

EEA Core Set of Indicators - CSI 032
Status of marine fish stocks
May 2005 assessment

working draft

About this document

Generated on: 17 Jun 2005

CSI contacts: http://ims.eionet.eu.int/IMS/About/contacts_for_csi

Online: <http://ims.eionet.eu.int/IMS/ISpecs/ISpecification20041007132227/IAssessment1116498234748>

If you would like to see further background information about this indicator, you can see the published specification at:

<http://www.eea.eu.int/coreset>

About this service

This PDF has been generated online by IMS (Indicator Management Service) at <http://ims.eionet.eu.int>.

This service is part of Reportnet at <http://www.eionet.eu.int/rn/click>.





Key policy question: Is the use of commercial fish stocks sustainable?

Key message: Most of the commercial fish stocks assessed in European waters appear to be outside safe biological limits (SBL).

Many commercial fish stocks in European waters remain non assessed. In the NE Atlantic, the percentage of non-assessed stocks of economic importance range from a minimum of 20% (North Sea) to a maximum of 71% (West Ireland) which is an increase in comparison to 13 % and 59 % from the previous assessment in 2002. The Baltic Sea still shows a high percentage of non-assessed stocks at 67% as compared to previous 56 %. In the Mediterranean region, the percentage is much higher with an average of 80 %, and a range from 65 % (Aegean Sea) to 83 % in the Adriatic (the previous highest value was recorded at 90 % for the South Alboran Sea).

Twenty-two to 53 % of the assessed commercial stocks in the NE Atlantic are outside safe biological limits. This is an improvement compared to the last record of 33-60 %. The Baltic and West Ireland Seas remain in the best shape with 22 and 29 % of their stocks being overfished (33% in the past) and the Irish Sea being the worst with 53 % of stocks outside safe biological limits (past record held by West of Scotland at 60%). For the Mediterranean the percentage of stocks outside safe biological limits range from 10 to 20 % with the Aegean and the Cretan Sea having the lowest performance.

The examination of 'safe' stocks in the NE Atlantic shows a slight decline ranging between 0 and 33%; these values correspond to West Ireland and North Sea, respectively. The last assessment of 2002 showed a range of 5 to 33 % for Celtic Sea/Western Channel and the Arctic, respectively. In the Mediterranean, the range extends from 0% (Cretan Seas) to 11% (Sardinia) compared to a minimum of 0% (S. Alboran and Cretan Seas) and a maximum of 15 % (Aegean Sea).

Looking at stocks in detail:

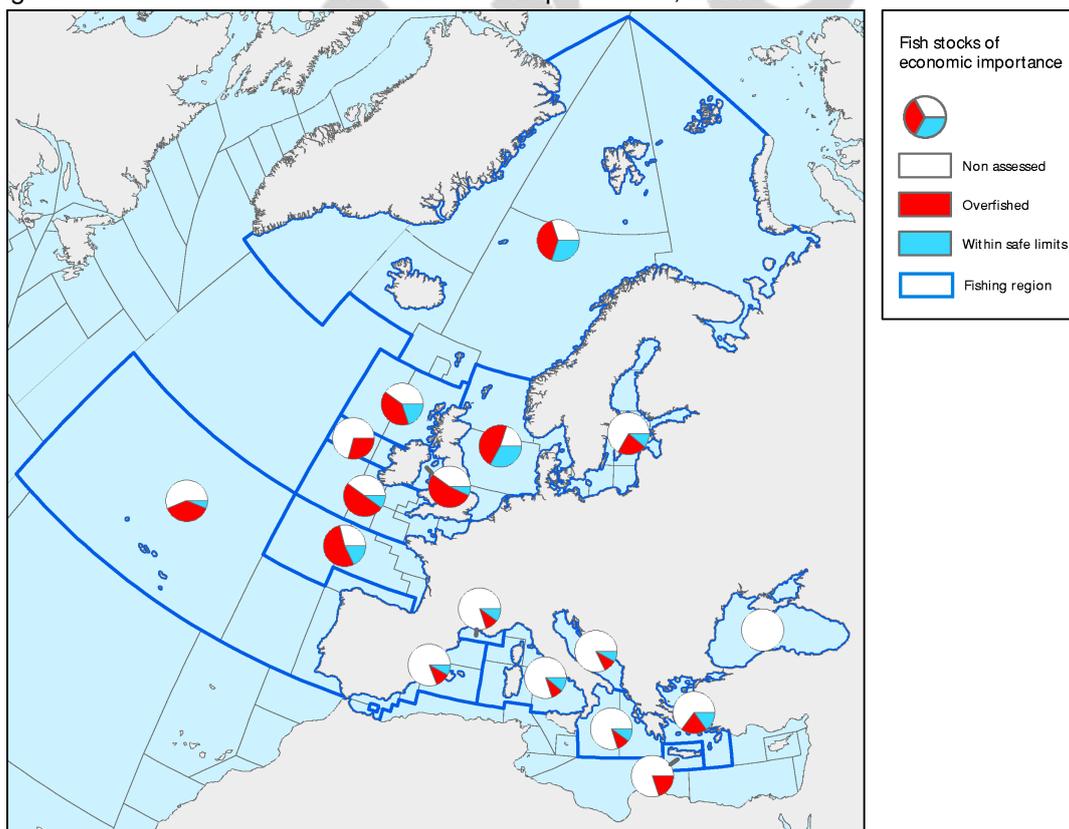
- The recovery of herring stocks appears to persist.
- Almost all round fish stocks have declined and are currently not sustainable.
- Pelagic and industrial species remain in better condition but still need to be subject to reduced fishing rates.
- In the Mediterranean region, only two demersal and two small pelagic stocks are monitored by GFCM with a limited spatial coverage. Demersal stocks remain outside safe biological limits. Many assessments that cover wider areas are based on preliminary results. Small pelagic stocks in the same area exhibit large scale fluctuations but are not fully exploited anywhere, except for the anchovy and pilchard in the Southern Alboran and Cretan Seas.
- According to ICCAT latest assessment the strong recruitment of swordfish over the past years has rendered the exploitation of the stock sustainable. Concern still remains about the over-exploitation of bluefin tuna. Uncertainties on stock assessment and lack of documented reporting (including EU Member States) still hinder management of these highly migratory species. Bluefin tuna catches continue to exceed the sustainable rate and despite ICCAT recommendations for both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, no measures (despite TAC reductions) have been enforced.

Recommendations and actions to prevent collapse of different stocks:



- ICES recommends to ban cod fishing in the North Sea, Irish Sea and west of Scotland, and to develop recovery plans to rebuild the stocks,
- EU prohibits all fisheries in an area west of Scotland as of 1 January 2004, and establishes a cod protection area in the North Sea where vessels targeting haddock are not allowed to fish,
- European Commission proposes (March 2004) to adjust the area concerned accordingly and to change the percentages of haddock that can be caught by vessels not holding a special licence,
- European Commission tables two proposals on long-term measures to help the recovery of sole stocks in the western Channel and Bay of Biscay, southern hake in the Cantabrian Sea and western Iberian Peninsula as well as plan for northern hake,
- ICES advises that fishing for deep-sea fish species should be permitted only when there are accompanying programmes to collect appropriate data. The expansion of such fisheries should be very slow until reliable assessments indicate that increased harvests are sustainable.

Fig. 1: Status of commercial fish stocks in European Seas, 2003-2004



Data source: GFCM, ICCAT, ICES



Fig. 2: State of commercial fish stocks in N E Atlantic and Baltic Sea in 2003-2004

Commercial stocks	Baltic Sea	North Sea & Skagerrak / Kattegat & Eastern Channel	West Scotland & Rockall Sea	Irish Sea	West Ireland	Celtic Sea & Western Channel	Bay of Biscay	Iberian Peninsula	Arctic
	ICES: IIIb,c,d, 22-32	ICES IIIa,IV, VIIId	ICES: VI	ICES: VIIa	ICES: VIIb,c, h-k	ICES: VIII-k, VIIe	ICES: VIIIa,b-d, e	ICES: VIIIc, IX,X	ICES: I, II, Va,b, XII, XIV,
Albacore									
Anchovy									
Anglerfish									
Blue whiting									
Bluefin tuna									
Brill									
Capelin									a
Cod									
Conger									
Chub mackerel									
Dab									
Flounder									
Haddock			b						
Hake									
Greenland Halibut									
Herring									
Horse mackerel									
Ling									
Mackerel									
Megrim									
Norway pout									
Plaice						c			
Pouting									
Red fish									
Saithe									
Salmon									
Sandeels									
Sardine									
Seabreams									
Sole									
Elasmobranchs									
Sprat						d			
Swordfish									
Turbot									
Whitefish									
Whiting									

Data source : ICES

working draft



Fig. 3: State of commercial fish stocks in Mediterranean Sea up to 2004



Data source : GFCM, ICCAT

working draft

draft



Fig. 4: Changes in state of commercial stocks in the North East Atlantic and Baltic Sea

Area	Stock	2001 Status	2002 Status	2004 Status
Arctic	Halibut	Outside safe biological limits	No sound assessment	No sound assessment
	Capelin		Within safe biological limits	Outside safe biological limits
	Red Fish		Outside safe biological limits	No sound assessment
Iberian Peninsula	Horse mackerel	Outside safe biological limits	No sound assessment	No sound assessment
West Ireland	Herring	Outside safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits	No sound assessment
Irish Sea	Whiting	Outside safe biological limits	No sound assessment	Outside safe biological limits
	Sole		Within safe biological limits	Outside safe biological limits
West Scotland	Megrim	Within safe biological limits	No sound assessment	No sound assessment
& Rockall Sea	Herring	No sound assessment	Within safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits
	Haddock		Outside safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits
North Sea & Skagerrak/ Kattegak & Eastern Channel	Herring	Outside safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits
	Haddock		Outside safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits
	Whiting		Outside safe biological limits	No sound assessment
Bay of Biscay	Anchovy		Within safe biological limits	Outside safe biological limits
	Whiting		No sound assessment	Within safe biological limits
Baltic	Herring		Outside safe biological limits	No sound assessment
Celtic Sea & Western Channel	Whiting		No sound assessment	Within safe biological limits

Data source: ICES



Fig. 5: Changes in state of commercial stocks in the Mediterranean

Area	Stock	2001 Status	2002 Status	2004 Status
Balearic - 1,6	Anchovy	Outside safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits
Sardinia, 11	Red mullet		Outside safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits
Adriatic - 17, 18	Anchovy	Outside safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits
Adriatic, 17	Pilchard		Within safe biological limits	No sound assessment
Aegean – 22	Anchovy	Outside safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits	Within safe biological limits
ALL	Swordfish	Outside safe biological limits		Within safe biological limits

Data source: GFCM, ICCAT