Commercial CPUE

Not used.

B.5. Other relevant data

None.

C. Assessment: data and method

C.1. Choice of stock assess model

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C.2. Model used for basis for advice

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C.3. Assessment model configuration

Model used: XSA

Software used: DOS-XSA/FLR-XSA

Model Options chosen:

Tapered time weighting applied, power = 3 over 20 years

Catchability independent on stock size for ages > 2

*Catchability independent of age for ages ≥ 6

Survivor estimates shrunk towards the mean F of the final 5 years or the 3 oldest ages

S.E. of the mean to which the estimate are shrunk = 1.500

Minimum standard error for population estimates derived from each fleet = 0.300

Prior weighting not applied

*correponds in the DOS-XSA setting to ages ≥ 6 (see benchmark 2013) and in the FLR-XSA setting to qage=6 (the FLR diagnostic output then incorrectly shows >6).

Input data types and characteristics:

Type	Name	Year range	Age range	Variable from year to year Yes/No
Caton	Catch in tonnes	1974-last data year	1-8+	No
Canum	Catch-at-age in numbers	1974-last data year	1-8+	No
W_{eca}	Weight-at-age in the commercial catch	1974-last data year	1-8+	No
W_{est}	Weight-at-age of the spawning stock at spawning time = WECA.	1974-last data year	1-8+	No
M_{prop}	Proportion of natural mortality before spawning	1974-last data year	1-8+	No
F_{prop}	Proportion of fishing mortality before spawning	1974-last data year	1-8+	No
Matprop	Proportion mature-at-age	1974-last data year	1-8+	No
Natmor	Natural mortality	1974-last data year	1-8+	Yes

Tuning data:

Type	Name	Year range	Age range
Tuning fleet 1	Acoustics	1991-last data year	1-8+

D. Short-Term Projection

Model used: Age structured

Software used: MDFP vers. 1a

Initial stock size: in the 2010 assessment from the XSA for age 2–8+. The recruitment-at-age 1 from RCT3. The long-term geometric mean recruitment for a period of unchanged pattern in recruitment is used for age 1 in all projection years (1988-last data year -1).

Maturity: The same maturity ogives as in the assessment is used for all years

F and M before spawning: Set respectively to 0.3 and 0.35 for all ages in all years

Weight at age in the stock: Assumed to be the same as weight at age in the catch

Weight at age in the catch: Average weight of the three last years.

Exploitation pattern: Average of the three last years, optional rescaling of F_{bar} (3-6) to the level of the last year, depending on existing or non-existing time-trend in $F(3-6)$ in recent years; Intermediate year assumptions: TAC constraint or status quo F or both

Intermediate year assumptions:

Stock recruitment model used: None, the long-term geometric mean recruitment-at-age 1 is used

Procedures used for splitting projected catches: Not relevant.

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E. Medium-Term Projections

Not performed for this stock.

F. Long-Term Projections

Not performed for this stock.

G. Biological Reference Points

B_{lim} was set at $B_{loss}=430\ 000$ t and B_{pa} was set at $600\ 000$ t (WKBALT 2013). $MSY\ B_{trigger}$ was set at $B_{pa} = 600\ 0000$ t. The values of F_{lim} and F_{pa} were estimated at 0.52 and 0.41, respectively.

In 2015 ICES (ICES 2015b) provided new precautionary F_{MSY} ranges [F_{lower} , F_{upper}] that are derived to deliver no more than a 5% reduction in long-term yield compared with MSY. In order to be consistent with the ICES precautionary approach F_{upper} is capped, so that the probability of $SSB < B_{lim}$ is no more than 5%. Two approaches have been used to derive the values of the cap on F_{upper} . One conforms to the ICES MSY advice rule (AR), and requires reducing F linearly towards zero when SSB is below $MSY\ B_{trigger}$. The second uses a constant F without an advice rule. Although the first often provides a wider F_{MSY} range, it requires the ICES MSY advice rule to be used. The new estimate of F_{MSY} is 0.22. The resulting ranges are shown in the text table below.

$MSY\ F_{lower}$	F_{MSY}	$MSY\ F_{upper}$ with AR	$MSY\ B_{trigger}$ (1000 t)	$MSY\ F_{upper}$ with no AR
0.16	0.22	0.28	600	0.22

H. Other Issues

None.

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