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16 Plaice in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a (Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian waters)

Pleuronectes platessa – ple.27.89a

Type of assessment: no analytical assessment

The Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian waters plaice, *Pleuronectes platessa*, is considered a data-limited stock (DLS) and classified as a category 5.2 stock (ICES, 2012; ICES, 2021).

Advice basis: precautionary approach

The advice for this stock is biennial.

Data revision

Landings for the years 1994 to 2000 were included with information available from the ICES historical database. Catches from 2014 to 2000 were extracted from InterCatch.

16.1 General

16.1.1 Stock identity

See Stock Annex.

16.1.2 Biological reference points

No biological reference points are defined for this stock.

16.1.3 Fishery description

See Stock Annex.

16.1.4 Summary of ICES advice and management

16.1.4.1 ICES advice for 2020 and 2021

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, landings should be no more than 155 t in each of the years 2022 and 2023. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding total catches.

16.1.4.2 Management plan

The EU Multiannual Plan for the Western Waters (MAP; EU, 2019) takes bycatch of this species into account.

16.2 Fisheries data

16.2.1 Commercial landings

Plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*) is caught as bycatch by various fleets and gear types covering both small-scale artisanal and trawl fisheries. Portugal and France are the main countries exploiting the stock with Spain playing a minor role. Landings may contain misidentified flounder (*Platichthys flesus*) as they are often confounded at market auctions in Portugal. The official landings are given in Table 16.1 while the catches submitted to the working group are given in Table 16.2. The quantity of discarding is uncertain. Discards are likely relatively minor but the WG cannot conclude that discarding is less than 5% of the catch.

Plaice were not present in sufficient numbers in the survey to allow estimation of an abundance index. EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 (G9527) is the only survey that covers the stock area and only 43 individuals were caught in Division 8 during the entire time-series (1997–2018). The survey may be considered adapted for providing an abundance index as this survey always caught considerable numbers of plaice in the Celtic Sea. No commercial index is currently available. However, the advice might benefit from commercial LPUE data if these were made available to the WG.

Biological information needs to be compiled. Issues concerning the quality of landing statistics in addition to the lack of survey or commercial abundance indices need to be resolved before an assessment can be made. As this species is at the southern extent of its range in the Bay of Biscay and Iberian Peninsula (Figure 16.1), perhaps merging the northern and southern stocks would provide a better opportunity to improve the assessment of the stock.

This stock is under the EU landing obligation since 2016.

16.3 Assessment model, diagnostics, and retrospectives

16.3.1 Previous assessment

ICES 2016 Advice (Published 30 June 2015)

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, the wanted catch should be no more than 194 t in each of the years 2016 and 2017. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding total catches. The ICES framework for category 5 stocks was applied (ICES, 2012). For stocks without information on abundance or exploitation, ICES considers that a precautionary reduction of catches should be implemented unless there is ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate to the stock. Given that this is the first time that ICES is providing quantitative advice, the precautionary buffer was applied (ICES, 2016).

ICES 2018 Advice (Published 30 June 2017)

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, wanted catches¹ in each of the years 2018 and 2019 should be no more than 194 t. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding total catches. The ICES framework for category 5 stocks was applied (ICES, 2012). For stocks without information on abundance or exploitation, ICES considers that a precautionary reduction of catches should be implemented unless there is ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate to the stock. The stock status relative to the reference points remains unknown. The precautionary buffer was applied in 2015 for the 2016 advice and is, therefore, not applied again this year (ICES, 2018).

¹“Wanted catch” is used to describe the stock that would be landed in the absence of the EU landing obligation.

ICES 2020 and 2021 Advice (Published 28 June 2019)

The ICES framework for category 5 stocks was applied (ICES, 2012). ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, wanted catches in each of the years 2020 and 2021 should be no more than 155 t. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding total catches. The stock status relative to reference points remains unknown. The precautionary buffer was not applied in 2017 for the 2018 and 2019 advice and is, therefore, applied this year.

16.3.2 Current assessment

The advice for this stock is biennial. In this WG, the stock catch data were updated. Advice is issued this year. COVID-19 has not affected the quality of data on which the advice is based.

16.4 References

- EU. 2019b. Regulation (EU) 2019/472 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 establishing a multiannual plan for stocks fished in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulations (EU) 2016/1139 and (EU) 2018/973, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007 and (EC) No 1300/2008. Official Journal of the European Union, L83: 1–17. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/472/oj>.
- ICES. 2012. ICES Implementation of Advice for Data-limited Stocks in 2012 in its 2012 Advice. ICES CM 2012/ACOM 68, 42 pp.
- ICES. 2016. Report of the Working Group for the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian waters Ecoregion (WGBIE), 13–19 May 2016, ICES HQ, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM/ACOM:12. 513 pp.
- ICES. 2018. Report of the Working Group for the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Waters Ecoregion (WGBIE), 3–10 May 2018, ICES HQ, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:12. 642 pp.
- ICES. 2021a. Advice on fishing opportunities. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2021. ICES Advice 2021, Section 1.1.1. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.7720>.

16.5 Tables and figures

Table 16.1. Plaice in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Official landings by country in tonnes.

Year	Belgium	France	Portugal	Spain	Total
1994		365	33	1	399
1995		319		12	331
1996		248		14	262
1997		255		3	258
1998		219		6	225
1999	1			3	4
2000	15	193		22	230
2001		201		22	223
2002	1	167		11	179
2003	1	217	1	4	223
2004		229	163	7	399
2005	4	186	1	33	224
2006	2	248	1	5	256
2007	5	214	41	4	263
2008	2	98	89	4	193
2009	2	133	101	8	244
2010	2	200	112	12	325
2011	2	208	65	9	283
2012	3	183	63	4	252
2013	0	147	45	5	197
2014	1	164	51	6	222
2015	2	142	45	5	194
2016	1	121	49	4	175
2017	1	98	33	2	134
2018	0	90	39	3	133
2019	0	94	36	3	133
2020	0	76	46	4	126

Table 16.2. Plaice in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Catches submitted to InterCatch (tonnes).

Catch category	Country	Gear	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Discards	France	Nets	-	10.00	3.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
		Other	-	2.00	0	0	0	0	-
		Trawl	-	4.00	0	1.00	1.00	0	-
	Spain	Nets	0	-	-	-	0	-	-
		Trawl	0	-	-	-	0	-	-
	Portugal	Trawl		0*	0*	0*	0	-	-
Discards total			0	15.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	2.00	2.00
Landings	Belgium	Other	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	-	0.40	0.30
	France	Nets	42.00	46.00	48.00	42.00	41.00	38.00	37.00
		Other	38.00	21.00	12.00	24.00	6.00	7.00	4.00
		Trawl	82.00	74.00	62.00	33.00	44.00	49.00	36.00
	Portugal	Other	47.00	44.00	47.00	33.00	39.00	36.00	46.00
	Spain	Nets	4.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.20
		Other	1.00	1.00	1.00	0	0	0.20	0.60
		Trawl	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.06	0.63
	Total landings			217.00	193.00	174.00	135.00	133.00	133.00
Total catches			217.00	208.00	177.00	140.00	136.00	135.00	128.00
Official Landings			220.00	193.00	173.00	134.00	133.00**	133.00**	126.00**

* Not available in InterCatch.

** Official provisional statistics from ICES website².² <http://data.ices.dk/rec12/downloadData.aspx>

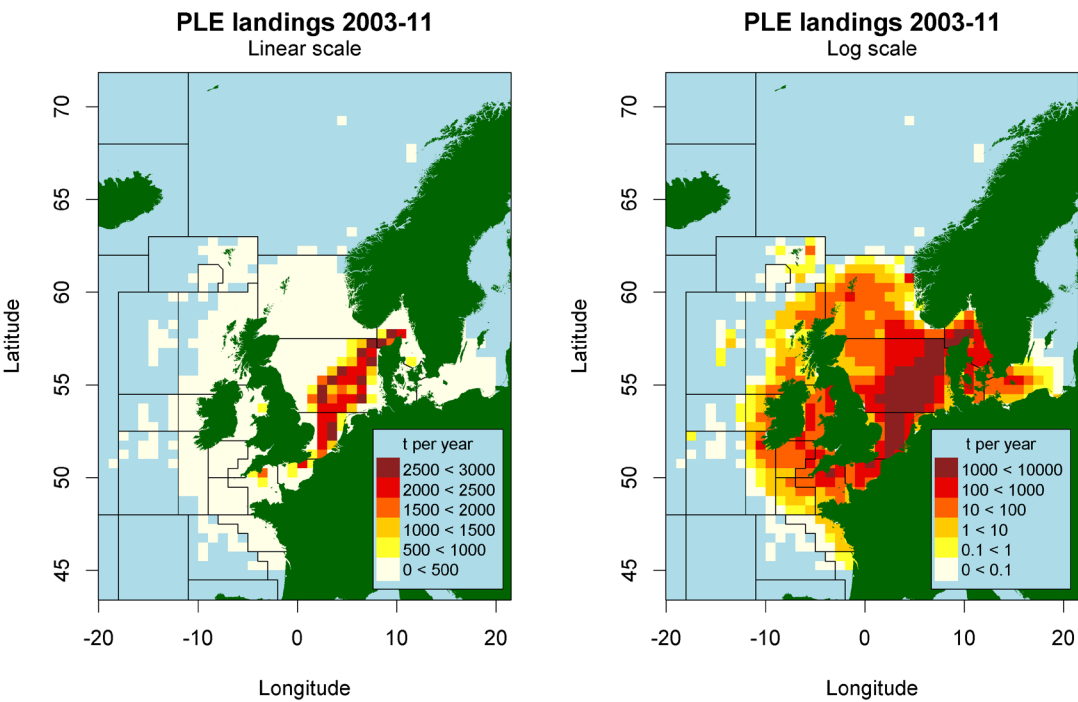


Figure 16.1. International landings of plaice by statistical rectangle from 2003–2011.