ICES Advice on fishing opportunities, catch, and effort
Celtic Seas, Greater North Sea, and Oceanic Northeast Atlantic ecoregions
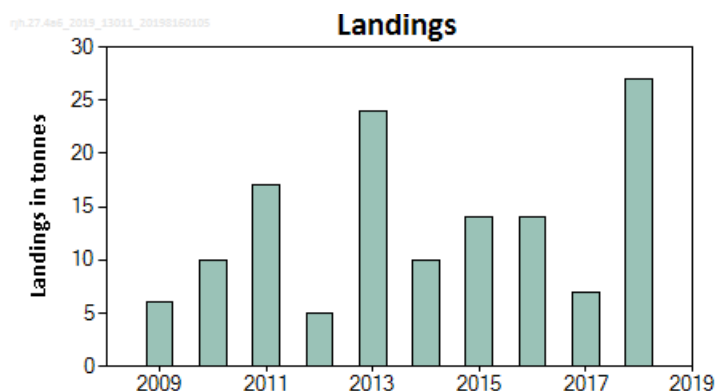*Published 4 October 2019*

Blonde ray (*Raja brachyura*) in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a (North Sea and West of Scotland)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, landings should be no more than 9 tonnes in each of the years 2020 and 2021. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catches.

Stock development over time

Landings have fluctuated over the time-series without trend.

Figure 1   Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. ICES estimates of species-specific landings available since 2009.

Stock and exploitation status

ICES cannot assess the stock and exploitation status relative to maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and precautionary approach (PA) reference points because the reference points are undefined.

Table 1   Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure				Stock size			
		2016	2017	2018			2016	2017	2018
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	?	?	?	Unknown	MSY $B_{trigger}$	?	?	?	Unknown
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	?	?	?	Unknown	B_{pa}, B_{lim}	?	?	?	Unknown
Management plan	F_{MGT}	–	–	–	Not applicable	B_{MGT}	–	–	–	Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	?	?	?	Unknown	-	?	?	?	Unknown

Catch scenarios

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 where there is no ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate for the stock. The precautionary buffer was last applied in 2018 and was not applied again in 2019.

Discarding is known to take place, but ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catch. In addition, discard survival, which is likely to occur, has not been estimated.

Table 2   Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. The basis for the catch scenarios*.

Advised catch for 2019 issued in 2018		9 tonnes
Discard rate		Unknown
Precautionary buffer	Not applied	-
Landings advice **		9 tonnes
% Advice change ***		0%

* The figures in the table are rounded. Calculations were done with unrounded inputs and computed values may not match exactly when calculated using the rounded figures in the table.
** Advised catch for 2019 issued in 2018.
*** Advice value for 2020 and 2021 relative to the advice value for 2019.

The advised landings for 2020 and 2021 are the same as those advised for 2019.

Basis of the advice

Table 3   Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for blonde ray in this area.

Quality of the assessment

Species identification issues between blonde ray and spotted ray may affect landings, observer, and survey data.

Current bottom trawl surveys are not considered informative, due to low catch rates.

Issues relevant for the advice

Blonde ray is a larger-bodied coastal species that is taken in recreational fisheries, but the quantities of retained catch are unknown.

Fishing opportunities are managed through an overall TAC for skates and rays by management unit. This stock straddles two TAC management units (North Sea and Celtic Seas).

Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

Basis of the assessment

Table 4   Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	5 (ICES, 2018).
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2019).
Input data	Annual landings since 2009.
Discards and bycatch	Unknown.
Indicators	None.
Other information	None.
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF).

Information from stakeholders

There is no additional available information.

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 5   Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. History of ICES advice and species-specific estimates of landings. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Landings corresponding to advice*	Agreed TAC*		ICES landings***
			2.a** and 4	6.a, 6.b, 7.a–c, and 7.e–k	
2006			2737	No TAC	
2007			2190	No TAC	
2008			1643	No TAC	
2009			1643	15748	6
2010			1397	13387	10
2011			1397	11379	18
2012			1395	9915	5
2013			1256	8924	24
2014	Decrease catches by 20%	-	1256	8032	10
2015	Same advice as in 2014	-	1382	8032	14
2016	Precautionary approach	6	1313	8032	14
2017	Same advice as 2016	6	1378	8434	7
2018	Precautionary approach	≤ 6	1654	9699	27
2019	Precautionary approach	≤ 9	1654	10184	
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 9			
2021	Same advice as in 2020	≤ 9			

* EU combined TAC for skates and rays.
** Since 2016, landings of blonde ray have not been allowed from EU waters of Division 2.a.
*** The data were revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016), and represent the minimum estimates based on reported landings.

History of the catch and landings

The distribution of this stock does not extend into the NEAFC Regulatory Area.

Table 6   Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. Catch distribution by fleet in 2018 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2018)	Landings		Discards
Unknown	Bottom trawl 99%	Other gears 1%	Unknown
	27 tonnes		

Table 7   Blonde ray in Subarea 6 and Division 4.a. ICES estimates of landings by country (in tonnes). The data were revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016).

Year	Belgium	Spain	France	UK	Ireland	Total*
2009	0	0.1	0.9	5	0.3	6
2010	0			7	4	10
2011				17	0.9	18
2012				4	1.4	5
2013				0.5	24	24
2014			0.6	0.7	9	10
2015			0.8	3	9	14
2016			0.6	2	11	14
2017			0.2	1	5	7
2018				1	3	23	27

* The figures in the table are rounded. Calculations were done with unrounded inputs and computed values may not match exactly when calculated using the rounded figures in the table.

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for blonde ray in this area.

Sources and references

ICES. 2012. ICES Implementation of Advice for Data-limited Stocks in 2012 in its 2012 Advice. ICES CM 2012/ACOM:68. 42 pp. https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5322.

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ICES. 2019. Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF). ICES Scientific Reports. 1:25. http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5594.