5.3.10 Blonde ray (*Raja brachyura*) in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g (Irish Sea, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North)

ICES stock advice

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, landings should be no more than 895 tonnes in each of the years 2017 and 2018. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catches.

Stock development over time

Landings (2009-2015) have ranged from 350 to 1170 tonnes. There are currently no stock size indicators.
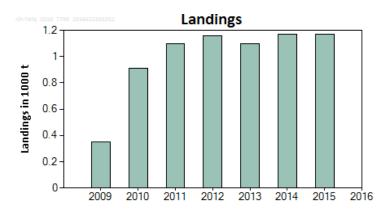

Figure 5.3.10.1   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. ICES estimated species-specific landings (in tonnes).

Stock and exploitation status

Table 5.3.10.1   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure				Stock size			
		2013	2014	2015			2013	2014	2015
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	?	?	? Undefined	MSY $B_{trigger}$		?	?	? Undefined
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	?	?	? Undefined	B_{pa}, B_{lim}		?	?	? Undefined
Management plan	F_{MGT}	-	-	- Not applicable	SSB_{MGT}		-	-	- Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	✖	?	? Unknown			?	?	? Unknown

Catch options

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 for the stock. The precautionary buffer was applied previously (ICES, 2014) and it has not been applied again this year.

The recent advised landings for 2015 and 2016 were originally derived using landings statistics from 2011-2013. In 2016, a review of the landing statistics of elasmobranchs (ICES, 2016a) was conducted. As a result, the basis which was used to provide advice in 2014 for 2015 and 2016 has been adjusted to account for the update in the landing statistics in the period 2011-2013.

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 5.3.10.2   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. For stocks in ICES data categories 3–6, one catch option is provided.

Recent advised landings (2015-2016)		897 t
Recent advised landings adjusted (2015–2016)* [897 t x 0.998]		895 t
Discard rate		Unknown
Precautionary buffer	Not applied	-
Landings advice**		895 t

*Recent advised landings adjusted for the revision of the landings statistics in 2011-2013
**(Recent advised landings adjusted).

Basis of the advice

Table 5.3.10.3   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach.
Management plan	There is no management plan for this stock.

Quality of the assessment

There is no assessment for this stock.

Issues relevant for the advice

Raja brachyura is a coastal and inner shelf species that has a patchy distribution and is often found in greater abundance in certain habitats (e.g. on sandbanks).

The quality of landings data has generally improved in recent years, especially following the WKSHARKS workshop in which ICES revised elasmobranch landings data for the period 2009-2015 (ICES, 2016a,b). However, data for *Raja brachyura* and *Raja montagui* are often confounded. The increase in landings from 2009 to 2010 is influenced by the introduction of mandatory species-specific reporting of skate landings.

Blonde ray is an important commercial species in this area. It is caught as bycatch in various demersal fisheries, including fisheries targeting the overall skate complex. It may also be targeted in areas of high local abundance, due to its large size and high market value.

In the UK (E&W)-BTS-Q3 survey, the species is caught most regularly in the Bristol Channel and off the east coast of Ireland. However, surveys have limited coverage in areas of local abundance and larger individuals are not sampled effectively.

Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

Basis of the assessment

Table 5.3.10.4   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. The basis of the assessment.

ICES stock data category	5 (ICES, 2016c)
Assessment type	No assessment. (ICES, 2016b)
Input data	Landings data 2009–2015
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified.
Indicators	None
Other information	UK (E&W)-BTS-Q3
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF)

Information from stakeholders

No information has been provided.

History of advice, catch, and management

Table 5.3.10.5   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. History of ICES advice and ICES estimates of landings** All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Predicted landings corresp. to advice	ICES species-specific landings: minimum estimate based on reported landings *
2011	No specific advice		1099
2012	No specific advice		1160
2013	No TAC, species-specific measures needed, catch to decrease by at least 20%	-	1097
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	-	1170
2015	Decrease at least 20 % from last 3 years' average.	897	1172
2016	No new advice, same as 2015	897	
2017	Precautionary approach	≤895	
2018	Precautionary approach (same value as advised catches for 2017)	≤895	

* Data revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016a).

** There is no a specific TAC for this stock. Fishing opportunities are managed through an overall TAC by management unit, which includes all species of skates and rays.

History of catch and landings

The distribution of this stock does not extend into the NEAFC regulatory area.

Table 5.3.10.6   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. Catch distribution by fleet in 2015 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2015)	Landings				Discards
Unknown	beam trawl	bottom trawls	fixed-nets	other gear	Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified.
	26%	62%	7%	5%	
	1172 tonnes				

Table 5.3.10.7   Blonde ray in divisions 7.a and 7.f–g. History of landings; ICES estimates of landings by country (in tonnes). Data revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016a).

Year	Belgium	UK	Ireland	France	Total
2009	170	138	5	36	350
2010	210	226	402	73	910
2011	313	273	382	131	1099
2012	404	261	407	87	1160
2013	406	262	377	52	1097
2014	351	229	420	170	1170
2015	359	244	352	218	1172

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for this stock 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.

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ICES. 2016b. Report of the Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF), 15–24 June 2016, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:20.

ICES. 2016c. General context of ICES advice. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2016. ICES Advice 2016, Book 1, Section 1.2.