

**Question for written answer E-003989/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Grace O'Sullivan (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Overfishing of non-quota species in inshore waters in Ireland

Prior to a recent High Court ruling, vessels longer than 18 metres had been banned from fishing in Irish inshore waters within six nautical miles of the shore.

However, following the overturning of this ban, pair trawling for sprat has recommenced unabated in this zone, with locals reporting a massively negative impact on the abundance of that keystone species and of by-catch, including mackerel.

According to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea's advice, sprat catches for each of the years 2022 and 2023 should be no more than 2 240 tonnes. However, the Irish Marine Institute Stock Book for 2021 indicates that Irish landings of sprat increased from 3 580 tonnes in 2018 to 13 018 tonnes in 2019 and 14 445 tonnes in 2020.

No total allowable catch quota has been set for sprat in Irish waters. This means that sprat is currently being massively overfished, which runs counter to the common fisheries policy objective of ending overfishing in EU waters.

1. Does the Commission consider the fishing of sprat in Irish inshore waters to exceed sustainable levels?
2. What measures are in place to monitor sprat stocks and prevent their collapse in EU waters?

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