

ICES Request Form

Grey cells to be filled in by ICES

Request from	Joint Request from UK and the European Commission
Contact within organisation	
Content contact person	
Request announced	21 st February 2025
Request received	
Answer deadline client	August 2025
Request code (client)	2025_SR02_UK-EU-Spurdog_management
Request code (ICES)	
Request Title	Management Scenarios for Spurdog (<i>Squalus acanthias</i>)
Background: <p>A ban on catching spurdog (<i>Squalus acanthius</i>) commercially between 2011-2022 was removed following ICES benchmark of the Northeast Atlantic stock in 2021. The benchmark was followed by subsequent positive catch advice and the re-opening of the commercial fishery in 2023. As a precautionary measure, in the 2023 and 2024 Written Records, the UK and the EU agreed to a maximum landing size of 100cm to discourage the targeting of mature females.</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback from the UK and EC member states indicated some concerns over the effectiveness of the current maximum landing size from both stock conservation and optimal resource utilisation perspectives. While there is a need to protect mature females, the fishing industries have highlighted current market preferences are for larger spurdog. In this context, the UK and EU both agreed that the effectiveness of the maximum landing size should be reviewed.</p> <p>Both the EU and the UK have been undertaking further research to inform a review of these measures. An appropriate next step has been identified to seek ICES advice on the impact of alternative management scenarios on the status of the stock. This advice would include outputs such as the projected catch distribution across length classes, the effects of varying fishing mortality rates, and the potential consequences for spawning stock biomass and recruitment. Such information will provide managers with the necessary advice to consider if the current precautionary measures are appropriate for stock management, or if they must be revised.</p> Request to ICES:	

ICES are requested to use the current benchmark assessment for the purposes of medium-term stochastic projections, accounting for estimates of discard survivability by length and gear, in order to explore the effect on the stock status of **releasing** and **retaining** spurdog under different management measures. This should take into account differences in the main **gear** types for the fishery.

Furthermore, ICES is requested to explore a combination of the potential management scenarios described below:

- a. Altering the maximum size above which spurdog must be released (currently 100cm), so that a range of different sizes could be explored (for example, incremental increases between 75cm to 120cm)
- b. The effects of introducing a range of minimum landing sizes below which spurdog must be released (for example incremental increases between 70cm to 90cm)
- c. The effects of combining maximum and minimum landing sizes
- d. Allocating only a proportion of the advised catch as a TAC (for example 15-75%) in line with the above scenarios
- e. The impact of catches targeting larger fish by running scenarios where landings are 25, 50 and 75 percent larger size classes and what impact this would have on modelled populations; and
- f. The effects of introducing an exemption from the Landing Obligation whereby all unwanted spurdog are released under the optimal maximum and/or minimum size and TAC scenarios (outlined in a to d).

Due to the complexity of the management scenarios, the requesting Parties suggest that meetings with ICES be scheduled during the delivery of this special request, at key points.

Planning ICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation work as specified on the Request to be done by the Stock coordinator and stock assessor (Mid-May and June 2025). • WKSPUR short meetings (i.e. 3 hours) to show progress on ToRs and take onboard comments and facilitate WGEF members to participate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3rd June – first workshop meeting (morning time to accommodate to experts presenting the simulations). ○ 16th June – during WGEF Pre-meeting ○ During WGEF annual meeting (only if needed) ○ 2nd July – Second workshop meeting. Final outcomes and wrap-up • Final results and Report to be delivered by 01st of August. • Review 04-18 August • ADGEF in 1-4 sept together with WGEF stocks • WCEF: 30th Sept to approve advice

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication: 07th October
ICES contact person	
WG(s) involved	WKSPUR
Preparation timing	-
Review group	RGSPUR
Advice drafting group	in 1-4 sept together with WGEF stocks
ACOM Webex	WCEF: 30th Sept
Release date	07th October