	<p><b>Council</b></p> <p><i>2025 Update on the Streamlining of the ICES Advice</i></p>	<p><b>CNL(25)07</b></p> <p><b>Agenda item:</b> 5.b) (i)</p>
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## *2025 Update on the Streamlining of the ICES Advice*

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the streamlining of the ICES Advice as requested by NASCO in 2022 and reaffirmed in 2024.

### **Decisions**

Council agrees to request that:

- the SSC adds in new text in the ICES advice request for 2026 to include an overview of the status of salmon in the North Atlantic as a whole in the section on Atlantic salmon in the North Atlantic area;
- the advice on salmon in the three regional areas is provided in 2026 in the ‘simplified fisheries advice’ format agreed in NASCO’s high-level Action Plan in 2024; and
- the Secretary works with ICES, including in its advice format sub-group, to enable this to happen.

### **Background**

At its 2022 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(22\)53rev](#), the Council of NASCO discussed various elements of the advice provided to NASCO by ICES. The discussion included noting that the ICES advice for other stocks was much more focused and that the advice to NASCO from ICES might also be shorter and more focused in future, with delegates consulting the Report of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS) if more information on a specific decision was required.

Council agreed to ask the Secretary to approach ICES to investigate a more streamlined approach / presentation of the ICES Advice.

In 2023, an update on the timing and background to the process was provided to Council, [CNL\(23\)09](#). In 2024, ICES provided a further update on the work carried out, [CNL\(24\)07](#), outlining the process to be taken to enable a streamlined set of advice from ICES to NASCO to be produced, noting the membership of the subgroup carrying out the work, which mostly comprises current and former members of the WGNAS and includes the NASCO Secretary. The subgroup’s first meeting was on 16 February 2024. Its aim then was to conclude its work by the end of February 2025 for consideration of ACOM (who must approve any format change) in advance of the March 2025 ACOM annual meeting.

At its 2024 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(24\)88rev](#), the Council of NASCO agreed to adopt ‘The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy’, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), which incorporates NASCO’s high-level actions in a single document. As part of this Action Plan, Council agreed the action:

- ‘ICES deliver simplified fisheries advice’, by 2025.

The update from ICES, with its overview on progress and information for Council, is given in Annex 1.

Secretariat  
Edinburgh  
9 May 2025

### *ICES Update on the Streamlining of the Advice for Atlantic Salmon*

The purpose of this paper is to present an update to NASCO's Council from ICES on the streamlining of the advice for Atlantic salmon.

The ICES advice format subgroup convened periodically in 2024 and has had discussions in conference calls and via correspondence in 2025 on the possible streamlined formats for the four advice sheets presented to NASCO, i.e. for North Atlantic salmon stocks; 'sal.oth.all'; salmon in the North-East Atlantic, 'sal.neac.all'; salmon from North America, 'sal.nac.all'; and salmon at West Greenland, 'sal.wgc.all'.

Discussions have been wide-ranging and there are two main issues. The first relates to providing an overview of the status of salmon in the North Atlantic as a whole, which is not currently requested to, or provided by, ICES – but which is possible to do. The second relates to a way forward to streamline the three area-based sets of advice.

#### **A possible overview of salmon in the entire North Atlantic**

An overview of the status of salmon in the North Atlantic as a whole is neither currently requested by NASCO or provided by ICES. Such an overview, forming part of the advice for sal.oth.all (perhaps as a front piece) would allow NASCO to see at a glance the status of salmon across the entire North Atlantic Ocean. It would facilitate NASCO's objective to contribute to the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean through improved communication tools for diverse expert, policy, management, and public audiences.

In its standard advice sheets, ICES provides a section on the status of the stock. This shows the status 'at a glance' and has proven to be very useful for ICES marine fish stocks for experts, stakeholders, requesters and the public. It synthesizes a lot of information in one sentence and associated four panel plot. An example is given at the end of this paper, for sole in the Irish Sea – showing the standard 'four-panel plot' used for many of the assessed species by ICES. These graphs show the stock status in terms of abundance, the catch history, the recruitment into the stock and the exploitation rate. The first and last of these are shown in relation to relevant biological reference points.

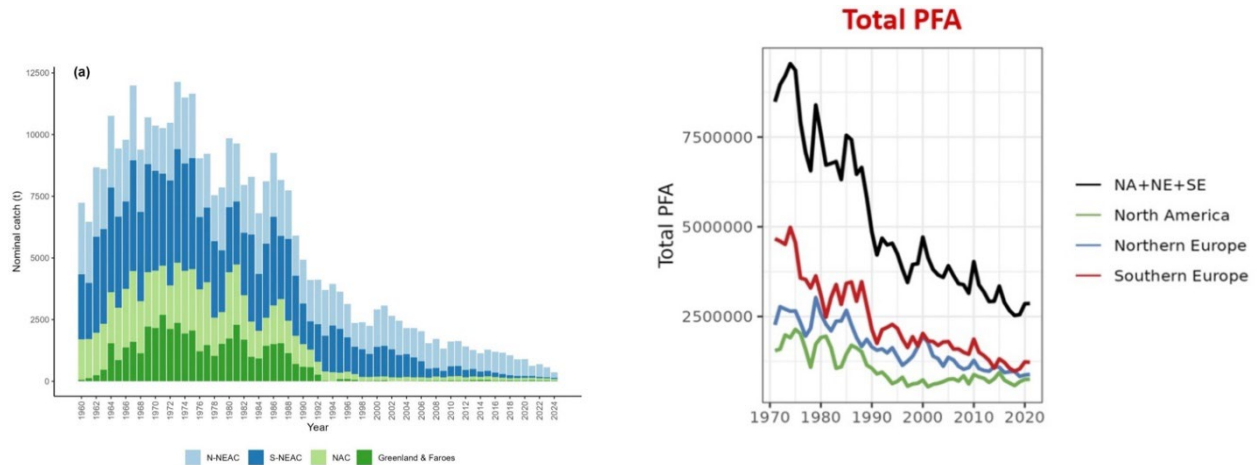
The development of the Life Cycle Model for salmon makes it possible to provide this type of overview for salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean. The form of the plot presented in ICES advice sheets varies depending on the type of assessment model and the available data, so the plot could easily be tailored to the requirements of ICES and the needs of NASCO. Decisions would need to be made by WGNAS on the following issues to enable an understanding of the most informative graphs to show:

- what is the most appropriate measure of abundance?
- is there is an appropriate measure of recruitment?
- is there an appropriate measure of exploitation rate?

One possibility for abundance is the pre-fishery abundance (the numbers of Atlantic salmon estimated to be alive in the ocean from a particular stock at a specified time). It may be possible to derive a reference point/management objective for such a measure that could be used to comment on stock status.

Additionally, the data used to provide the graphs, that are an output of the stock assessment, would be provided as tables in the advice sheet, enabling the relevant graphs to be created individually for other reports such as NASCO’s periodic State of North Atlantic Salmon Reports.

An example with two panels: showing catch and pre-fishery abundance.



The addition of such an overview would not change the format or content of any of the other parts of the advice provided by ICES for the North Atlantic salmon stocks in sal.oth.all, but would be a complement to what is already given. This could be added to the regular advice request to ICES from NASCO.

### A step towards streamlining all the advice sheets

Providing streamlined advice for the three regional areas enables delivery of the high-level action in NASCO’s Action Plan, agreed by NASCO’s Council in 2024, i.e. ‘ICES deliver simplified fisheries advice’

The ICES advice format subgroup is not yet in a position to provide examples of streamlined / simplified advice in any of the three regional areas, A partial example was developed for sal.neac.all which was circulated for comment. The subsequent discussions highlighted the need for experts to determine the best way to synthesize stock status. They also demonstrated the substantial gap between the approach to determining stock status in the standard ICES advice sheets and the current presentation for North Atlantic salmon advice.

While the addition of an overview as described above for the sal.oth.all advice sheet would not change the advice format at this time, it would be a step towards the reformatting and streamlining of the ICES advice for NASCO. The process of making decisions on how to represent stock status should help to move this process along for the advice sheets for the three regional areas.

The standard ICES advice format provides room to address all of the aspects of the advice request from NASCO but in a more streamlined, focused and easier to understand format and language. For example, the plots in the stock development over time section described above and shown below, give way to quickly and easily seen status without having to produce - and for requesters to digest - many paragraphs of text. The ‘Issues relevant for the advice’ section describes any changes in the fishery or management that are relevant, without the need to repeat many paragraphs from year to year that essentially focus on things that have not changed. The ICES advice format also strives to be understandable to all, experts and non-scientists alike.

In addition, the regular ICES advice format can have aspects that are tailored to the specific needs of NASCO. If the focus of the standard sheets is too narrow, relevant aspects could be added. For example, the proportion of rivers attaining their conservation limits would likely not be in the standard format but could be included, perhaps in the ‘Issues relevant for the advice’ section.

The aim of this work is to make advice sheets that are easier for the experts to produce, easier for NASCO to use, but still to meet NASCO’s needs. The intent is for the work to be finished before work begins on the 2026 assessment and advice. It is in line with NASCO’s original ask in 2022 to investigate a shorter and more focused presentation of the advice on North Atlantic salmon, which was highlighted in NASCO’s high-level Action Plan, agreed by NASCO’s Council in 2024, i.e. ‘ICES deliver simplified fisheries advice’.

### Example advice and status of the stock sections

#### Sole (*Solea solea*) in Division 7.a (Irish Sea)

##### ICES advice on fishing opportunities

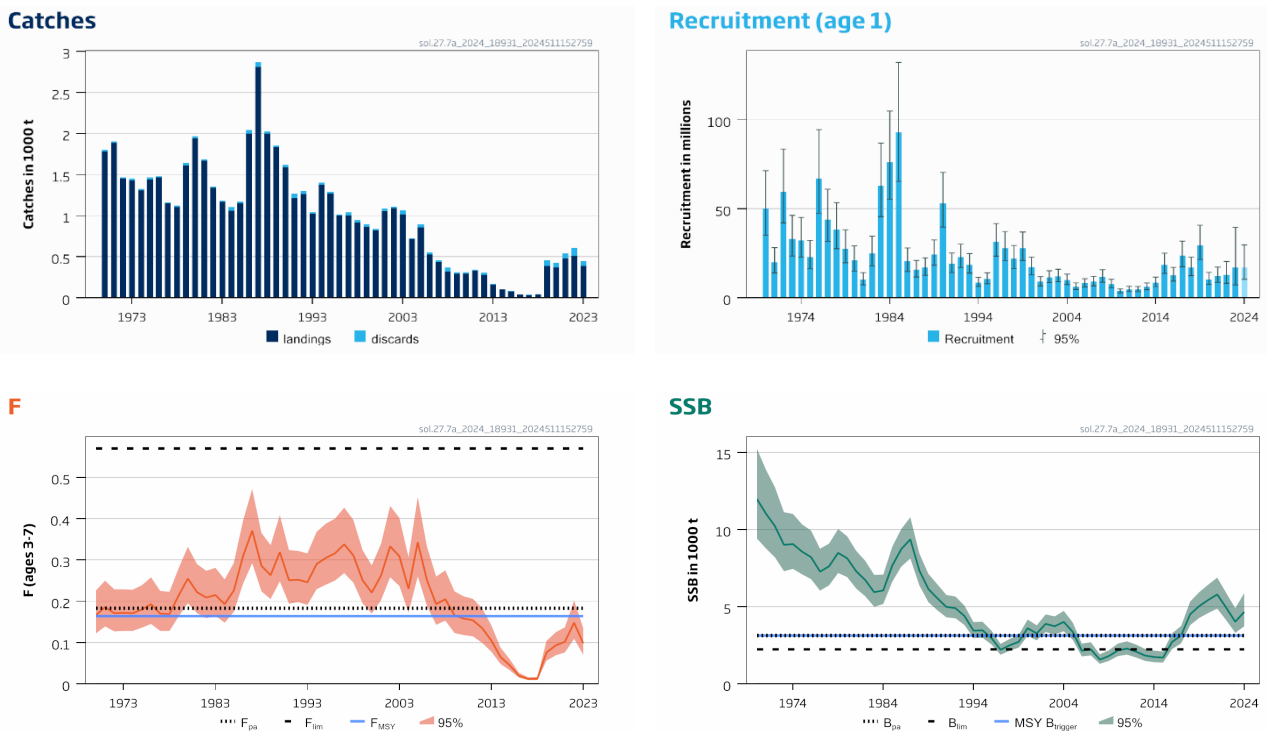
ICES advises that when the MSY approach is applied, catches in 2025 should be no more than 609 tonnes.

##### Non-fisheries conservation considerations

Conservation aspects and associated management measures may exist at a national or regional level but were not reviewed by ICES.

##### Stock development over time

Fishing pressure on the stock is below  $F_{MSY}$ ; spawning-stock size is above MSY  $B_{trigger}$ ,  $B_{pa}$ , and  $B_{lim}$ .



**Figure 1** Sole in Division 7.a. Summary of the stock assessment. The assumed recruitment value for 2024 is shaded in a lighter colour.