

Stock Annex: Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a (Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian waters)

Stock specific documentation of standard assessment procedures used by ICES.

Stock	Whiting
Working Group:	Working Group for the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Waters Ecoregion (WGBIE)
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A. General

A.1. Stock definition

The stock unit definition of whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in this area is not clear and Atlantic Iberian waters (Division 9.a) represent the southern limits of the distribution of the species. WGNEW concluded that in the absence of specific information on stock structure, the ICES ecoregions (North Sea including 7.d, Celtic Seas and South European Atlantic) are to be used as minimum level of disaggregation for the definition of stock units (ICES, 2012). This is an interim solution until more information is available on the stock.

A.2. Fishery

France and Spain are the main participants in this fishery although France has not recorded landings since 2008 and there were no Spanish data available for 2011. Landings are primarily made by trawlers although France recorded substantial landings by long-lines prior to 2009.

A.3. Ecosystem aspects

B. Data

B.1. Commercial catch

Fishery statistics are currently being compiled. There are concerns about the reliability of the 2008-2009 French data.

There is some mixing in Portuguese markets with pollack due to use of common names. This resulted in most pollack landings being recorded as whiting from 2004 onwards. Sampling data indicates that Portuguese landings of whiting and pollack from 9.a consisted of 2% whiting and 98% pollack. The Portuguese authorities informed the group that they can only correct the official landings statistics from 2015, therefore the working group presents corrected estimates of the landings in addition to the official landings.

B.2. Biological

Atlantic Iberian waters (Division 9.a) represent the southern limits of the distribution of the species.

B.3. Surveys

Whiting are present in the French EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 survey for the Bay of Biscay area from 1987, with the exclusion of 1993 and 1996. Age information is available since 1997. A working document to WGBIE 2016 explored the use of the EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 survey for whiting and found that the catches were very variable, resulting in high uncertainty in recruitment and biomass estimates. The estimates were considered to be too imprecise to be used as the basis for advice.

B.4. Commercial cpue

AZTI have compiled whiting LPUE in Divisions 8.a,b,d based on landings from the pair trawl fleet, which constitute 99% of the Spanish landings in that area (working document to WGHMM 2012). Landings and effort by this fleet have both declined from mid 2000s and LPUE has declined from 0.39 t/day in 2007 to 0.04 t/day in 2011.

B.5. Other relevant data**C. Assessment: data and method****D. Short-Term Projection****E. Medium-Term Projections****F. Long-Term Projections****G. Biological Reference Points****H. Other Issues****I. References**

ICES. 2012. Report of the Working Group on Assessment of New MoU Species (WGNEW), 5 - 9 March 2012, . ICES CM 2012/ACOM:20. 258 pp.