16.4.12 Technical guidelines on conservation status advice

Introduction

Some stocks for which ICES provides fishing opportunities advice are more affected by other anthropogenic pressures than by fishing. In these cases, ICES will now include 'conservation status advice' in the respective fishing opportunities advice sheet.

Advice on conservation status is only to be given where clear, demonstrable management action can be recommended for any non-catch anthropogenic pressure, e.g. blocked water passage, eutrophication, or other degradation of habitat. It can also be used to highlight clear demonstrable sensitivity to climate change. The qualification required to show clear, demonstratable management action is high. Avoid generic statements that are of no specific application to management, including those related to climate change.

Thus, the conservation status sections should not be completed if the headline conservation status is "ICES has not identified any conservation aspects". Only complete those sections of the advice sheet when clear conservation aspects/management actions with a scientific underpinning are identified. Please consult the decision tree shown in Figure 1 for clarity on the process.

Completion of section 'Advice on conservation aspects' (see also Annex 1)

Select one of the following three options, based on conservation relevance, information availability and where clear, demonstratable management actions are apparent:

1. Advice can be given for one or more conservation aspects and required **conservation actions**

Provide concise advice (headline appropriate) on relevant conservation aspects and required conservation actions by making a distinction between actions with direct *vs*. indirect effects on the species/stock in question.

a) *Example (on European eel): ICES advises that i) all non-fisheries related anthropogenic mortalities should be zero (direct effects on eel survival), and ii) the quantity and quality of eel habitats should be restored including restoring connectivity and the physical, chemical, and biological properties of the habitats (indirect effects).*

b) *Example (on eastern Baltic cod): ICES advises that eastern Baltic cod conservation should be considered within the context of degradation of ecosystem status, resulting from cumulative anthropogenic pressures and climate change. Habitat restoration efforts with focus on improving bottom oxygen content are recommended (direct effects on mortality and indirect effects on biomass).*

2. One or more **conservation aspects** are recognised but no clear advice can be given

Note relevant conservation aspects (related to e.g. habitat requirements/sensitivities of a species/stock in question) and state that "which is considered as a source of risk for the stock/species". Include a statement: "For the time being, ICES has not identified any further conservation actions"

a) *Example (on angel shark): ICES states that angel shark is a low productivity species found in shallow coastal areas and is particularly sensitive to habitat degradation, which is considered as a source of risk for the species. For the time being, ICES has not identified any further conservation actions.*

3. No **conservation aspect** is identified

State that "ICES has not identified any conservation aspects".

Completion of section 'Conservation status'

Only complete if indicated as required in the decision tree. State if the stock/species is included in:

i) ICES species list of bycatch relevance (published in 2022) for the relevant ecoregion, and

ii) other relevant lists (e.g. OSPAR list of threatened and declining species, HELCOM Red List, IUCN Red List). In all cases, indicate species classification and year of assessment.
Please note: citation of fish species on a Red List should only be mentioned if the species in question is classified as threatened (VU, EN, CR) in that list. It should always be stated for which level the Red List was compiled, i.e. global or regional (EU, HELCOM, OSPAR, etc). Furthermore, in case of different classifications in different regional Red Lists, both should be cited (see Example 2).

Alternatively, state that "ICES is not aware of any information on stock/species specific conservation status". State in a footer that "This is for information purposes and ICES does not formally endorse the methods used by third parties to create lists".

Example 1: The European eel is listed on the IUCN Red List as Critically Endangered (2008).

Example 2: Cod is categorized on the HELCOM Red List for the Baltic Sea as Vulnerable (2013) and on the IUCN European Red List as Least Concern (2015).

Example 3: ICES is not aware of any information on stock/species specific conservation status.

Section 'Basis of the advice', sub-section: On aspects of conservation status

Only complete if indicated as required in the decision tree.

Advice basis	Ecosystem-based management (EBM)
Existing conservation measures	Provide information on any conservation measures at national, regional or global levels, e.g. inclusion of a species to the EU prohibited species list and any regulations, and Appendices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, by also stating since when. *Example 1: the European eel has been listed in CITES Appendix II and in the EU implementation of CITES rules (Annex B to Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97; EU, 1996) since 13 March 2009.* *Example 2: the species is covered by the EU Eel regulation and associated national management plans.* *Example 3: this stock is covered by the EU Action Plan for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (2009)* *Example 4: this species is covered by the EU habitats directive (1992)* *Example 5: the listing by IUCN of this species as critically endangered impacts management choices for fisheries under Norwegian jurisdiction (Marine Resources Act, 2008)* *Example 6: ICES is not aware of any conservation measures for this stock.*

Section 'Issues relevant for the advice'; subsection: On the conservation aspects

Only complete if indicated as required in the decision tree.

Provide information on:

- In case ICES advises non-zero TAC, but a given species is included in conservation list(s) of third parties
  Proposed text: "The criteria and the purpose behind the appearance of the stock/species in the conservation lists may differ from the ones used by ICES. Therefore, there is no inconsistency of having two different diagnostics and advice."

- Intrinsic productivity of the species/stock
  Example: (Bay of Biscay sole) the decreasing trend in the ratio R/SSB is of concern and possible impact of coastal pollution should be investigated.

- General habitat status/dynamics relevant to the species/stock, e.g. due to climate change, eutrophication/pollution
  Example: (cod) the decreasing trend in both biomass and recruitment in the southern part of the North Sea, attributed in part to a combination of fishing pressure and climate change effects (changed productivity).

- Status/dynamics of the habitat on a local scale as a result of other human activities than fishing, by also considering spatial overlap of multiple human activities
  Example: (herring) activities (such as gravel extractions, wind farms…) that affect the spawning habitat should not occur, unless the effects of these activities have been assessed and shown not to be detrimental.

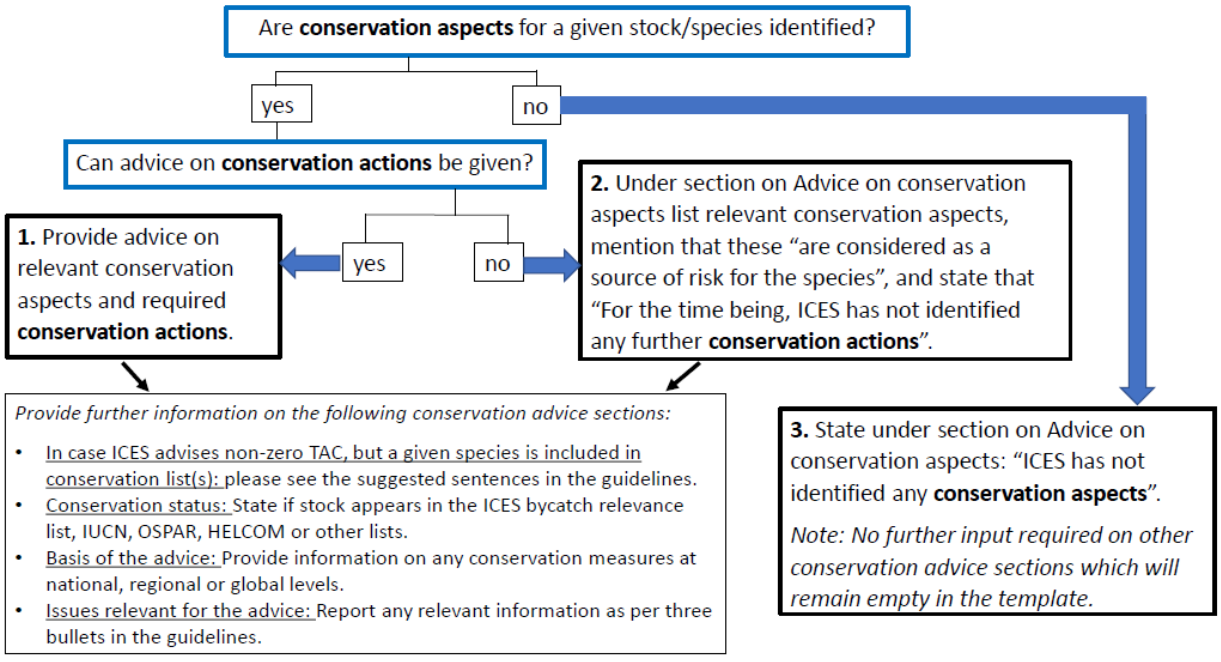


Figure 1 Decision tree for the conservation status advice.

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Annex 1: Template for the advice on fishing opportunities and conservation aspects (new sections on conservation advice are shaded in a different colour)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities and conservation

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advice on conservation aspects

Stock development over time

Conservation status

Catch scenarios

Basis of the advice

On the fishing opportunities

On the conservation aspects

Quality of the assessment

Issues relevant for the advice

On the fishing opportunities

On the conservation aspects

Reference points

Basis of the assessment

History of the advice, catch, and management

History of catch and landings

Summary of the assessment

Sources and references