

OCEANA

Leganitos 47, 6º

28013 Madrid, Spain

EU Transparency Register ID: 47937943241-80

Contact person: Agnes Lisik

**Oceana fishing opportunities
recommendations for 2015**

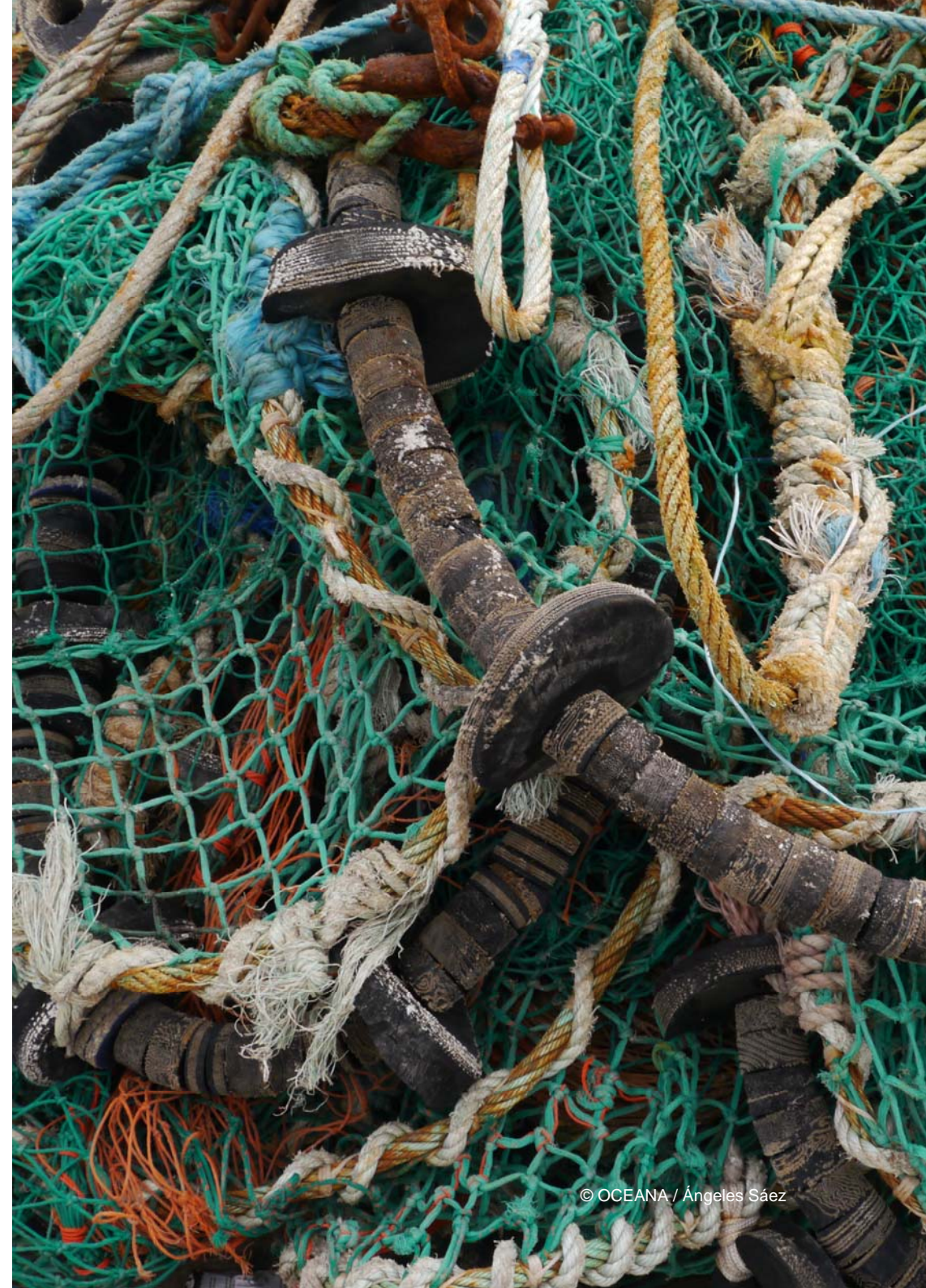
North East Atlantic stocks



© OCEANA / Angeles Sáez

Contents

Introduction		5
Oceana catch recommendations		10
Analysis of main commercial species		19
Anglerfish	<i>Lophius</i> spp.	19
Cod	<i>Gadus morhua</i>	22
Haddock	<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	27
Hake	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	31
Herring	<i>Clupea harengus</i>	34
Megrin	<i>Lepidorhombus</i> spp.	38
Norway lobster	<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	41
Plaice	<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	46
Pollack	<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	51
Sole	<i>Solea solea</i>	53
Whiting	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>	58
References		63
Acknowledgements		63
Appendix	Description of ICES areas	65



In response to the EU Commission consultation on fishing opportunities for 2015, Oceana would like to provide a constructive opinion on how fishing opportunities should be set for stocks in the North East Atlantic.

The fishing opportunities for 2015 will be the first to be legally adopted under the commitments of Maximum Sustainable Yield and the obligation to land all catches. Oceana considers these management objectives, together with the fulfilment of the scientific recommendations, as a cornerstone for responsible exploitation and recovery of fish stocks.

It is our hope that the Commission takes into account the recommendations contained in this document, and that the Commission proposal for 2015 will contribute to achieving the objectives agreed in the new Common Fisheries Policy.



Xavier Pastor, Executive Director of Oceana Europe

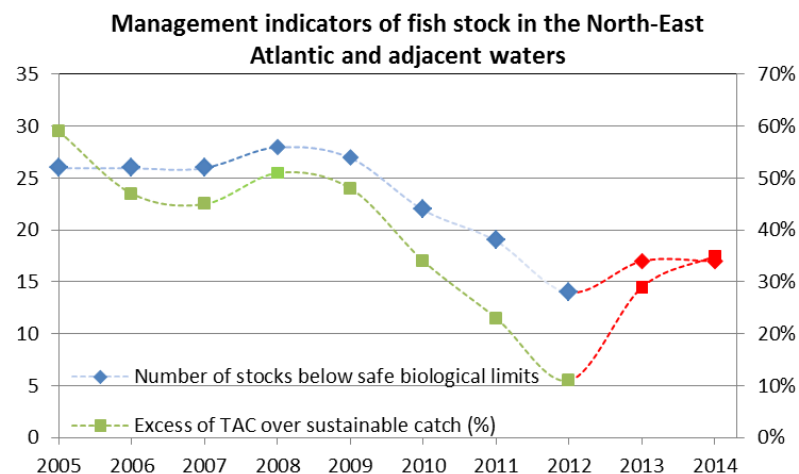
State of resources

The status of fish stocks in the North East Atlantic and adjacent waters has seen a positive trend in recent years that could be summarized by the reduction of the percentage of stocks overfished, from around 90% in the mid-2000s to 41% in 2014 and the increase in the number of stock inside safe biological limits from around 12 stocks in the mid-2000s to 21 in 2014¹.

¹ COM(2014) 388. Communication from the Commission concerning a consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2015.

Oceana appreciates this overall progress but also recognizes that further improvement is still needed in order to fully recover European fish stocks and to phase out overfishing. Oceana wants to highlight several concerns about recent trends in fisheries indicators as reported in the Commission communication on fishing opportunities for 2015 that clearly threaten the sustainable exploitation of stocks in the North East Atlantic.

Fishing opportunities cannot exceed sustainable catch limits without leading to overexploitation. There has been a steady decrease in the disparity between established TACs and sustainable catch limits (in %) since 2008, dropping to its lowest rate of 11% in 2012. However, this value increased during 2013 and 2014, and now stands at 35%. This shows an evident step back in the management of resources that leads to deterioration in the state of the stocks, and so for the first time in 7 years the percentage of overfished stocks has increased, from 39% in 2012 to 41% in 2013. In addition, the number of stocks below safe biological limits increased by 21%, from 14 stocks in 2012 to 17 in 2013, and has since then remained at the same level.



Although these trends may to some extent be explained by an increase in the number of stocks evaluated during 2012, and stocks where a quantitative scientific advice concerning fishing opportunities is available, these negative trends were not improved during recent years. In fact the trend even got worse as in the case of the disparity between established TACs and sustainable catch levels which has increased from 11% in 2012 to 29% in 2013 and to 35% in 2014.

Examples of stocks below safe biological limits (Blim) included in this proposal are:

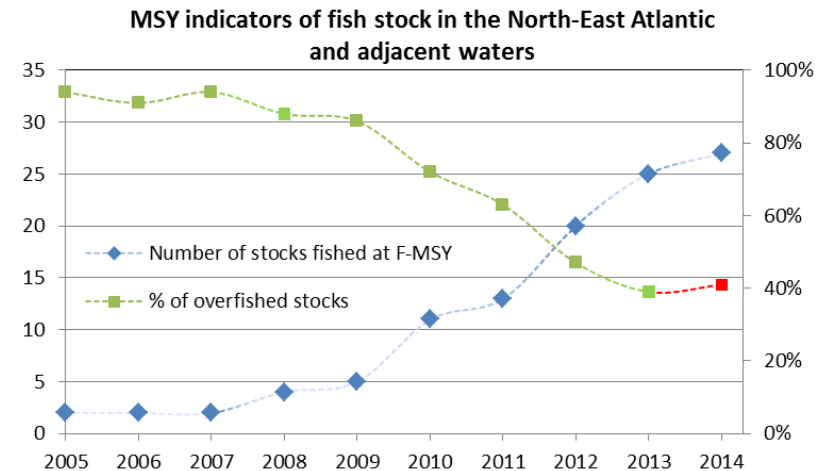
- Cod in the West of Scotland, the Irish Sea and the Kattegat,
- Haddock in the Faeroes Grounds,
- Herring in the South of West of Scotland, West of Ireland, and Porcupine Bank,
- Sole in the Irish Sea, and
- Whiting in the West of Scotland and Irish Sea

“Differences between agreed TAC and what is considered by scientist as sustainable has increased during last two years – Fishing opportunities have to be aligned with the scientific advice”

MSY commitment

Fishing opportunities must contribute to restore and/or maintain populations of harvested species above biomass levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield. Unfortunately, despite the fact that according to the CFP the MSY objective shall be achieved by 2015 for all stocks where possible, and by 2020 at the latest, currently only 27 out of the 71 Atlantic stocks, for which a quantified scientific advice concerning fishing opportunities is available, are known to be fished at MSY rate. For the rest of stocks, 44 out of 71, they either do not comply with the MSY framework because they are in breach of scientific advice (19 stocks), or, because of a lack of data, no fishing rate vis à vis MSY is available (25 stocks).

This situation not only goes against the provisions of the CFP, but also against international commitments² and management recommendations³. Recovering stocks to levels above MSY is essential to economic efficiency, as restoring stock productivity and ecosystem health will result in better revenues for fishers and will improve the welfare of fishing communities.



Oceana urges the Commission to propose fishing opportunities according to the MSY in all possible cases, and remembers that achieving MSY exploitation rates by a later date than 2015 would be acceptable only if it would seriously jeopardise the social and economic sustainability of the fishing fleets involved. After 2015, those rates should be achieved as soon as possible and in any event no later than 2020.

² UN. 2002. World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg, South Africa.

³ COM (2006) 360. Implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield.

“Only 27 Atlantic stocks are exploited according to the MSY commitment – Fishing rates according to the MSY should be set in all possible cases”

The obligation to land all catches

According to article 15 of the CFP -Landing obligation-, from 1 January 2015 it will be forbidden to discard individuals of the main pelagic commercial species. Many of the affected species are included in this proposal (e.g. Mackerel, Horse mackerel, Herring, Blue whiting, Boarfish, Anchovy, Argentine, Sardine, Sprat...).

This new obligation has implications in the typology of scientific advice and the setting of catch limits. The fishing opportunities for these species have to reflect real catches rather than previous landings, as previously discarded amounts have to be landed and will be counted against the quotas.

It is crucial that the implementation of the landing obligation does not result in an increase in the fishing mortality or jeopardise the MSY objective. The landing obligation should not be used as an argument to exceed the limits proposed by the scientist, or lead to an extra quota. To facilitate the implementation of the landing obligation there are already flexibility measures in place such as: the inter-annual quota flexibility, inter-species flexibility, or *de minimis* exemptions (on the basis of high survivability, disproportionate costs and difficulties to increase selectivity).

“The landing obligation shall not result in an increase in the fishing mortality - No extra quota exceeding scientific advice should be allowed in order to facilitate the implementation of the landing obligation“

Data-poor stocks and rollover rule

Currently the status of 47 stocks in the North East Atlantic and adjacent waters, is unknown, which make up more than half of all managed stocks in the area. This means that implemented fishing

opportunities for these stocks can neither guarantee sustainable exploitation, nor can they guarantee reaching MSY. For example, this situation applies to most of the main stocks of species such as anglerfish, megrim or pollack.

To remedy this situation and improve the management of these stocks, in 2012, ICES introduced the use of alternative assessment methods appropriate for data-poor stocks⁴ in order to provide quantitative catch recommendations where possible. As a result the number of stocks with a quantitative advice on fishing opportunities has increased from 47 in 2012 to 71 in 2014.

Oceana welcomed the use of these models and suggested that they should preferably lead to maintaining or decreasing the TAC, and only in select few cases should they lead to an increase in the TAC. In this way the precautionary approach will be applied and Member States will be encouraged to provide accurate information on fisheries to develop sound assessments. But the potential application of these assessments for data-limited stocks has been reduced by the adoption of a joint statement by the Council and the Commission⁵. This agreement points to the fact that for a list of 21 stocks for which there is limited information and are of low economic importance, or are taken only as by-catches, or which show low levels of quota uptake, it can be considered to constrain catches during the following five years at the TAC levels fixed for 2013.

Last year 17 out of the 21 stocks listed in the agreement were backed up with scientific advice. The rollover rule was applied for the 21 stocks, keeping the same catch level as in 2013 and consequently 15 scientific recommendations for reductions in catches were ignored.

Oceana disagrees with this approach in cases where there is scientific advice available that can be used for setting the catch limits,

⁴ ICES. 2012. ICES Implementation of Advice for Data-limited Stocks in 2012 in its 2012 Advice. ICES CM 2012/ACOM 68. 42pp.

⁵ Joint statement by the Council and the Commission" (Council of the European Union Document Doc 5315/13 PECHE 15, 15 January 2013)

especially in the case of recommendations for reduced catches. Oceana calls on the Commission to ignore this agreement when the perception of the status of any of these stocks has worsened and to use the best available scientific information to implement precautionary management measures.

“The rollover rule should be not applied when there is a scientific assessment recommending a reduction in catches“

Deep Sea species

The extreme biological characteristics of most deep-sea species make them the fish resource that are the poorest adapted to sustain fishing pressure, since their population productivity and recovery capacity is very limited.

As a result of serious deficiencies in the management and knowledge of deep-sea fish stocks many deep-sea species captured in the region are not covered by the fishing opportunities regulations and therefore remain unmanaged. At the same time, only 1 out of 24 managed species contain some stocks that are considered to be in good condition. The status of most species is completely unknown. This situation puts the viability of the fishery and the resources in serious risk.

For deep-sea stocks it is particularly important that scientific advice is followed when available and that the precautionary approach is adhered to. Oceana urges the Commission to further strengthen management by proposing fishing opportunities according to the following recommendations:

- Fishing opportunities shall not exceed scientifically advised levels.
- Fishing opportunities should be fixed with explicit consideration of impacts on non-target deep-sea species.
- Fishing opportunities may not be allocated if insufficient scientific advice is available.
- Fishing opportunities shall not be allocated for most vulnerable deep-sea species, like deep-sea sharks.

Principles for proposing TACs for 2015

The Commission in its communication has proposed a number of principles to set fishing opportunities for 2015. Oceana supports these principles as a commitment to reduce overfishing; however Oceana would like to add comments and suggestions to the Commission guidelines:

1. Management plans. The Commission intends to apply MPs where they are consistent with the MSY. In cases where existing plans have become inapplicable (e.g. because an objective other than MSY has been reached) the Commission will adopt proposals on the basis of MSY. Oceana suggests going further and calls for the management recommendation contained in the management plans that are poorly implemented and are not providing positive results in terms of stock recovery and effort reduction, to be ignored. Management plans like:
 - Cod in the Irish Sea and the Kattegat
 - Haddock in West of Scotland
 - Nephrops in the southern Bay of Biscay⁶
2. Stocks with MSY advice available. The commission intends to propose TACs consistent with MSY in 2015 for the growing group of stocks with MSY full assessment and MSY proxies. Oceana urges the Commission to follow this principle and only accept a delay in cases whereby achieving MSY by 2015 would seriously jeopardise the sustainability of the fishing fleets. Oceana recalls that in many cases the BMSY proxy available is similar to the PA reference point, so it cannot be considered as ambitious enough in terms of recovering fish stocks to levels which are able to produce MSY.
3. Stocks with survey-assessed trends. Through assessing stocks on a case-by-case basis and taking the precautionary approach into account, the Commission intends to propose quantitative scientific advice. Oceana calls the Commission to align its

⁶ Multi-annual plan also affects to hake

proposal with the scientific recommendations as much as possible to reduce the current breach between TACs and sustainable catch levels, in particular for the stocks considered to be below precautionary and safe biological limits.

4. Stocks with a presumption of stability and poor data stocks. In the case of stocks listed in the Joint statement Doc 5315/13 PECHE 15, and unless scientific advice indicates a need for change, the Commission intends to apply the rollover rule. Oceana recommends applying this principle only in cases where a good stock condition can be proved, otherwise the proposal should be in line with data limited stock assessment (best available advice).
5. Stocks without scientific advice. The Commission proposes to follow the precautionary approach in a systematic, predefined and transparent way. Oceana recommends a precautionary reduction by 15% in relation to the average landings of the last three years.

Oceana TACs proposal (in tonnes) for North East Atlantic stocks

Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, figures in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference in % from previous year

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
<i>Argentina silus</i>	EU and international waters of I and II	90 (0%)	Unknown (I and II)	81 (-10%)
<i>Argentina silus</i>	EU waters of III and IV	1028 (0%)	Unknown (IIIa and IV)	925 (-10%)
<i>Argentina silus</i>	EU and international waters of V, VI and VII	4316 (0%)	Unknown decreasing (Va), unknown (Vb, VI and VII),	4033 (-7%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	IIIa and EU waters of 22-32	29 (0%)	Unknown but above possible reference points (IIIa), completely unknown (22-32)	29 (0%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	EU and international waters of I, II and XIV	21 (0%)	Unknown (I, II), unknown but above possible reference points (XIV)	21 (0%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	EU waters of IV	235 (0%)	Unknown but above possible reference points (IV)	235 (0%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	EU and international waters of V, VI and VII	937 (0%)	Unknown stable (VIb), unknown but above possible reference points (Va,b, VIa, VII)	937 (0%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	Norwegian waters of IV	170 (0%)	Unknown but above possible reference points (IV)	170 (0%)
Caproidae	EU and international waters of VI, VI, VIII	127509 (+55%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	IIIa	40515 (-16%)	Above PA (IIIa)	28360 (-30%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Union and Norwegian waters of IV (N 53°03')	418333 (-2%)	Above PA (IV)	409966 (-2%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Norwegian waters south of 62°N	866 (-6%)	Above PA (IIIa, IV)	849 (-2%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	By-catches IIIa	6659 (0%)	Above PA (IIIa)	3212 (-52%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	By-catches IV, VIId and Union waters of IIIa	13085 (-9%)	Above PA (IV, VIId), completely unknown (IIIa)	16055 (+22%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	IVc, VIId	51704 (-2%)	Above PA (IVc, VIId)	50670 (-2%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Vb, VIb, VIa (N)	28067 (+2%)	Completely unknown (Vb, VIb), above Blim (VIaN)	22690 (-19%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VIa (S), VIIb, VIIc	3676 (+145%)	Below safe biological limits (VIaS, VIIbc)	0 (-100)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VI Clyde	(UK)	?	?

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VIIa	5251 (+5%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIaN and S)	4854 (-8%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VIIe and VIIf	930 (0%)	Completely unknown (VIIe,f)	791 (-15%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VIIg, VIIh, VIIj, VIIk	22360 (+30%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIg-k)	15140 (-32%)
<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	IX, X and CECAF 34.1.1	8778 (0%)	Unknown, variable without trend (IXa) and completely unknown (IXb, X and CECAF 34.1.1)	7461 (-15%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	IIIa (West-Skagerrak)	3972 (+5%)	Below Blim (IIIa-W)	1549 (-61%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	IIIa (East-Kattegat)	100 (0%)	Below Blim (IIIa-E)	0 (-100%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	IV, EU waters of IIa, IIIa not covered by Ska y Kat	27799 (+5%)	Below Blim (IV), Unknown (IIa),	10842 (-61%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	Norwegian Waters S of 62°N	382 (0%)	Below Blim (IV, IIIa), Unknown (IIa),	149 (-61%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIIb, EU and international Waters of Vb (west of 12°W), XII and XIV	74 (0%)	Unknown (VIIb, XIV), Below PA (Vb1) Completely Unknown (XII)	70 (-5%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIIa, EU and international Waters of Vb (east of 12°W)	0 (0%)	Below Blim (VIIa), Below PA (Vb1) Unknown (Vb2)	0 (0%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIIa	228 (-20%)	Below Blim (VIIa)	0 (-100%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIIb, VIIc, VIIe, VIIf, VIIg, VIIh, VIIj, VIIk, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	6848 (-33%)	Above MSY proxy (VIIe-k) Completely unknown (VIIbc, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	4024 (-41%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIIId	1620 (+5%)	Below Blim (VIIId)	632 (-61%)
<i>Lamna nasus</i>	I to XIV, French Guyana, Kattegat, EU waters of Skagerrak, EU waters of CECAF	0 (0%)	Threatened species	0 (0%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	EU Waters of IIa and IV	2083 (+8%)	Completely Unknown (IIa, IVbc), above MSY B trigger (IVa)	2013 (-3%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	VI, EU and international Waters of Vb, intern waters of XII and XIV	4074 (+20%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIa), Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (VIb) Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	pm [3937 (-3%)]
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	VII	17385 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIb-k), Completely unknown (VIIa)	13814 (-20%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIId, VIIIe	1716 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIabd), Completely unknown (VIIIe)	1366 (-20%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	VIIIc IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	2257 (+86%)	Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1), above MSY B trigger (VIIIc, IXa)	1013 (-55%)
<i>Limanda limanda & Platichthys flesus</i>	EU waters of IIa and IV	18434 (0%)	DAB- completely unknown (IIa), unknown (IV) FLE- completely unknown (IIa), unknown (IV)	10955 (-41%)
Lophiidae	EU Waters of IIa and IV	7833 (-10%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (IV), Completely unknown (IIa)	pm

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
Lophiidae	Norwegian Waters of IV	1500 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (IV)	pm
Lophiidae	VI, EU and international waters of Vb , international waters of XII and XIV	4432 (-10%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (VI), Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	pm
Lophiidae	VII	33516 (+15%)	Unknown positive trend for (VIIb-k). Completely unknown (VIIa)	29534 (-12%)
Lophiidae	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIE	8980 (+15%)	Unknown positive trend for (VIIIabd). Completely unknown (VIIE)	7914 (-12%)
Lophiidae	VIIIc, IX, X, and CECAF34.1.1 (EU)	2629 (+6%)	Unknown but stable trend and possibly above MSY (VIIIc, IXa). Completely unknown IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1	2987 (+14%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	IIIa, EU waters of IIIb,c,d (22-32)	2355 (-15%)	Above MSY B trigger (IIIa W), Completely unknown (IIIaE,b,c,d)	2543 (+8%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	IV, EU Waters of IIa	38284 (-15%)	Above MSY B trigger (IV, IIa)	41346 (+8%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	Norwegian waters of South 62°	707 (0%)	Above MSY B trigger (IV, IIIa west)	763 (+8%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	EU and Internat Waters of VIb, XII and XIV	1210 (+22%)	Below Blim (VIb), Completely unknown (XII, XIV)	1210 (0%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	EU and international waters of Vb, VIa	3988 (-5%)	Below Blim (Vb) Above MSY B trigger (VIa)	4307 (+8%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	VIIb-k, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	9479 (-33%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIb-k) Completely unknown (VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	5605 (-41%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	VIIa	1181 (-1%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIa)	893 (-24%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	IIIa	1050 (0%)	Unknown (IIIa)	500 (-53%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	IV, EU waters of IIa	16092 (-15%)	Unknown – above Blim (IV) Completely unknown (IIa)	13678 (-15%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	VI EU and international waters of Vb, international waters of XII and XIV	292 (0%)	Below Blim (VIa), unknown (VIb) Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	11 (-96%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	VIIa	80 (-5%)	Below Blim (VIIa)	0 (-100%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	VIIb-h, VIIj-k	20668 (-15%)	Above MSY (VIIb-c,e-k), Unknown above Blim (VIIc)	17742 (-14%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	VIII	3175 (0%)	Unknown (VIII)	1671 (-47%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	IX, X,CECAF (EU)	(Portugal)	IXa (unknown) Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	251 (-x%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i> & <i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	Norwegian waters south of 62°N	190 (0%) EU	WHG- Unknown, below recent trend and close to Blim (IV), Unknown (IIIa). POL- Unknown below possible reference points (IIIa, IV)	161 (-15%)
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	IIIa, EU waters of IIIb and IIIc, IIId (22-32)	2466 (+18%)	Possibly above B MSY trigger proxy (IIIa) & Completely unknown (IIIbcd)	2367 (-4%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	EU waters of IIa and IV	2874 (+18%)	Completely unknown (IIa) & Possibly above MSY (IV)	2759 (-4%)
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	VI, VII, EU waters of Vb, int waters of XII, XIV	45896 (+18%)	Possibly above B MSY trigger proxy (VI, VII) & Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	44060 (-4%)
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIIe	30610 (+18%)	Possibly above B MSY trigger proxy (VIIIabd) & Completely unknown (VIIIe)	29386 (-4%)
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	16266 (+15%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIIc, IXa), Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	7302 (-55%)
<i>Micromesistius poutassou</i>	Norwegian Waters of II and IV	0? (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Micromesistius poutassou</i>	EU and internat Waters of I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIIIa,b,d,e, XII, XIV	185525 (+60%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Micromesistius poutassou</i>	VIIIc, IX, X, EU waters of CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	30823 (+87%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Micromesistius poutassou</i>	EU waters of II, IVa, V, VI north of 56°30' N and VII west of 12°W	0? (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Microstomus & Glyptocephalus</i>	EU waters II, IV	6391 (0%)	WIT – Unknown uptrend (IV) & completely unknown (II) WHB – Unknown uptrend (IV) & completely unknown (II)	5924 (-7%)
<i>Molva dypterygia</i>	EU waters and international waters Vb, VI, VII	2540 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (Vb, VI, VII)	5046 (+99%)
<i>Molva dypterygia</i>	International waters of XII	619 (-20%)	Unknown below possible reference points (International waters of XII)	0 (-100%)
<i>Molva dypterygia</i>	EU waters and international waters of II, IV	53 (0%)	Unknown below possible reference points (II, IVa) completely unknown (IVbc)	0 (-100%)
<i>Molva dypterygia</i>	EU waters and international waters of III	8 (0%)	Unknown below possible reference points (IIIa)	0 (-100%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	EU and international waters I, II	36 (0%)	Unknown stable (I, II)	36 (0%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	IIIa, EU waters of Subdivisions 22-32 (IIIbcd)	87 (0%)	Unknown stable (IIIa), completely unknown (IIIbcd)	66 (-24%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	EU waters of IV	2428 (0%)	Unknown stable (IVa), completely unknown (IVb,c)	1845 (-24%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	EU and international waters of V	33 (0%)	Above MSY B trigger (Va) Unknown stable (Vb)	34 (+3%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	EU and international waters of VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	14164 (0%)	Unknown stable (VI, VII, VIII, IX, XII, XIV), Completely unknown (X)	10765 (-24%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	Norwegian waters IV	950 (0%)	Unknown stable (IVa), completely unknown (IVb,c)	722 (-24%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	IIIa, EU waters of Subdivision 22-32	5019 (-3%)	Unknown (IIIa) Completely unknown (IIIbc, 22-32)	5318 (+6%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	EU Waters of IIa and IV	15499 (-10%)	Above and below MSY B trigger & Unknown (FU of IV), Completely unknown (IIa)	13174 (-15%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	Norwegian waters IV	1000 (0%)	Above and below MYS B trigger & Unknown (FU of IV),	850 (-15%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	VI, EU and international waters Vb	15287 (-8%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (VIa) Completely unknown (Vb, VIb)	pm
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	VII	20989 (-9%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (VII)	pm
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	VIIIa,b,d,e	3899 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIIab) Completely unknown (VIIIde)	3214 (-17%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	VIIIc	67 (-9%)	Unknown decreasing (VIIIc)	0 (-100%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	221 (-10%)	Unknown decreasing and increasing (IXa), Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 43.1.1)	0 (-100%)
<i>Pandalus borealis</i>	IIIa	3551 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (IIIa)	pm
<i>Pandalus borealis</i>	EU waters of IIa, IV	2446 (-20%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (IIa), Unknown (IVa-Fladen ground)	pm
<i>Pandalus borealis</i>	Norwegian waters south of 62°00' N	480 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (IIIa, IVa-Norwegian deep)	pm
<i>Penaeus spp.</i>	French Guyana Waters	(France)	?	pm
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	IIIa (Skagerrak)	10056 (+10%)	Unknown stable (western component) uptrend (eastern component)	7232 (-28%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	IIIa (Kattegat)	2160 (+20%)	Unknown uptrend	2626 (+21%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	IV, EU waters of IIa, IIIa not covered by Skagerrak and Kattegat	111631 (+15%)	Above MSY B trigger (IV) Completely unknown (IIa, IIIa not covered by Skagerrak and Kattegat)	113345 (+2%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VI, EU and international waters of Vb, international waters of XII and XIV	658 (0%)	Completely unknown (Vb, VI, XII, XIV)	559 (-15%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIa	1220 (-25%)	Unknown possibly above reference points (VIIa)	1220 (0%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIb, VIIc	74 (0%)	Unknown (VIIbc)	30 (-59%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIId, VIIe	5322 (-17%)	Unknown increasing (VIIId) above MSY B trigger (VIIe)	4203 (-21%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIIf, VIIg	461 (+25%)	Unknown (VIIIfg)	420 (-9%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIIh, VIIj, VIIk	135 (-4%)	Unknown (VIIIhjk)	135 (0%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	395 (0%)	Unknown (VIII, IXa) Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	233 (-20%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	VI, EU and international waters of Vb, international waters of XII and XIV	397 (0%)	Unknown (VI) completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	50 (-87%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	VII	13495 (0%)	Unknown (VII)	4150 (-69%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIIe	1482 (0%)	Unknown (VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIIe)	977 (-34%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	VIIIc	231 (0%)	Unknown (VIIIc)	152 (-34%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	282 (0%)	Unknown (IXa) completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	186 (-34%)
<i>Pollachius virens</i>	IIIa and IV, EU waters IIa, IIIb, IIIc, Subdivisions 22-32	77536 (-15%)	Below PA (IIIa, IV), Completely unknown (IIIbc 22-32), above PA (IIa)	62804 (-19%)
<i>Pollachius virens</i>	VI, EU and international Vb, XII, XIV	8045 (-15%)	Below PA (VI) above MSY B trigger (Vb), Completely unknown (XII, XIV)	6516 (-19%)
<i>Pollachius virens</i>	Norwegian waters south 62°N	880 (0%)	Below PA (IIIa, IV)	713 (-19%)
<i>Pollachius virens</i>	VII, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	3176 (0%)	Completely unknown (VII, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	2700 (-15%)
<i>Psetta & Scophthalmus</i>	EU waters IIa, IV	4642 (0%)	TUR-Unknown uptrend (IV), completely unknown (IIa), BLL-Unknown (IV), completely unknown (IIa)	5133 (+10%)
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters IIa, IV	1256 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters IIIa	47 (-10%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters VIa, VIb, VIIa-c, VIIIe-k	8032 (-10%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters VIId	798 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters VIII and IX	3420 (-10%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Reinhardtius hippoglossoides</i>	EU waters IIa, IV, EU and international waters Vb, VI	2000 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (IIa), above MSY B trigger (Vb, VI), completely unknown (IV)	pm
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	IIIa, IV, EU waters IIa, IIIb, IIIc, Subdiv 22-32	299240 (+80%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	VI, VII, VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIIe, EU and internat waters Vb, internat waters IIa, XII, XIV	563970 (+98%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF (EU)	56635 (+82%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	Norwegian waters of IIa, IVa	19437(+82%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Solea solea</i>	EU waters II, IV	11900 (-15%)	Above MSY B trigger (IV), completely unknown (II)	10973 (-8%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	IIIa, EU waters of IIIb-d (22-32)	353 (-37%)	Below Blim (IIIab, 22-24) Completely unknown (25-32)	205 (-42%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
<i>Solea solea</i>	VI, EU and international waters of Vb, internat Waters of XII, XIV	57 (0%)	Completely unknown (VI, Vb, XII, XIV)	48 (-15%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIa	95 (-32%)	Below Blim (VIIa)	0 (-100%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIb VIIc	42 (0%)	Unknown (VIIbc)	30 (-29%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIId	4838 (-18%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIId)	1931 (-61%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIe	832 (-7%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIe)	851 (+2%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIIf VIIg	1001 (-9%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIIfg)	652 (-35%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIh, VIIj and VIIk	382 (-5%)	Unknown (VIIh-k)	225 (-41%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIIa and VIIIb	3800 (-7%)	Below PA (VIIIa,b)	2407 (-37%)
<i>Solea spp.</i>	VIIIc, VIIId and VIIIE, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	1072 (0%)	Unknown (VIIIc, IXa) Completely Unknown (VIIIde, IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	869 (-19%)
<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>	VIIId and VIIe	5150 (0%)	Unknown uptrend	3832 (-26%)
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	EU waters of IIIa	0 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	EU waters of IIa and IV	0 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	EU and international waters of I, V, VI, VII, VIII, XII, XIV	0 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	VIIIc	18508 (-26%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	IX	35000 (+17%)	Unknown at long term average (IXa), completely unknown (IXb)	71824 (+105%)
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	X, CECAF 34.1.1 (Azores)	(Portugal)	Unknown stable (Xa2), completely unknown (Xa1, Xb)	1098 (x%)
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	CECAF 34.1.1 (Madeira)	(Portugal)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	CECAF 34.1.1 (Canary Islands)	(Spain)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Trachurus spp. & by-catches</i>	EU waters IVb, IVc, VIIId	31720 (-16%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm
<i>Trachurus spp. & by-catches</i>	EU waters IIa, IVa, VI, VIIa-c, VIIe-k, VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIId, VIIIE, EU and internat waters Vb, internat waters XII, XIV	116912 (-27%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report	pm

Oceana TACs proposal (in tonnes) for North East Atlantic deep-sea stocks. Brackets compare TAC difference in % from previous year

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2013	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015	Oceana proposal 2016
<i>Deep-sea sharks*</i>	EU and international waters of V, VI, VII, VIII, IX	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Depleted or concerns about depletion	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Deep-sea sharks*</i>	EU and international waters of X	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Depleted or concerns about depletion	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Deep-sea sharks*, Deania hystricosa and Deania profundorum</i>	International waters of XII	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Depleted or concerns about depletion	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Aphanopus carbo</i>	EU and international waters of I, II, III, IV	9 (0%)	9 (0%)	Unknown stable	9 (0%)	9 (0%)
<i>Aphanopus carbo</i>	EU and international waters of V, VI, VII, XII	3051 (40%)	3966 (30%)	Unknown stable	2802 (-29%)	2802 (0%)
<i>Aphanopus carbo</i>	EU and international waters of VIII, IX, X	3700 (10%)	3700 (0%)	Unknown stable	2726 (-26%)	2726 (0%)
<i>Aphanopus carbo</i>	EU and international waters of CECAF 34.1.2	3674 (-5%)	3490 (-5%)	Totally unknown	2966 (-15%)	2966 (0%)
<i>Beryx spp.</i>	EU and international waters of III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	321 (-2%)	296 (-8%)	Unknown	280 (-5%)	280 (0%)
<i>Coryphaenoides rupestris</i>	EU and international waters of I, II, IV	13 (0%)	13 (0%)	Unknown (I, II, IV)	13 (0%)	13 (0%)
<i>Coryphaenoides rupestris</i>	EU and international waters of III	680 (-20%)	544 (-20%)	Unknown stable at low level (IIIa)	0 (-100%)	0 (-100%)
<i>Coryphaenoides rupestris</i>	EU and international waters of Vb, VI, VII	4297 (69%)	4297 (0%)	Around B MSY trigger (Vb, VI, VII)	4297 (0%)	4297 (0%)
<i>Coryphaenoides rupestris</i>	EU and international waters of VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	3581 (-10%)	3223 (-10%)	Unknown (VIII, IX, XIIb), completely unknown (X, XIIa, XIV)	838(-74%)	838 (0%)
<i>Hoplostethus atlanticus</i>	EU and international waters of VI	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Below possible reference points	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Hoplostethus atlanticus</i>	EU and international waters of VII	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Below possible reference points	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Hoplostethus atlanticus</i>	EU and international waters of I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Below possible reference points	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>	EU and international waters of VI, VII, VIII	196 (-9%)	178 (-9%)	Below possible reference points	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>	EU and international waters of IX	780 (0%)	780 (0%)	Below possible reference points	115 (-85%)	115 (0%)
<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>	EU and international waters of X	1022 (-10%)	920 (-10%)	Unknown decreasing	400 (-56%)	400 (0%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2013	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015	Oceana proposal 2016
<i>Phycis blennoides</i>	EU and international waters of I, II, III, IV	31 (0%)	31 (0%)	Unknown	31 (0%)	31 (0%)
<i>Phycis blennoides</i>	EU and international waters of V, VI, VII	2028 (0%)	2028 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (VI, VII)	2028 (0%)	2028 (0%)
<i>Phycis blennoides</i>	EU and international waters of VIII, IX	267 (0%)	267 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (VIII, IXa)	267 (0%)	267 (0%)
<i>Phycis blennoides</i>	EU and international waters of X, XII	54 (0%)	54 (0%)	Unknown	54 (0%)	54 (0%)

*Deep-sea sharks means the following list of species: *Apristurus* spp., *Chlamydoselachus anguineus*, *Centrophorus* spp., *Centroscymnus coelolepis*, *Centroscymnus crepidater*, *Centroscyllium fabricci*, *Deania calcea*, *Dalatias licha*, *Etmopterus princeps*, *Etmopterus spinax*, *Galeus murinus*, *Haxanchus griseus*, *Oxynotus paradoxus*, *Scymnodon ringens* and *Somniosus microcephalus*.

Anglerfish (*Lophius spp.*)

Species description

Anglerfish are found in most of the world's oceans. The two species found in the North Atlantic are the angler (*Lophius piscatorius*) and black-bellied angler (*Lophius budegassa*). The species are distributed from the south-west of the Barents Sea to the Straits of Gibraltar and the African coasts, including the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. *L. budegassa* is wider spread in southern waters than *L. piscatorius*. Anglerfish live in soft or muddy bottoms where they bury themselves waiting for prey, mainly fish. Spawning appears to occur largely in deep waters off the edge of the continental shelf, although mature females are rarely encountered.

State of the stocks

There are serious data gaps regarding anglerfish stocks, making them considered as data limited stocks. While the state of the stocks of the two target species (*L. piscatorius* and *L. budegassa*) differs, their management do not, and both are caught in the same grounds and by the same fleets. As anglerfish matures at a larger size, a large portion of catches consist of immature fish, making the stock susceptible to recruitment overfishing.

In the **Skagerrak and Kattegat (IIIa)**, the **North Sea (IV)**, and in **Western Scotland and Rockall (VI)**, scientific assessment on stock status was not available at the time of writing this report.

In the **West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, North and South Celtic Sea, and East and West of Southwest of Ireland (VIIb-k)**, **North, Central and Bay of Biscay-Offshore (VIIIa,b,d)** there is no analytical assessment of the state of the stocks, the exploitation status is unknown, and there are no reliable estimates of discards. There are no reference points defined for these stocks. Improved sampling of length composition and accurate estimates of growth parameters are needed to facilitate the development of analytical assessment. According to the data survey, biomass showed erratic

behaviour in a positive trend. So for *L. piscatorius* and *L. budegassa*, the average of the stock biomass indicator in the last two years (2012-2013) is respectively 60% and 33% higher than the average of the three previous years (2009-2011). These trends seem to be a consequence of successful recruitment, especially for *L. budegassa* (strong recruitment in 2011, 2012 and 2013), not as a result of a significant decrease in TAC or effort. *L. budegassa* landings represent 30% of the total landings of both species. The majority of anglerfish catches consist of young fish and anglerfish discards of small individuals seem to have increased in recent years.

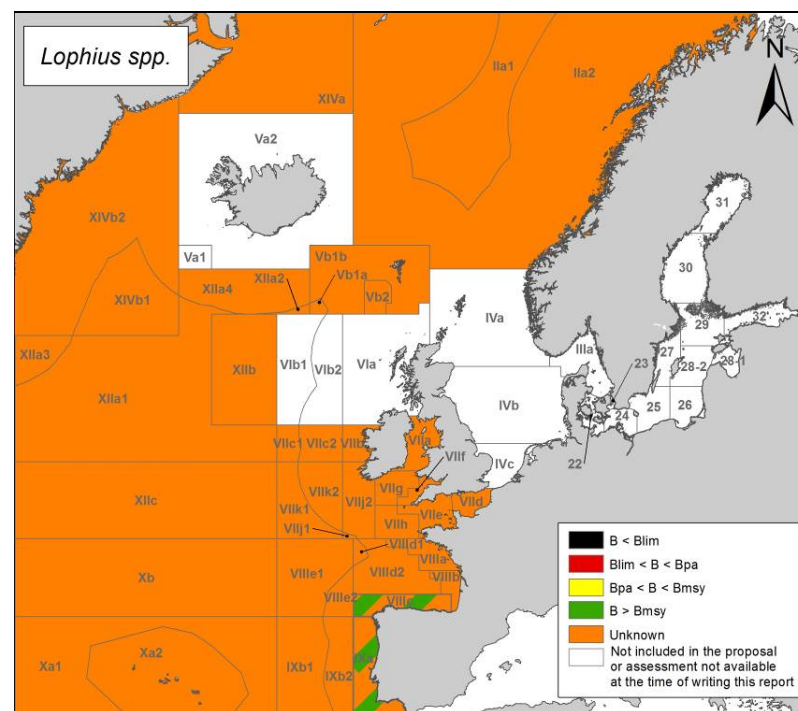


Figure 1. Anglerfish stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

In the Iberian Peninsula, **south of the Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **west of Portuguese waters** (IXa) anglerfish stocks state depend on the species. While *L. budegassa* anglerfish stock is in good condition and presently above the Bmsy trigger thanks to a progressive reduction in mortality, which has been below Fmsy since 2001, the *L. piscatorius* stock status is unknown in relation to any potential biomass reference point, but is estimated to be in an intermittently increasing trend during last 18 years, in response to a fishing mortality decrease trend since the late 80s. Recruitment for *L. piscatorius*, which constitutes around 65% of the total anglerfish landings, has been low in recent years with no evidence of strong year classes since 2001. Discards are known to take place but cannot be quantified. A large proportion of catches include immature fish.

There are no scientific assessments that provide an evaluation about the status and rate of exploitation for the rest of the managed stocks in the **EU and international waters of Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Irish Sea** (VIIa), **West of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIe), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X), **international waters of North Azores** (XII), **international waters of East Greenland** (XIV) and **CECAF 34.1.1**.

Oceana proposal

Technical measures are required to ensure that sufficient numbers of individuals can reach the spawning size. Oceana proposes setting a minimum landing size linked to the reproductive size. EU Regulation (EC) 2406/96 fixes a minimum weight of 500g for anglerfish to ensure marketing standards, and increases the mesh opening for the nets used for this fishery in accordance with this criteria. The situation endangers the stock's possible positive evolution by preventing the young individuals that have resulted from the latest good levels of recruitment, from being incorporated into the population.

As both anglerfish species are caught, landed and counted together, they are managed under a common TAC. This situation prevents effective control of the single-species exploitation rates and could

potentially lead to overexploitation of either species. The species requires a management plan, based on objective scientific criteria to control its exploitation. The control system also needs to be improved.

For the stock from the **Skagerrak and Kattegat** (IIIa) the **North Sea** (IV), and **Western Scotland and Rockall** (VI), scientific recommendation on fishing opportunities was not available at the time of writing this report.

For stocks from the **West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, North and South Celtic Sea, and East and West of Southwest of Ireland** (VIIb-k), **North, Central and Offshore of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIa,b,d), based on the specific assessment of data-limited stocks, ICES advises that catches for the two species combined should not exceed 37450 tonnes, *L. budegassa* 1075 tonnes and *L. piscatorius* 26691 tonnes, which implies a XX% increase in TAC in relation to the average landings of the last three years. Oceana agrees with this measure as anglerfish biomass indicators show an uptrend over the last years, even though discards, which are known to occur, are not included in the assessment.

For the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **West of Portuguese waters** (IXa), ICES advises that, based on the MSY transition approach, landings of anglerfish in 2015 should not exceed 2987 tonnes, *L. budegassa* 1050 tonnes and *L. piscatorius* 1937 tonnes, which implies a 14% increase in TAC. Discards are not included in the assessment. Oceana advises that the proposed increase is followed to keep the MSY exploitation rate during 2015.

For the other managed stocks for which there is no information, **EU and international waters of Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Irish Sea** (VIIa), **West of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIe), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X), **international waters of North Azores** (XII), **international waters of East Greenland** (XIV), and **CECAF 34.1.1**, Oceana proposes applying the scientific advice of the stocks included in the same management area.

Table 1. Comparative table of anglerfish TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
EU Waters of IIa and IV	EU waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	7833 (-10%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (IV), Completely unknown (IIa)	pm
Norwegian Waters of IV	Norwegian Waters of North Sea	1500 (0%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (IV)	pm
VI, Vb (EU&IW), XII (IW) and XIV (IW)	Rockall, West of Scotland, EU & International waters of Faeroes Grounds, international waters of North Azores and international waters East Greenland	4432 (-10%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (VI), Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	pm
VII	Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland - East and West	33516 (+15%)	Unknown positive trend for (VIIb-k). Completely unknown (VIIa)	29534 (-12%)
VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIIe	Bay of Biscay North, Central, Offshore and West	8980 (+15%)	Unknown positive trend for (VIIIabd). Completely unknown (VIIIe)	7914 (-12%)
VIIIc, IX, X, and CECAF34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay South, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds and EU waters of CECAF34.1.1	2629 (+6%)	Unknown but stable trend and possibly above MSY (VIIIc, IXa). Completely unknown IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1	2987 (+14%)

*Stock status depending on the species

Cod (*Gadus morhua*)

Species description

This epibenthic, pelagic species can be found in a wide variety of habitats, from the coast to the boundaries of the continental shelf. It forms aggregations during the day. Cod is an omnivorous species and its diet consists of invertebrates and fish, including its own juveniles. The largest stocks are found in the Norwegian Arctic, the Barents Sea and Iceland. It is also found in the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and west of Scotland.

State of the stocks

Cod stocks in European waters are in a poor state, the species has been subject to successive management plans, and the species is still showing no solid signs of recovery. Furthermore, some of the stocks continue to collapse with biomasses below the safe biological and precautionary limits.

Despite the low abundance of the species, it is still possible to find areas of high cod density due to its hyper-aggregating behaviour. This can lead to high catches in specific places causing high mortality on damaged stocks. Rising sea temperature has been shown to have a negative impact on cod recruitment in warmer waters of the species' range distribution.

Kattegat (IIIa, East): new data available for this stock does not change the perception of the stock, so previous description of the stocks status is applicable for this year. The stock is collapsed and overexploited with biomass levels below safe biological limits since 2000. Recruitment in recent years has been among the lowest in the time series with values that compromise any short term recovery. Scientists have spent 14 years unsuccessfully recommending the closure of this fishery according to the precautionary approach. The implementation and enforcement of the 2008 management plan is not adequate, and has not helped the stock to recover. The current level of fishing mortality is uncertain and reported landings and

discard estimates do not represent total removals from the stock. ICES estimates that total removals have been much higher than the reported landings in the past years, therefore, the level of fishing mortality cannot be reliably estimated. Discard data from on-board observers indicates an increase since 2009, existing management measures have not been effective to reduce discards in fact discard rate for 2013 is the highest of the whole times series with discard estimates (1997-2013). Fishing mortality has been the major driver of long-term stock dynamics, more than the effects of environmental and climate change.

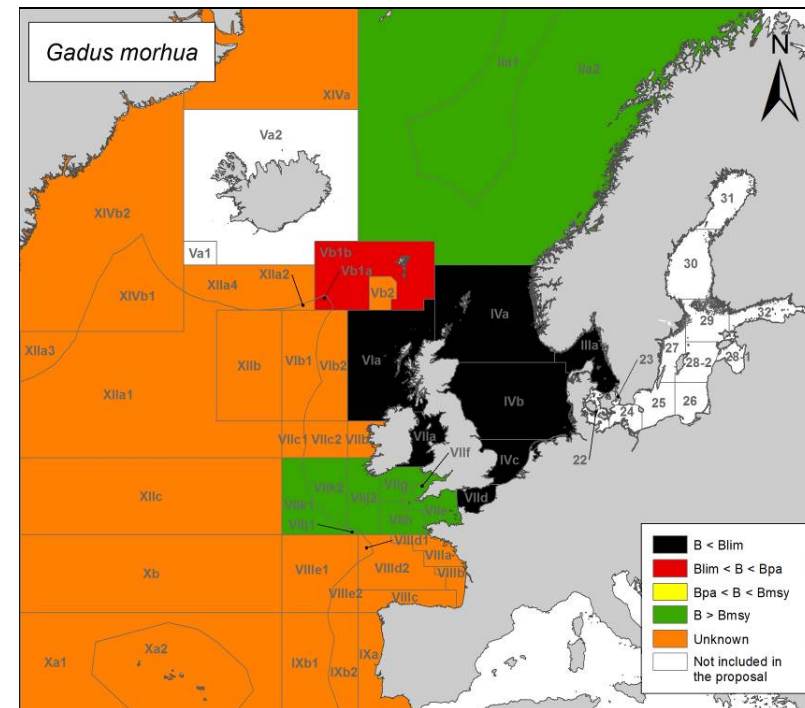


Figure 2. Cod stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

In the **North Sea (IV)** **Eastern Channel (VIIId)** and **Skagerrak (IIIa West)**, the stock has gradually increased since its historical low in 2006, confirming that a recovery trend is taking place, but remains low, in the vicinity of safe biological limits. Fishing mortality has decreased since 2000 and it is now at around 0.4, between F_{pa} and F_{msy} proxy, well over F_{msy} proxy (0.2). Recruitment has been poor since 2000 and the proportion of discards, around 21-28% in weight in recent years, is high although lower than in previous years (47% in 2007). The stock is managed through the EU management plan (Regulation (EC) 1342/2008) and the EU–Norway long-term management plan. Both plans are in accordance with the precautionary approach, according to ICES, but only if properly implemented and enforced. An evaluation of these plans' effectiveness in 2011-2012 concluded that although a gradual reduction in F and discards has taken place in recent years, the management plan has not controlled F as envisaged in the Nord Sea.

Rockall (VIb): There are no new data available that change the perception of the stock, so previous assessment is also utilizable for 2015. Reliable information is lacking to evaluate the status of this stock, and current landing levels are 20 times lower than those documented ten years ago, having gone from 2000 tonnes in 2002 to less than 100 today. Although there are doubts on the accuracy of the reported landings, as these are reported by vessels operating in both divisions VIa and VIb, the strong downtrend in landings could be proof of stock depletion and that catches and fishing efforts are not sustainable.

East Greenland (XIV): new data (landings and surveys) available for this stock do not change the perception of the stock, therefore ICES advice remains the same as last year. No analytical assessment is available for this stock because of the lack of a time-series of landings since 1993. Therefore, fishing possibilities cannot be projected. Available information indicates that the cod biomass is low compared to before the 1990s. The stock has been managed since 2008 through a management plan agreed on by Greenland and the EU. Although the stock has slightly increased in recent years, it is still far below any possible biomass reference points.

West of Scotland (VIa): this stock is completely collapsed with a biomass level that has remained very low and well below safe biological limits since 1997. The management plan (Regulation (EC) 1342/2008) has yet to be implemented and enforced adequately. It has therefore failed to reduce fishing mortality to the required levels and fishing mortality continues to be very high, over the safe biological limits and more than three times higher than MSY fishing rate. The fishery is also managed by a combination of by-catch restrictions, area closures and technical measures. Recruitment has been estimated to be low since 2001 and is considered impaired. In 2013 catches were nine times greater than the reported landings and estimated mortality is increasingly due to discarding. Discard information is imprecise compared to landing data because of lower sampling coverage but it is estimated to be roughly four times greater than landings, around 71% of total catches in 2012.

Irish Sea (VIIa): all available evidence points to a severely depleted stock with low recruitment. Spawning stock biomass has declined since the late 1980s and, despite the faint biomass increase trend since 2010, it is well below safe biological limits, reducing reproductive and recovery capacity. Recruitment has been below average for the past nineteen years and eight of the last ten years showed recruitment levels among the lowest on record due to low spawning stock biomass and poor environmental conditions. Scientists have spent 13 years, including 2014, unsuccessfully recommending the closure of this fishery. Although fishing mortality has been declining in recent years it still remains very high, clearly above any reference points, including safe biological limits, and cannot reverse the depletion of the stock. The management plan is not enforced adequately or showing any positive results in the short term. After evaluating the plan, ICES considers that it is not in accordance with the precautionary approach. Discards are highly variable between trips and gears, for 2013 discards are estimated to be around 36% of total catches in weight, but in the past total removals were between 2 and 3 times higher than the reported landings. There is a by-catch of cod in this area by fisheries targeting nephrops and whitefish.

W English Channel (VIIe), **Bristol Channel** (VIIIf), **N&S Celtic Sae** (VIIg,h), **Great Sole** (VIIj), **W Great Sole** (VIIk): spawning biomass is above any reference point, including the MSY biomass trigger (provisionally set at Bpa) objective since 2011. The good status of the stock, which was below safe biological limits from 2004 to 2010, is directly related to the sharp reduction of the fishing mortality since 2005. It should be noted a biomass reduction trend as the result of low recruitment in recent years combined with an increase in fishing mortality. Recruitment has been highly variable over time with occasional high recruitment as in 1987 and 2010. Although Celtic Sea cod is known to have higher growth rates and to mature earlier than other cod stocks, this should not lead to an optimistic situation as the recruitment is lower than other cod stocks.

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **West of Ireland and Porcupine Bank** (VIIbc), **Bay of Biscay** (VIII), **Portuguese Waters** (IX), **Azores Grounds** (X), **international waters of North Azores** (XII) and EU waters of **CECAF 34.1.1** there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its status and its exploitation rate.

Oceana proposal

Bearing in mind the worrying state of conservation and development of most of the Atlantic cod stocks, Oceana urges the Commission to propose TAC reductions, including fisheries' closures, to guarantee that populations recover above precautionary biomass levels as quickly as possible. An improvement on data collection is also desirable to amend fishing parameters and get better assessments.

Because NE Atlantic demersal fisheries are mixed fisheries harvesting a wide range of commercial species, including cod, a multi-species management plan is being developed to consider the fisheries and species interaction. Regarding cod, this plan would allow the reduction of the recurring cod TAC overshoot due to by-catch in other fisheries. The scope of the new multi-species plan would include the North Sea, Skagerrak and the Eastern Channel.

Oceana believes that the future plan will contribute to improve the management of these species.

Kattegat (IIIa, East): New data available does not change the perception of the stock, so the ICES advice for last year remains the same. According to the multi-annual plan, TAC and effort should be reduced by 25%, the lowest possible reduction level attending to article 9. Due to the continuing critical stock status, with a biomass far below safe biological limits and uncertain mortality, Oceana considers, based on precautionary considerations and in line with ICES advice, that there should be no direct fisheries and that by-catch should be minimised as much as possible. If the fishery is not closed Oceana recommends imposing conservation measures and minimizing the fishing effort in the area to avoid over-catching, since there is a lack of controls prevents the fixed TAC from accurately controlling real catches. Oceana recommends that only fisheries that can demonstrate a close to zero catch of cod is allowed in this area given the bad state of the stock and the fact that ICES states that the current low TAC is likely to be reached before the end of the year, thus increasing the risk of discard of cod. Additional measures to decrease the discard rates should urgently be implemented

For the **North Sea** (IV) **Eastern Channel** (VIId) and **Skagerrak** (IIIa, West), ICES advises, based on the EU-Norway management plan, which limits annual TAC variations to 20%, that combined catches in 2015 should be no more than 35486 tonnes, resulting in a 20% reduction. If discards rates do not change from those in 2013 this implies landings of no more than 26713 tonnes. This figure does not fulfil the scheme for transition towards the MSY framework. According to the MSY framework, ICES advises, that landings should be no more than 12986 tonnes, resulting in a 61% TAC reduction, Oceana agrees with this advice, although a lower reduction could be also acceptable, between 35% ~ 61%, in case such reduction has serious negative socio-economic consequences. Oceana believes that as biomass is still around safe biological limits and fishing mortality is well above Fmsy proxy, the reduction shall be significant higher than the one recommended by the management plan, to ensure the recovery of the stock in the short term. It should be noted that all previous catch recommendations, including the MSY

approach or even zero catch, will keep biomass below the precautionary benchmark during 2015. Cod are also caught as part of mixed fisheries catching haddock, whiting, Nephrops, plaice, and sole.

The apparent northerly shift in the distribution of cod in the North Sea in combination with the relative stability criteria may create problems in managing the fisheries. Some areas could be fully used while in other areas, the quota may be exhausted prematurely and increase the incentive to discarding.

Rockall (VIb): There is no new data that change the perception of the stocks, therefore last year catch advice is still applicable for 2015. Despite the lack of sound knowledge about the rate of exploitation and stock trends, ICES advises based limited stock assessment data that catches in 2014 should be no more than 70 tonnes. Oceana agrees with this advice.

East Greenland (XIV): in response to ICES recommendations, and based on precautionary considerations, no offshore fishery should take place in 2015 to improve the likelihood of spawning stocks in West and East Greenland. Oceana agrees with this advice and urges to follow it.

West of Scotland (VIa): According to the management plan, which has not been evaluated by ICES, effort should be reduced by 25%, which according to the last ICES forecast is not enough to recover the stock. The plan however, also suggests that if the stock is failing to recover properly, which it is the case, a higher reduction could be considered. ICES advises, on the basis of the MSY approach, that there should be no direct fishing and by-catch should be minimized in 2015. Oceana agrees with the zero catch advice and requests the closure of the fishery. Because of critical low biomass and recruitment over last decade it is impossible to identify any catch compatible with the precautionary approach or with the MSY approach. Scientists have spent 12 years unsuccessfully recommending the closure of this fishery. It is necessary to recover the stock above Bpa as quickly as possible. Any allowable catch will generate the same or more amount of discards, something that the

stock cannot afford. Measures to reduce the high discard rates are recommended.

Irish Sea (VIIa): ICES has warned that the current management plan is not in accordance with the precautionary approach so it makes no sense to continue setting TACs this way. According to the non-precautionary management plan, the TAC should be reduced by at least 25%. ICES advises on the basis of the MSY and precautionary approaches that there should be no direct fisheries in 2015 and cod by-catch in the area should be minimized. Oceana supports this advice due to the stock's deplorable state and recommends closing the fishery based on precautionary considerations, and only allowing other fisheries in the area that can demonstrate a close to zero by-catch of cod. TAC reductions are not enough to guarantee that the stocks recover above Blim quickly. The stock has been harvested unsustainably since the late 1980s. Oceana is of the opinion that the use of selective gears should be made mandatory in this area, e.g. the use of the eliminator trawl in fisheries targeting whitefish and sorting grids in trawls targeting nephrops.

W English Channel (VIIe), **Bristol Channel** (VIIf), **N&S Celtic Sea** (VIIg,h), **Great Sole** (VIIj), **W Great Sole** (VIIk): ICES advises, based on the MSY approach, that landings in 2015 be no more than 4024 tonnes with a 0.37 mortality rate, a 41% TAC decrease. This TAC will lead to a biomass increase by 13%. Oceana agrees with this advice, although a lower reduction could be also acceptable, between 31% ~ 41%, in case such reduction has serious negative socio-economic consequences. Oceana warns that this decrease should be respected so as to guarantee the MSY in following years, especially when 2011 and 2012 year classes are estimated well below the average of the time-series. In recent years agreed TAC was not fully caught so they have not been restrictive. Discard rates (mainly minimum landing size and high-grading) represents around 10% of total catches by weight. Cod in the Celtic Sea are mainly caught together with whiting and haddock.

For the rest of the managed stocks **West of Ireland and Porcupine Bank** (VIIbc), **Bay of Biscay** (VIII), **Portuguese Waters** (IX), **Azores Grounds** (X), **international waters of North Azores** (XII) and EU

waters of **CECAF 34.1.1**, Oceana proposes, in line with the precautionary approach, a minimal reduction in catches of 15% for those stocks which are not managed together with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 2. Comparative table of cod TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
IIIa (West)	Skagerrak	3972 (+5%)	Below Blim (IIIa-W)	1549 (-61%)
IIIa (East)	Kattegat	100 (0%)	Below Blim (IIIa-E)	0 (-100%)
IV, EU waters of IIa, IIIa not covered by Ska y Kat	North Sea, EU waters of Norwegian Sea, Transition area to Baltic not covered by Ska y Kat	27799 (+5%)	Below Blim (IV), Unknown (IIa),	10842 (-61%)
Norwegian Waters S of 62°N	Norwegian Waters South of 62°N	382 (0%)	Below Blim (IV, IIIa), Unknown (IIa),	149 (-61%)
VIIb, EU and internat Waters of Vb (west of 12°W), XII and XIV	Rockall, EU and int water of Faeroes West of 12°W, North Azores and East Greenland	74 (0%)	Unknown (VIIb, XIV), Below PA (Vb1) Completely Unknown (XII)	70 (-5%)
VIa, EU and internat Waters of Vb (east of 12°W)	West of Scotland and EU and int water of Faeroes East of 12°W	0 (0%)	Below Blim (VIa), Below PA (Vb1) Unknown (Vb2)	0 (0%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	228 (-20%)	Below Blim (VIIa)	0 (-100%)
VIIb, VIIc, VIIE, VIIf, VIIf, VIIh, VIIj, VIIk, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North, Celtic Sea South, Southwest of Ireland / East, Southwest of Ireland – West, Bay of Biscay, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds, EU waters of CECAF 34.1.1	6848 (-33%)	Above MSY proxy (VIIE-k) Completely unknown (VIIbc, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	4024 (-41%)
VIIId	Eastern English Channel	1620 (+5%)	Below Blim (VIIId)	632 (-61%)

Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*)

Species description

Haddock is found in the North-East Atlantic, from the Bay of Biscay to the Barents Sea. It is also found in the North-West Atlantic. Adults are found between 80 and 200 meters depth, on rocky, sandy or gravel bottoms. The species feeds on benthic organisms including crustaceans, molluscs, equinoderms and fish.

State of the stocks

The state of haddock stocks in European waters is very heterogeneous: some stocks are in a deplorable situation while others are at MSY B trigger levels. Threats in different areas stem from problems caused by unsustainable exploitation, discards and undeclared catches.

Haddock in the Northern Shelf were previously assessed as two separate stocks: **North Sea** and **Skagerrak** (IV, IIIa west) and **West of Scotland** (VIa). There was strong evidence that the stocks were not biologically distinct and they should therefore be assessed as a single stock. Stocks are in good condition and exploited according to the MSY approach. Spawning stock biomass has surpassed the MSY B trigger since 2001 and fishing mortality rates have been below Fmsy since 2008. Recruitment over the last ten years has been poor, except in 2005 and 2009 when year classes were around average. Discards are highly variable but appear to be declining in recent years, Discard rates in 2012 and 2013 are the lowest observed in the time-series and appear to be linked to low recruitment.

Haddock biomass in **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb) has decreased since 2003 and is currently estimated to be below safe biological limits in its lowest record in the time-series. Fishing mortality has been oscillating between precautionary and safe biological limit, it is currently slightly above precautionary and MSY levels. Since the mid-1970s, recruitment has fluctuated from 1 to 3 strong year classes followed by several weak ones. Year classes from 2003 onwards

have all been well below the long-term average. Given the low biomass, poor recruitment and slow growth, stock recovery would remain compromised unless drastic measures are taken. Discards are assumed negligible.

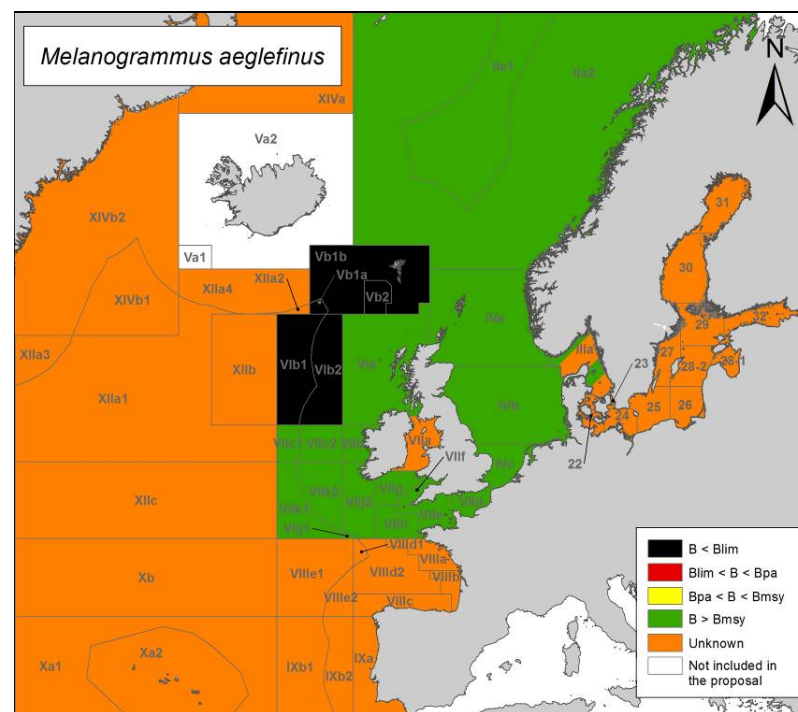


Figure 3. Haddock stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass⁷.

In the **Rockall** (VIb) spawning stock biomass is below precautionary levels and is the lowest observed in the time-series, despite fishing mortality has declined over time. Nevertheless, the marked downward trend for biomass since 2008 and the extremely weak

⁷ Stock status based on trends for VIIa

recruitment during 2007-2012 is worrying as it is the second year that biomass is placed below safe biological limits. If these trends do not change, the situation could doubtlessly jeopardise fishing activity in the upcoming years. Recruitment during 2007-2012 is estimated to be extremely weak. Discard ratio in recent years was reduced, from around 34% in the period 1999-2009 to 7% and 2% in last two years, 2011 and 2012 respectively, as result of the minimal presence of young undersize individuals in the population, but it has increased dramatically during 2013, 58% by weight and 87% by numbers. An improved time series of landings and discards is needed to provide an accurate assessment of the stock. A management plan is under development.

Biomass for stocks of **West of Ireland** (VIIb), **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), **E&W English Channel** (VII d-e), **Bristol Channel** (VII f), **Celtic Sea N&S** (VII g-h), **Southwest of Ireland E&W** (VII j-k), has showed an increasing trend over the last time-series, particularly in 2011 when it increased significantly due to an exceptional recruitment in 2009 year class. Unfortunately during the last three years it has showed a worrying decreasing trend that if not corrected it might place the stock below MSY during next year. Bpa and Blim reference points have not been defined. Fishing mortality is above Fmsy and has increased in 2012 and 2013. Recruitment is highly variable, lowest value in the time-series in 2012 and well above average in 2013. This situation seriously compromises future catches and biomass as they are highly dependent on the strength of incoming year classes. Discards, representing 56%, 53%, 36% and 12% of total catches in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively (because of minimum landing size and over-quotas), pose a serious concern for the stock status. Technical measures in order to reduce discards have been mandatory since 2012.

Haddock status in the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) is unknown as there is no sound data on the fishery, so the assessment is only indicative of trends. Biological indicator trends show that, after worrying decline, the average of the biomass indicator in the last two years (2013-2014) is 22% higher than the average of the three previous years (2010-2012). Recruitment is very variable, relative recruitment estimated for age 1 in 2014 is the highest in the series, and biomass

fluctuations depends on the incoming years classes. Discards in this area are high, average of 52% of total catches in the last three years 2011-2013, and represent a serious problem for this stock.

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **Kattegat** (IIIa East), **Sound** (IIIb), **Belt Sea** (IIIc), **Baltic Sea** (24-32), **Bay of Biscay** (VIII), **Portuguese Waters** (IX), **Azores Grounds** (X), **international waters of North Azores** (XII), **east Greenland** (XIV) and **CECAF 34.1.1** (EU), there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its status and exploitation rate.

Oceana proposal

Due to the lack of control over real catches and the high levels of haddock discards, the regulation of its exploitation using only a TAC is not suitable. Management measures must be urgently introduced to improve fishing selectivity. These measures must guarantee the reduction of current discard levels, with the aim of maximising additional recruits to the breeding stock biomass and future catches.

For the **North Sea** (IV), **Skagerrak** (IIIa west), and **West of Scotland** (VIa) ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach that landings should be no more than 48176 tonnes, a 8% TAC increase. If rates of discards and industrial by-catch do not change from average of the last three years (2011-2013) this implies catches of 54580 tonnes. A management plan was agreed by EU and Norway in 2008 for North Sea and Skagerrak areas. ICES has provisionally assessed the plan and concludes it can be accepted as precautionary. According to the management plan, ICES advises that the landings in 2015 be no more than 41518 tonnes, if it is assumed that discards have not changed from the previous 3 years, which represents a 7% decrease in catches and fishing at the target rate of 0,3. This last advice also follows the MSY framework.

For **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), ICES advises, based on the MSY and the precautionary approach, that there should be no directed fishery for haddock in 2015. It is the seventh consecutive year that scientists recommend closing the fishery. ICES has warned that it is necessary to put measures in place to minimize haddock by-catch in other

fisheries and to develop a recovery plan as a prerequisite to reopening the directed fishery. Oceana agrees with ICES advice to ensure the stock's recovery over safe biological limits as quickly as possible. Only a zero fishing mortality in 2015 will result in getting the stock above safe biological limits in 2016.

For the **Rockall** stock (VIb), ICES advises that based on the MSY framework landings should be no more than 2930 tonnes in 2015. If discard rates do not change from the average of the last 8 years, this implies catches of no more than 4310 tonnes. Oceana suggests following the scientific advice but with certain caution as biomass is well below safe biological limits, so recommends keeping last year TAC. Oceana also recommends further management measures to minimize the by-catch of small haddock to maximize their contribution to the recovery of the stock.

For the **West of Ireland** (VIb), **Porcupine Bank** (VIc), **E&W English Channel** (VIId-e), **Bristol Channel** (VIIf), **Celtic Sea N&S** (VIIg-h), **Southwest of Ireland E&W** (VIIf-k), ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach that landings should be no more than 5605 tonnes, which represents a TAC reduction of 41%. This implies catches of no more than 10434 tonnes if discard rates do not change from the average of the last 10 years. Oceana agrees with this advice, although a lower reduction could be also acceptable, between 30% ~ 41%, in case such reduction has serious negative socio-economic consequences. This situation is largely due to scientific advice being disregarded in recent years. Oceana agrees with this approach and requests the Commission to follow the MSY approach, or, in case it has serious negative socio-economic consequences to propose a reduction higher than 30%. The high rate

of discards puts the stock at risk, and therefore the technical measures that have been introduced should be fully implemented and evaluated in order to reduce discarding and improve recruitment. Further technical measures to reduce discards, like increase the mesh size, should be considered. Official landings from Subareas VIII, IX, and X, managed together with Division VIIb-k, have made up less than 2% of all landings in the TAC area since 1973.

The haddock in the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) is a data limited stock. ICES advises that, based on the data-limited stock approach, landings should be no more than 425 tonnes in 2015. If discard rates do not change from average of the last three years (2011-2013), catches should be no more than 893 tonnes. This implies a XX% increase in catches. Oceana bears in mind that previous TACs did not seem to be restrictive for the landings mainly due to the restricted TAC for cod, that relative fishing mortality for this stock is above average time series, and the high discard rate, around 68% in 2012 and 52% in 2013, recommends to follow the scientific advice. Technical measures like an increase in mesh size (large square meshes) or sorting grids should be widely implemented to reduce the haddock discard ratios, in particular in nephrops and cod fisheries.

For the rest of the managed stocks in the **Kattegat** (IIIa East), **Sound** (IIIb), **Belt Sea** (IIIc), **Baltic Sea** (24-32), **Bay of Biscay** (VIII), **Portuguese Waters** (IX), **Azores Grounds** (X), **international waters of North Azores** (XII), **east Greenland** (XIV) and **CECAF 34.1.1** (EU), Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, proposes a minimal reduction in catches of 15% for those stocks which are not managed together with other stocks for which there is scientific advice.

Table 3. Comparative table of haddock TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
IIIa, EU waters of IIIb,c,d (22-32)	Skagerrak, Kattegat, Sound, Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea	2355 (-15%)	Above MSY B trigger (IIIa W), Completely unknown (IIIaE,b,c,d)	2543 (+8%)
IV, EU Waters of IIa	North Sea, EU Waters of Norwegian Sea	38284 (-15%)	Above MSY B trigger (IV, IIa)	41346 (+8%)
Norwegian waters of South 62°	Norwegian waters South of 62°	707 (0%)	Above MSY B trigger (IV, IIIa west)	763 (+8%)
EU and Internat Waters of VIb, XII and XIV	EU and Internat Waters of Rockall, North of Azores, East Greenland	1210 (+22%)	Below Blim (VIb), Completely unknown (XII, XIV)	1210 (0%)
Vb, VIa	EU and Internat Waters of Faeroes Grounds, West of Scotland	3988 (-5%)	Below Blim (Vb) Above MSY B trigger (VIa)	4307 (+8%)
VIIb-k, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, E&W English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea N&S, Southwest of Ireland E&W, Bay of Biscay, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds, CECAF 34.1.1	9479 (-33%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIb-k) Completely unknown (VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	5605 (-41%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	1181 (-1%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIa)	893 (-24%)

* Only in the case that Faeroes Grounds (Vb) is close to fishing.

Hake (*Merluccius merluccius*)

Species description

European hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) is widely distributed throughout the North-East Atlantic, from Norway and Iceland down to southern Mauritania. This demersal species is found on bottoms between 70 and 370 meters depth where it feeds on crustaceans during its juvenile stage and on fish during its adult stage.

State of the stocks

The management of hake in European waters distinguishes itself between two big stocks that are managed differently: the northern and the southern stocks. After years of overexploitation the state of both stocks is clearly improving. These populations are managed through management plans^{8,9} which should be updated.

For the northern stock of **Skagerrak and Kattegat (IIIa)**, **North Sea (IV)**, **Rockall and West of Scotland (VI)**, **Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South**, and **Southwest of Ireland (VII)** and **North, Central and Offshore Bay of Biscay (VIIIa,b,d)**, spawning biomass has been increasing since 1998, with the exception of 2006, and particularly during 2009-2011. This trend has placed the biomass in 2012 at a record high above any reference point. Equally positive is the fishing mortality trend, while still above F_{msy}, which decreased sharply from 2005 to 2010 and has been stable close to F_{msy} in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Recruitment fluctuations appear to show no substantial trend over the whole series: after low recruitments in 2009, 2010 and 2011, the 2012 is estimated to be the highest in the time-series. There is still uncertainty concerning the total number of catches due to the

amount of undeclared discards, especially of juvenile hake, which can be substantial in some areas and fleets. Landings far exceeded the TACs during previous years. The new status of the stock, which was subjected to high levels of exploitation from the late 1980s to the mid-2000s, requires a new management plan according to new management objectives as the current ones are based on reference points that are no longer appropriate. Overall, stock discards have increased substantially in the last five years, in some cases because of quota restrictions, but in particular for some gears in subareas VII and VIII.

In the southern hake stock of **South of Bay of Biscay (VIIIc)** and **East of Portuguese waters (IXa)**, there is no known biomass reference point. Biomass has been improving since 1998, when spawning biomass was at historic lows, and it is considered to be around the average in 2013. Fishing mortality has decreased in recent years but it is still well above MSY mortality, more than two times higher. Most recruitments have been above the historical average since 2005 which has helped the stocks recovery in recent years. Catch levels and landings have far exceeded the approved TACs in past years due to a lack of control by Member States and commitment from the fleets. There is no match between minimum landing size and the trawl mesh size currently enforced, resulting in high discard rates. Discards occur mainly in the trawl fisheries that target smaller fish than gillnetters and longliners

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **Sound (IIIb)**, **Belt Sea (IIIc)**, **Baltic Sea (24-32)**, **European Waters of Norwegian Sea (EU waters of IIa)**, **EU and international waters of Faeroes Grounds (Vb)**, **int waters of North Azores (XII)**, **East Greenland (XIV)**, **West of Bay of Biscay (VIIIe)**, **West Portuguese Waters (IXb)**, **Azores Grounds (X)** and **CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)**, there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its status and rate of exploitation.

⁸ Council Regulation (EC) No 811/2004 of 21 April 2004 establishing measures for the recovery of the Northern hake stock.

⁹ Council Regulation (EC) No 2166/2005 of 20 December 2005 establishing measures for the recovery of the Southern hake and Norway lobster stocks in the Cantabrian Sea and Western Iberian Peninsula.

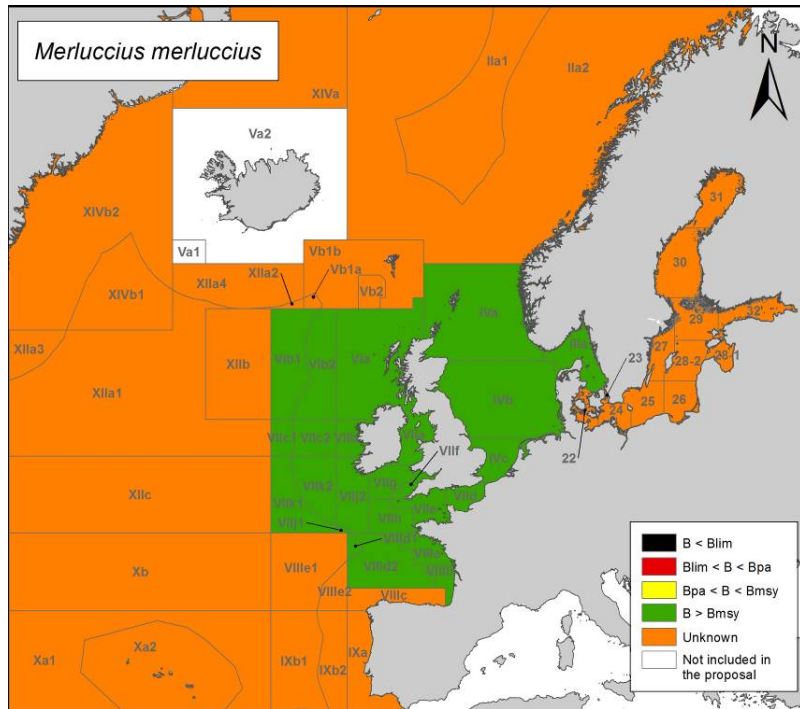


Figure 4. Hake stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹⁰.

Oceana proposal

Because of the new perspective on assessments and stocks status, the current existing management plans should no longer be used. Oceana suggests the possible implementation of TACs according to the MSY framework instead of the corresponding recovery plans.

¹⁰Stock status based on trends for IIIa, IV, VI, VII, VIIIabd

For the northern stock, **Skagerrak and Kattegat (IIIa), North Sea (IV), Rockall and West of Scotland (VI), Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland (VII)** and **North, Central and Offshore Bay of Biscay (VIIIa,b,d)**, ICES advises on the basis of the recovery plan (EC N° 811/2004) a 9% TAC reduction, which means a TAC of 73477 tonnes in landings, on the other hand ICES advises, on the basis of the MSY approach, that landings in 2015 be no more than 78457 tonnes, a 4% decrease from the 2014 TAC. MSY advice is based on landings because the total amount of discards cannot be quantified. Despite that the target values used in the plan are based on reference points that are no longer appropriate, Oceana agrees with both advices. Oceana also recommends updating the current management plan as ICES has stated that target values based on precautionary reference points are no longer appropriate. An important increase in catches has occurred in the northern part of the distribution area (Division IIIa, and Subareas IV and VI) in recent years. Spawning biomass and the long-term yield can be substantially improved by reducing small fish mortality through technical measures.

For the Southern stock, **South of Bay of Biscay (VIIIc) and East of Portuguese waters (IXa)**, ICES advises, on the basis of the MSY approach, that landings be no more than 7302 tonnes in 2015, which implies a reduction in TAC by 55%, and catches of no more than 8417 tonnes if discard rates do not change from the average of the years 2011-2013. Oceana agrees with this advice, although a lower reduction could be also acceptable, between 31% ~ 55%, in case such reduction has serious negative socio-economic consequences. The existing management plan (Regulation (EC) N° 2166/2005) means a 10% reduction in fishing mortality and a 15% constraint on TAC changes between years; this would lead to a TAC of 13844 tonnes (landings) in 2015. It is worth remembering that although ICES has not carried out an in-depth assessment of the management plan, it stated that the plan's target is no longer valid because reference points are no longer appropriate. Due to the uncertainty regarding the management plan, Oceana supports fixing a TAC according to the MSY proposed by ICES.

For the rest of the managed stocks **Sound** (IIIb), **Belt Sea** (IIIc), **Baltic Sea** (24-32), **European Waters of Norwegian Sea** (EU waters of IIa), **EU and international waters of Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **int waters of North Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV), **West of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIe), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X), and **CECAF 34.1.1** (EU), scientists cannot provide assessments because fishing parameters are lacking. For those stocks, Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, proposes a minimal reduction in catches of 15% for those stocks which are not managed with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 4. Comparative table of hake TACs (landings in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
IIIa, EU waters of IIIb and IIIc, III d (22-32)	Skagerrak, Kattegat, EU waters of Sound, Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea	2466 (+18%)	Possibly above B MSY trigger proxy (IIIa) & Completely unknown (IIIbcd)	2367 (-4%)
EU waters of IIa and IV	European Waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	2874 (+18%)	Completely unknown (IIa) & Possibly above MSY (IV)	2759 (-4%)
VI, VII, EU waters of Vb, int waters of XII, XIV	Rockall, West of Scotland, Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland, EU waters of Faeroes Grounds, int waters of North Azores, East Greenland .	45896 (+18%)	Possibly above B MSY trigger proxy (VI, VII) & Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	44060 (-4%)
VIIIa, VIIIb, VIII d, VIIIe	Bay of Biscay (North), Bay of Biscay (Central), Bay of Biscay (Offshore), West of Bay of Biscay	30610 (+18%)	Possibly above B MSY trigger proxy (VIIIabd) & Completely unknown (VIIIe)	29386 (-4%)
VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay (South), Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds	16266 (+15%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIIc, IXa), Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	7302 (-55%)

Herring (*Clupea harengus*)

Species description

Herring is found throughout the North Atlantic. In the North-East Atlantic, the species is distributed from the Bay of Biscay up to Iceland and southern Greenland, including the Baltic Sea. The species forms schools in coastal waters and feeds on small pelagic copepods.

State of the stocks

In 2008, the EU approved a multi-annual plan for fisheries exploiting herring¹¹, in waters of Faeroes Grounds (Vb), Rockall (VIb), and part of Western of Scotland (VIa), which ICES has assessed as being in compliance with the precautionary approach. There are also proposals of new management plans for other stocks. The species, and in particular juveniles, is usually caught as by-catch by industrial fisheries.

In the Herring North Sea autumn spawners, **Skagerrak** (IIIa West), **Kattegat** (IIIa East), **North Sea** (IV) and the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), the stock looks in good condition, nevertheless, MSY biomass reference point has not been defined yet. Biomass has been increasing since 2007 and it is currently well above Bpa. The stock suffered several years of collapse between mid-60s to mid-80s with lowest time-series biomass. A new management plan was agreed by the EU and Norway in 2014, which has not been evaluated by ICES. Fishing mortality has been low for the past five years and since 1996 is below MSY. Although recruitment in 2008 and 2009 are estimated to be above the long-term geometric mean the year classes from 2002 onwards are estimated to be among the weakest since the late 1970s. ICES considers the stock to be in a low productivity phase, as the survival ratio between newly hatched larvae and recruits is still much lower than prior to 2001. All catches are assumed to be landed.

There is no accurate survey data for stocks in the **West of Scotland-South** (VIa South), **West of Ireland** (VIIb) and **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc) but an exploratory ICES assessment shows that biomass is at the lowest observed in the time series and well below safe biological limits since 1998. This indicates that stocks are in a state of complete overexploitation and collapse. Recruitment information is uncertain but it has been very low in recent years limiting a possible change in trend or recovery in the short term. The exploratory assessments indicate a fishing mortality reduction during the last 3 years but it is still well above possible reference points. Discards are considered to be low. A rebuilding plan is necessary for a proper management of this stock, currently exists a formal proposal made by the Pelagic RAC.

In the stock of the **West of Scotland-North** (VIa North) spawning stock biomass has been fluctuating at a low level since the mid-1970s and is currently just above safe biological limits. Fishing mortality has showed a progressive reduction trend during last decades and in recent years it is around FMSY. Current recruitment is low compared with the historical period. A stock recovery is expected in the medium term if the recruitment trend changes. All catches are assumed to be landed so discards are considered to be low. A management plan was adopted by the EU in 2008 (EC 1300/2008).

In the **Irish Sea-North** (VIIa North) spawning stock biomass has been progressively increasing since 2004 and above MSY B trigger since 2006. Fishing mortality has decreased since 2003 and has been fluctuating around MSY in recent years with the lowest values in the time-series. Recruitment has increased during the last decade and it is estimated to be above the average of the time-series since 2006. All catches are assumed to be landed therefore discards are considered to be low. Spawning and nursery areas are sensitive and vulnerable to anthropogenic influences.

Stocks from **Irish Sea-South** (VIIa South), **Celtic Sea** (VIIg,h) and **Southwest of Ireland** (VIIj,k) are in a good state and are exploited in a sustainable way. Spawning stock biomass has increased since 2005 and is currently above Bmys trigger, and at its full reproductive

¹¹ Council Regulation (EC) 1300/2008

capacity. Fishing mortality is below Fmsy since 2007, although it has increased since 2009. Year classes over the past years are above average, in particular from 2009-2013 year classes. All catches are assumed to be landed, therefore, discards are considered to be low. Spawning and nursery areas are sensitive and vulnerable to anthropogenic influences. A long-term management plan was agreed by the Pelagic RAC in 2011, and has been used by managers since 2012

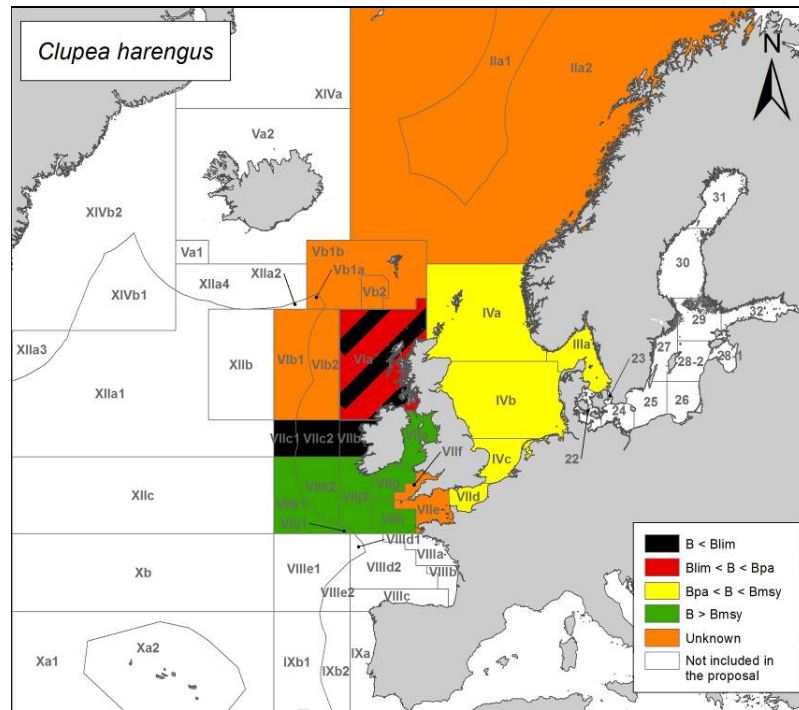


Figure 5. Herring stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹².

¹² Stock status based on trends for VIa, VIIbc.

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **EU waters of Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Rockall** (VIb), **Western English Channel** (VIIe) and **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation of its status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

Given the importance of gravel substrate as an important fish habitat for herring spawning, activities that have a negative impact on this habitat, such as the extraction of marine aggregates and marine construction on spawning grounds, should not occur.

For the stocks of **Skagerrak** (IIIa West), **Kattegat** (IIIa East), **North Sea** (IV) and the **Eastern English Channel** (VIIId) ICES advises, on the basis of the 2008 EU-Norway management plan, that total catches in 2015 be no more than 461664 tonnes, which implies a 9% decrease in TAC. The 2008 management plan is considered to be consistent with the precautionary approach and the MSY by ICES, the 2014 management plan has not been yet evaluated. ICES also advises that according to the MSY approach, catches in 2015 be no more than 492403 tonnes, which implies a 2% decrease in TAC. Oceana therefore agrees with both TAC proposals, although they would place biomass at the same level as in 2014.

For the **West of Scotland-South** (VIa-S) **West of Ireland** (VIIb), **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), ICES has recommended on the basis of the precautionary considerations and the MSY approach, that there be no catches. It is the seventh time in nine years that scientists have recommended the closure of the fishery. Due to the poor stock situation, Oceana agrees that the closure is needed to enable this stock to recover.

For the stock of the **West of Scotland-North** (VIa North), on the basis of the agreed management plan, the TAC for 2013 should be no more than 22690 tonnes, which represents a 19% decrease in catches. ICES has evaluated the plan and concludes that it is in accordance with the precautionary approach. It seems that the management plan catch recommendation could be in line with the

MSY approach, so Oceana agrees with this advice despite the unknown status of the other stocks managed under the same TAC.

For the **Irish Sea North** (VIIa North) ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach, that catches in 2015 should be no more than 4854 tonnes, which represents an 8% decrease of catches and a fishing mortality at 0.26. Oceana recommends setting a TAC according to the MSY framework despite this reduction in catches, by 8%, implies a reduction on biomass by 12% in 2015. This stock is managed together with VIIa South.

For the **Irish Sea South** (VIIa South), **Celtic Sea** (VIIg,h) and **Southwest of Ireland** (VIIj,k) stocks, ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach, that catches in 2015 should be no more than

15140 tonnes, which implies a 32% TAC decrease. According to the management plan agreed by the Pelagic RAC and evaluated by the Irish Marine Institute and ICES as precautionary, the TAC in 2014 should be set at 15652 tonnes, a 30% TAC decrease. Both proposed TACs are precautionary, but Oceana recommends a 32% decrease as this reduction is compatible with the MSY framework.

For the rest of managed stocks **EU waters of Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Rockall** (VIb), **Western English Channel** (VIIe) and **Bristol Channel** (VIIf), Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, proposes a minimal reduction in catches of 15% for stocks that are not managed together with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 5. Comparative table of herring TACs (catches in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
IIIa	Skagerrak and Kattegat	40515 (-16%)	Above PA (IIIa)	28360 (-30%)
Union and Norwegian waters of IV (N 53°03')	EU and Norwegian Waters of North Sea (north of 53°30')	418333 (-2%)	Above PA (IV)	409966 (-2%)
Norwegian waters south of 62°N	Norwegian Waters south of 62°	866 (-6%)	Above PA (IIIa, IV)	849 (-2%)
By-catches IIIa	by-catches in Skagerrak and Kattegat	6659 (0%)	Above PA (IIIa)	3212 (-52%)
By-catches IV, VIId and Union waters of IIa	by-catches in North Sea, Eastern English Channel and EU waters of Norwegian waters	13085 (-9%)	Above PA (IV, VIId), completely unknown (IIa)	16055 (+22%)
IVc, VIId	Southern North Sea and Eastern English Cannel	51704 (-2%)	Above PA (IVc, VIId)	50670 (-2%)
Vb, VIb, VIa (N)	EU and int waters of Faeroes Grounds, Rockall and north of west of Scotland (N)	28067 (+2%)	Completely unknown (Vb, VIb), above Blim (VIaN)	22690 (-19%)
VIa (S), VIIb, VIIc	West of Scotland (S), West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank	3676 (+145%)	Below safe biological limits (VIaS, VIIbc)	0 (-100)
VI Clyde		(UK)	?	?

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
VIIa (South & North)	Irish Sea	5251 (+5%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIaN and S)	4854 (-8%)
VIIe and VIIf	Western English Channel and Bristol Channel	930 (0%)	Completely unknown (VIIe,f)	791 (-15%)
VIIg, VIIh, VIIj, VIIk	Celtic Sea North and South, Southwest of Ireland East and West	22360 (+30%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIg-k)	15140 (-32%)

Megrim (*Lepidorhombus* spp.)

Species description

The two species of megrim found in the North-East Atlantic are *Lepidorhombus whiffiagonis* and *Lepidorhombus boscii*. Widely distributed, these species are found from Icelandic waters to the African coasts of the Western Sahara on soft bottoms and at depths ranging between 288 and 700 meters where they feed on small demersal fish, cephalopods and crustaceans.

State of the stocks

Despite the fact that the two species are widely distributed and exploited, the state of most stocks is still uncertain despite years of management. *L. whiffiagonis*, which makes up around 20% of the total catches, is the species in the poorest state of conservation in terms of biomass.

In the **Northern North Sea (IVa)** and **West of Scotland (VIa)** new data (catch and surveys) available for this stock do not change the perception of the stocks. The stocks are in a good state and exploited in a sustainable way. Spawning stock biomass is fluctuating well above MSY B trigger, in its highest record for the past 2 decades. Overall, mortality has declined since the late 1990s and since then it has been maintained at levels below F MSY. Information about discards is imprecise but it is estimated to have declined from 30% in the beginning of the time series to 15% in 2012.

In the **Rockall (VIb)** scientific assessment on stock status was not available at the time of writing this report.

In the **West of Ireland (VIIb)**, **Porcupine Bank (VIIc)**, **Eastern and Western English Channel (VIId,e)** **Bristol Channel (VIIf)**, **Celtic Sea North and South**, (VIIg,h) and **Southwest of Ireland (VIIj.k)** and **North, Central and Offshore Bay of Biscay (VIIIa,b,d)**, new data available for this stock does not change its perception, therefore, ICES status description in 2015 remains the same as for

2013. The state of the stock and exploitation rate is uncertain and the analytical assessment should only be considered as indicative of trends. Trends in biomass indicated an increase of 13% in the last two years 2012–2013 compared to the three previous years (2009–2011), when the stock was below its long term average. Fishing mortality in the last decade has decreased in a positive trend. Previous defined reference points are no longer valid and no new points have been defined yet. The discard rate is estimated to be substantial, around 25%, consisting mainly of undersized megrims and high-grading.

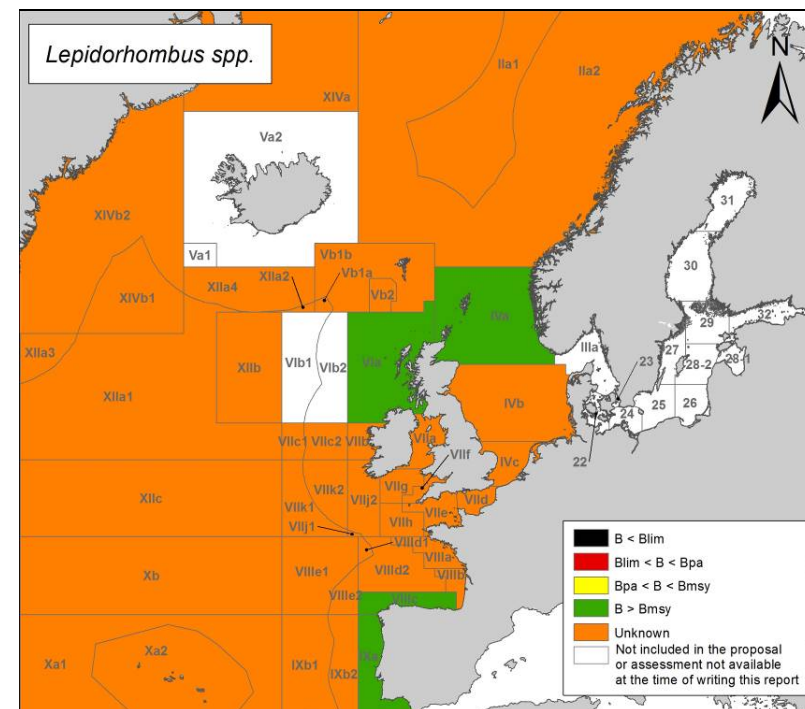


Figure 6. Megrims stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

In the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **East of Portuguese waters** (IXa) the ICES stock assessment differentiates the two species caught.

The *L. boschii* biomass continues increasing in an upward trend since 2001, when it was at its lowest recorded level, and it is in a record high in 2013 above MSY trigger. Fishing mortality has been declining throughout the time-series and it is currently above FMSY. Recruitment has been around average since 2000, with the exception of a record high in 2009. The range of discards is substantial and estimated between 39-63% (in numbers) although this is considered to be an underestimation

In the case of *L. whiffiagonis*, biomass has increased from a minimum observed in 2009 and is considered to be now above MSY B trigger. Fishing mortality has been fluctuating during time-series into a down trend, and according to the latest available data it is below FMSY. Recruitment has been low for over a decade with the exception of the high 2009 year-class. The range of discards for both species is estimated between 10-45% (in numbers), although, as in the case of *L. boschii*, this is considered to be an underestimation.

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Central and South North Sea** (IVb,c), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Irish Sea** (VIIa), **West of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIe), **North Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X) and **CECAF 34.1.1** there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

The poor information on the stocks in some areas, and the uncertainty about their evolution in others, makes it necessary to improve data collection systems and, consequently, the assessment of this species.

Management of the stocks is set for the two species of megrim since they are caught and recorded together in landings. The advice on TACs should be based on the stock that is in the poorest condition.

For the **Northern North Sea** (IVa) and **West of Scotland** (VIa) the 2013 advice is biennial and valid for current year and 2015. Imprecise and missing age data hampers the ability of ICES to carry out an age-based assessment for this stock. ICES advises, on the basis of the MSY approach, that landings in 2015 should be no more than 5950 tonnes, which implies catches of no more than 7000 tonnes if the discard rate does not change from the average of the last three years. Oceana recommends that the Commission propose this TAC, as the probability of the biomass falling below the MSY B trigger is very low.

For the **Rockall** (VIb) stock, scientific recommendation on fishing opportunities was not available at the time of writing this report.

In the **West of Ireland** (VIIb), **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), **Eastern and Western English Channel** (VIId,e) **Bristol Channel** (VIIf), **Celtic Sea North and South**, (VIIg,h) and **Southwest of Ireland** (VIIj,k) and **North, Central and Offshore Bay of Biscay** (VIIIa,b,d), ICES advises, on the basis of the data limited stocks approach (biomass index available), that landings should be no more than 15180 tonnes in 2015. Oceana considering that the effort in the main fishery has steadily decreased, agrees with this recommendation that means an increase in landings by 13% in relation to the average catches of the last three years.

For the stocks of the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **East of Portuguese waters** (IXa), ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach, that combined landings of megrims should be no more than 1013 tonnes, 1244 catches tonnes, which represents a 55,1% TAC decrease, if discard rates do not change from average of the last 12 years. Oceana agrees with this advice, although a lower reduction could be also acceptable, between 35% ~ 55%, in case such reduction has serious negative socio-economic consequences. Oceana regrets the strong variations in catch limits between years (86% increase in 2014) in order to provide for a progressive stability in fishing opportunities.

For the rest of the managed stocks **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Central and South North Sea** (IVb,c), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Irish Sea** (VIIa), **West of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIe), **North Azores** (XII), **East**

Greenland (XIV), West Portuguese Waters (IXb), Azores Grounds (X) and CECAF 34.1.1, according to the precautionary approach, Oceana proposes a minimal reduction in catches of 15% for those stocks that are not managed together with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 6. Comparative table of megrim TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
EU Waters of IIa and IV	EU Waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	2083 (+8%)	Completely Unknown (IIa, IVbc), above MSY B trigger (IVa)	2013 (-3%)
VI, EU and int Waters of Vb, intern waters of XII and XIV	Rockall, West of Scotland, EU and int Waters of Faeroes Grounds, intern waters of North of Azores and East Greenland	4074 (+20%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIa), Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (VIb) Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	pm [3937 (-3%)]
VII	Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland - East and West	17385 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIb-k), Completely unknown (VIIa)	13814 (-20%)
VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIE	North, Central, Offshore and West Bay of Biscay	1716 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIabd), Completely unknown (VIIE)	1366 (-20%)
VIIIc IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	South Bay of Biscay, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds, CECAF 34.1.1	2257 (+86%)	Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1), above MSY B trigger (VIIIc, IXa)	1013 (-55%)

Norway lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*)

Species description

Norway lobster occurs throughout the continental shelf and the East Atlantic slope, from Iceland to the Atlantic coast of Morocco. It is present in muddy bottoms between 20 and 800 meters depth. The species feeds on detritus, crustaceans and annelids.

State of the stocks

Nephrops are limited to muddy habitats. This means that the distribution of suitable sediment defines the species distribution and stocks are therefore assessed as separate functional units inside the same area. ICES provides specific information on the state of the stocks in functional units. The general state of the stocks is not unfavourable, with several Functional Units (FU) exploited at the MSY B trigger. However, problems persist for stocks which are in a worse condition, such as those in the north and west areas of the Iberian Peninsula.

In **Skagerrak** and **Kattegat** (IIIa), there are two functional units, Skagerrak (FU3) and Kattegat (FU4), which are assessed together as one stock. Although there is no sound information, estimates of absolute abundance available for 2011, 2012 and 2013, based on biological underwater surveys, are considered to be stable. Otherwise estimated harvest ratios suggest that the stock is exploited sustainably. It must be stressed that discards in weight in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 represented 56%, 39%, 31%, 52% and 51% respectively of total catches.

In the **North Sea** (IV) *nephrops* stocks are assessed as nine separate functional units, and for several of them, no reference points have been defined. Overall, catches grew constantly until 2006, doubling in a period of ten years. Since then, catches have slowly started to decline. Landings in the North Sea were around 21209, 17214, 13722 and 10829 tonnes from 2010 to 2013.

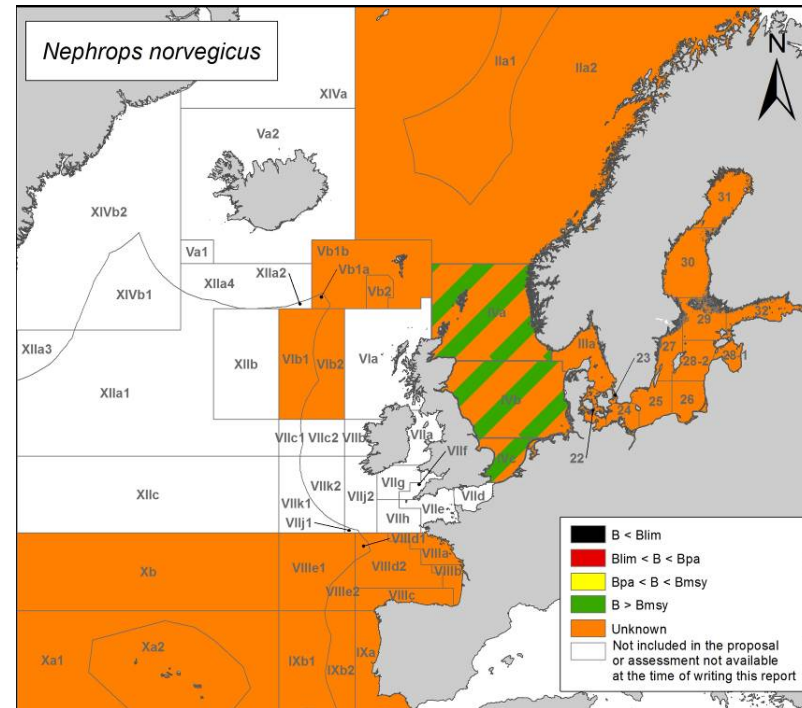


Figure 7. Norway lobster stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

The current management of the Norway lobster in the North Sea, both in terms of TAC and effort, does not offer enough guarantees to be sustainable. Few of the units are in “good” condition: Fladen Ground (FU7-IVa), Firth of Forth (FU8-IVb), Moray Firth (FU9-IVa). For the rest of the functional units, Farn Deeps (FU6-IVb), Off Horn’s Reef (FU33IVb), Devil’s Hole (FU34-IVb), the group of other areas or rectangles, and Botney Gut-Silver Pit (FU5-IVbc), Noup (FU10-IVa), Norwegian Deeps (FU32-IVa), the status is overexploited or unknown. Although for the last three FU (5, 10 and 32) fishing mortality indicator seems to be below possible reference points.

Despite the use of more selective gears trawling for nephrops results in by-catch and discards of other species, including cod, haddock and whiting that can be high due to the mesh size. This is particularly problematic for the various North Sea cod stocks which are in poor condition. Nephrops discards are also high for several FUs.

In the **West of Scotland** (VIa) scientific assessment on stock status was not available at the time of writing this report.

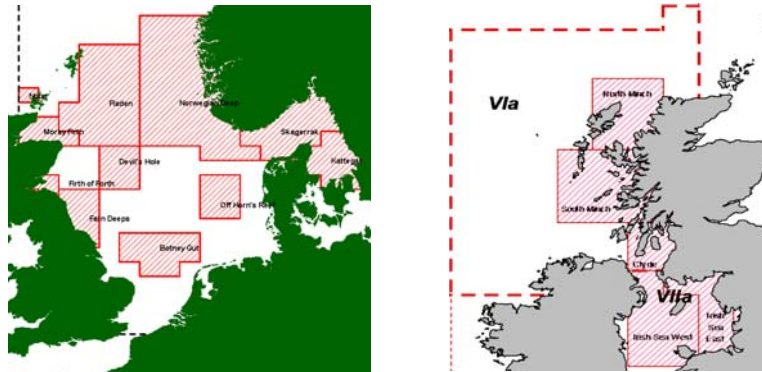


Figure 7.1 Nephrops functional units in the North Sea and Skagerrak-Kattegat (left) and in the West of Scotland (right). Source: ICES.

In Subdivisions of **Subarea VII**, scientific assessment on stock status was not available at the time of writing this report.

In the **North and Central Bay of Biscay** (VIIIab), two functional units (FU23) and (FU24) are assessed together. The stocks are defined as a data-limited stock, its condition is not well known. Trends in biomass indicate an increase in the last two years (2013 and 2014), by 14% with respect to the biomass average of the three previous years (2010-2012). Anyway biomass index from 2006-2013 shows no clear trend. Fishing mortality has been declining in recent years and recruitment has shown a downwards trend also in recent years.

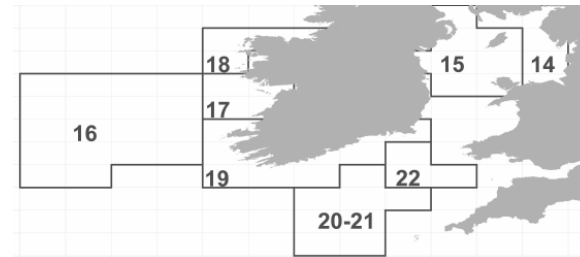


Figure 7.2 Nephrops functional units in the Subarea VII. Source: ICES.

In the **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) the stocks are assessed as two separate functional units: North Galicia (FU25) and Cantabrian Sea (FU31). New information indicates that the stocks in both FUs are at a very low level and in a poor state. Annual TAC reductions of 10%, according to the management plan (EC N°2166/2005), have been ineffective in reducing fishing mortality. Landings are well below the established TAC. In 2012 and 2013 only around 17% of the agreed TAC was landed. This situation is clear evidence of the stock overexploitation. There is no evidence that the current management of nephrops ensures that effort is sufficiently limited to avoid depletion in the functional units. A high proportion of the catches are taken outside of the two FUs.

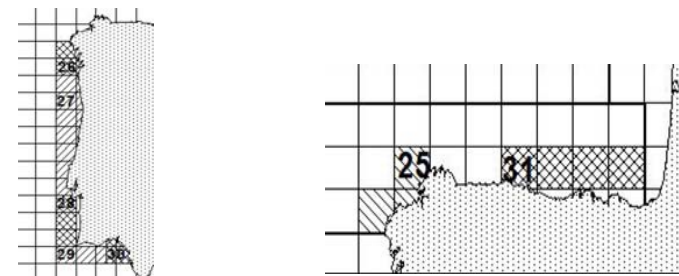


Figure 7.3 Nephrops functional units in the Subarea (VIIIc) and East of Portuguese Waters (IXa). Source: ICES.

In the **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa), stocks are assessed as five separate functional units, West Galicia (FU26), North Portugal (FU27), Southwest Portugal (FU28), South Portugal (FU29), Gulf of Cadiz (FU30). After many years of management under a recovery plan (Regulation EC N°2166/2005) several FUs continue to decrease and to be overexploited with extremely low biomass levels. Oceana is deeply worried about the status and downtrend of FUs 26 and 27. Biomass indicator for FUs 28 and 29 suggests that there has been no substantial change in the biomass over the time period and for the case of FU 30 indicates that there may be some recovery in the stock in recent years. A high proportion of the nephrops catches are allocated into areas outside of the FUs.

For the rest of managed stocks, in the **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Belt, Sound and Baltic Sea** (Subdivisions 22-32), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Rockall** (VIb), **Offshore and West of Bay of Biscay** (VIII d,e), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X) and **CECAF 34.1.1** there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about their status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

For years ICES has recommended a change in the geographical scope of the management of Norway lobster; ICES has requested management based on functional units for the North Sea (IV), the West of Scotland (VIa), Subarea VII and the waters of the Iberian Peninsula (VIIIc and IXa). These units, which are smaller in size than the ICES areas, are defined on the basis of the actual differentiated distribution of the species.

Nephrops management according to ICES areas does not provide adequate safeguards to ensure that local effort is sufficiently limited to avoid depletion of the resource in the FU. Management at the functional unit level should ensure that catch opportunities and effort are compatible and in line with the scale of the resources in each of the stocks defined by the functional units.

Currently, the same TAC covers different functional units and vessels are free to move between grounds, allowing effort to develop on some grounds in a largely uncontrolled way. This has historically resulted in inappropriate harvest rates from some units.

The volume of discards in this fishery is significant. Furthermore, the type of fishing gear used in this fishery causes a significant amount of by-catch and discards of other species, such as cod, haddock and whiting. Scientists have repeatedly signalled the need to introduce improvements in the selectivity of the gear. Scientific studies recommend an increase in mesh size and the use of square mesh panels as an appropriate method for reducing these catches.

Nephrops individuals have a survival rate after discarding of about 25%, so the application of the future discard ban, from 2016 to 2018, will have potential implications in setting management measures and catch limits, as they will have to be landed in the future. A potential TAC reduction is expected to correct this situation.

The potential recovery of main predators of nephrops such as cod could be associated with a reduction in nephrops abundance, therefore it may be expected a reduction in fishing opportunities when these species recover.

For **Skagerrak** and **Kattegat** (IIIa), ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach that landings in 2015 should be no more than 5318 tonnes, a X% TAC decrease, which implies catches of about 10290 tonnes if discard rates do not change from average past three years (2011-2013). Although harvest rate values are considered preliminary and may be modified following further data exploration and analysis Oceana agrees with this TAC proposal. Nephrops fisheries in Skagerrak and Kattegat are heavily influenced by the management of cod. Despite the efforts to reduce discard through the use of selective gears, more efforts are still needed, the main reason for the high amount of discards (67% in numbers in 2013) is the lack of connection between the minimum landing size and the net mesh size. Cod in the Kattegat is in a particularly dire situation and Oceana therefore recommends that only fisheries that are demonstrating a near zero by-catch of cod is allowed.

For the **North Sea** (IV) nephrops, ICES does not provide a single recommendation for the whole group of FUs. TAC advice for the FUs show increases for Firth of Forth (FU8), Moray Firth (FU9) and Fladen Ground (FU7), as well as decreases for Farn Deep (FU6), Noup (FU10), and Norwegian Deep (FU32), and maintaining numbers for Botney Gut-Silver Pit (FU5), Off Horn's Reef (FU33) and the case of other areas or rectangles not defined as FUs. For the sum of total FUs, on the basis of single stock advice, ICES advises landings be set at 18324 tonnes.

There are a couple of drawbacks for this advice: on one hand if catch limits cannot be adapted by functional units, this sum can lead to nephrops local depletion; on the other hand if this sum is directly applied, it also leads to cod catches being potentially higher than allowed under the cod management plan. Other species taken as by-catch by trawling, like haddock or whiting should also be considered. In addition, official landings are usually much lower than the agreed TAC so the TAC is not restrictive for the fishery. For these reasons and due to the overexploitation situation of cod, Oceana based on mixed fisheries approach to cod recommends, setting the TAC at 5776 tonnes or at least a 15% TAC reduction.

For the **West of Scotland** (VIa), scientific recommendation on fishing opportunities was not available at the time of writing this report.

For Subdivisions of **Subarea VII**, scientific recommendation on fishing opportunities was not available at the time of writing this report.

For the **North** and **Central Bay of Biscay** (VIIIab), ICES advises that landings be no more than 3214 tonnes based on the ICES approach for data-limited stocks. This corresponds to removals of no more than

4224 tonnes, assuming that discards rate do not change from the average of the last three years (2011-2013). Oceana agrees with this approach and recommends the Commission follows this TAC advice, which implies a reduction in catches of 17% for 2014.

For the **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) after years under the management plan, instead of recovering, the stocks are still stable at low or declining. The perpetual state of overexploitation is why this year is the 14th in a row that scientists advise zero catches for the FUs of the fishery. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, urges the Commission to obviate the management plan and propose a 0 TAC.

For **East Portuguese Waters** (IXa), the state of the stocks has led scientists to recommend the closure of the West Galicia (FU26) and North Portugal (FU27), and increase for the rest of functional units. Oceana, according to ICES advice agrees with the closure of West Galicia (FU26) and North Portugal (FU27) and recommends a 226 tonnes TAC for the Southwest (FU 28) and South Portugal (FU29), and a 95 tonnes TAC for the Gulf of Cadiz (FU30) on the basis of precautionary considerations. If management cannot be adapted by functional units Oceana recommends ignoring the management plan and setting a zero TAC for 2014. Control at landing should be improved as in several previous years the TAC was overshoot.

For the rest of the managed stocks **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Belt, Sound and Baltic Sea** (Subdivisions 22-32), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Rockall** (VIb), **Offshore and West of Bay of Biscay** (VIII d,e), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X) and **CECAF 34.1,1** according to the precautionary approach, Oceana proposes a minimal reduction in catches of 15% for those stocks that are not managed with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 7. Comparative table of lobster TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
IIIa, EU waters of Subdivision 22-32	Skagerrak (West) and Kattegat (East), EU waters of Belt Sea – Sound, and Baltic waters	5019 (-3%)	Unknown (IIIa) Completely unknown (IIIbc, 22-32)	5318 (+6%)
EU Waters of IIa and IV	EU Waters of North Sea and Norwegian Waters	15499 (-10%)	Above and below MSY B trigger & Unknown (FU of IV), Completely unknown (IIa)	13174 (-15%)
Norwegian waters IV	Norwegian waters of North Sea	1000 (0%)	Above and below MYS B trigger & Unknown (FU of IV),	850 (-15%)
VI, EU and internat waters Vb	Rockall, West of Scotland, EU and internat waters of Faeroes Grounds	15287 (-8%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (VIa) Completely unknown (Vb, VIb)	pm
VII	Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland - East and West	20989 (-9%)	Scientific assessment not available at the time of writing this report (VII)	pm
VIIIa,b,d,e	Bay of Biscay North Central Offshore West	3899 (0%)	Unknown uptrend (VIIIab) Completely unknown (VIIIde)	3214 (-17%)
VIIIc	Bay of Biscay / South	67 (-9%)	Unknown decreasing (VIIIc)	0 (-100%)
IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds and EU Waters of CECAF 34.1.1	221 (-10%)	Unknown decreasing and increasing (IXa), Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 43.1.1)	0 (-100%)

Plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*)

Species description

European plaice is the most important flat fish in European fisheries. It is distributed throughout the North-East Atlantic, from Greenland and Norway to Morocco. The distribution of the species in the water column depends on its age, where older specimens tend to migrate to greater depths. The species feeds on molluscs and polychaete worms. .

State of the stocks – Kattegat pending

The state of plaice stocks varies between areas, but all are plagued by high discard rates, which compromise the responsible exploitation of the stocks. Some fisheries have discard rates of 80%, due to an imbalance between minimum landing size and fishing gear mesh size.

In **Skagerrak** (IIIa subdivision 20) plaice is considered to have two components, Eastern and Western, and is closely associated with North Sea plaice, in particular for the Western component. There is no sound information about stock status and rate of exploitation. No reference points are defined for this stock. A biomass index suggests that, in recent years, the Western component has been fluctuating around the long term average, and that the Eastern component is increasing from the historical low. For the western component, the biomass index in the last three years (2012-2014) is 13% lower than the average of the five previous years (2007-2011), on the other hand, for the eastern component, which was previously considered depleted, biomass index in the last three years is 69% higher than the average of the five previous years. Fishing mortality is unknown but there are evidences that effort has been substantially reduced, by 41% between 2003 and 2012. It is thought that most of landings are taken in Western Skagerrak. Selective and large-meshed gears for that fishery have reduced Plaice discard; by 12% and 13% of total catches were discarded in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

In **Kattegat** (IIIa subdivision 21) there is no solid assessment for the stock because historical data on discards are not available, the assessment is accepted for trends mainly. Exploratory assessment shows indicates an increase in relative SSB from 2009 in response to the drop of relative fishing mortality since 2008, fishing mortality is likely to be below any potential reference point. As a result, the average biomass in the last two assessed years (2011-2012) is 129% higher than the average biomass of the three previous years, (2008-2010). Information on discarding in 2013 indicates that discard weight was 42% of the total catch.

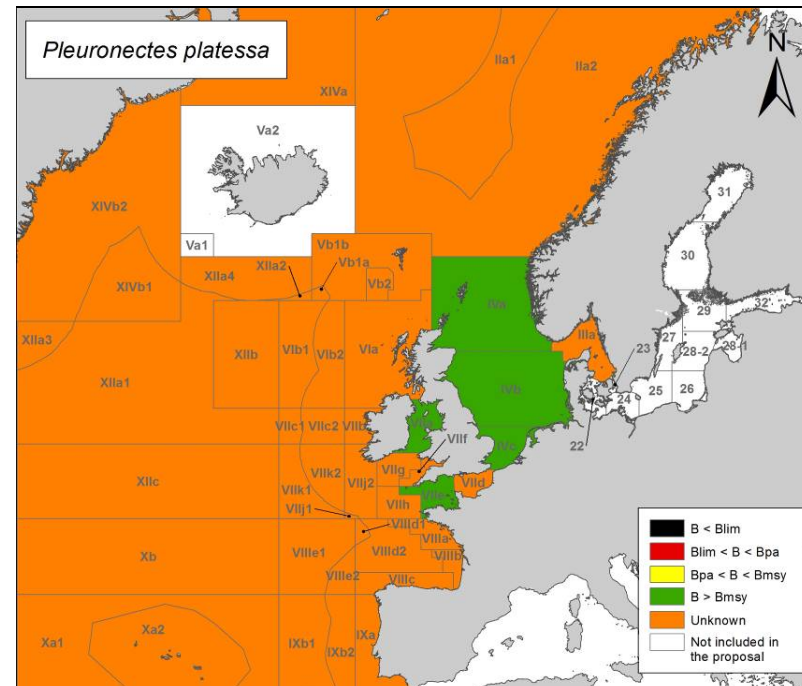


Figure 8. Plaice stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹³.

¹³ Stock status based on trends for VIIa, VIIfg.

In the **North Sea** (IV) the EU management plan for plaice and sole (Council regulation (EC) No 676/2007) seems to be yielding good results. Biomass is well above the MSY trigger reference point and has reached its highest level in time series in 2014. Fishing mortality has been reduced since 2000 from levels over safe biological limits to below the MSY framework in 2008, at the historic low, and below the target specified in the management plan. Recruitment in recent years has been around the long-term average from 2007 onwards. Although total fleet discard ratio has gradually decreased since 2000 it is still high and discards represent a substantial part of the total catch, as the mesh size is smaller than the minimum landing size. For 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 discards represented 43%, 37% and 44% and 33% respectively of the total catches.

In the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) there is no sound information and assessments are only indicative of trends. No reference points are defined for this stock, and previous precautionary reference points are no longer considered appropriate. The surveys and biomass (SSB) trends indicate an increase in stock size since the mid-1990s, which has subsequently stabilised since 2003. The stock size indicator in the last two years (2012-2013) is 7% lower than the average of the three previous years (2009-2011). Fishing mortality has shown a downward trend since the beginning of the 1990s and since 2000 it seems to be established in low values, as the estimates of total catch (landings and discards) since 2006 are only around 15% and 20% of the AEPM (annual egg production method) estimates of SSB over this period. Although the assessment method has improve compared to last year, there are still difficulties regarding data interpretation. Nevertheless, indicators suggest that fishing mortality is below possible reference points. A very high proportion of the catch is discarded 87%, 50%, 70% and 70% of total catches in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively.

In the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) and **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc) new data available for these stocks do not change the perception of the stock. The state of the stock is unknown because information is lacking to evaluate it and available catch statistics are not considered reliable enough to estimate trends in abundance. Catches in this area are too low to support the collection of the necessary information for

assessment of the stock status. Discards are known to take place but are unquantified. No reference points are defined for these stocks, nor is there any evidence that the current level of exploitation is appropriate for the stock.

In the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), both the stock status and rate of exploitation are unknown; therefore assessments are indicative of trends only. No reference points are defined for these stocks. The surveys and biological trends indicate that spawning stock biomass has been declining continuously since mid-1990s to a record low (2003-2008), and has since 2003 increased and is currently around the highest level. Fishing mortality has declined since 2002 and is currently below average and among the lowest in the time-series. The recruitment trend during last years is uncertain. Survey information indicates that discard rates are unknown, although in the last 3 years it has been estimated to be in the order of 30-40% in weight depending on the specific outing and on fishing practices. There is uncertainty about the landings statistics of VIId plaice because of migration between this area and the North Sea and the western channel. In many cases, the mesh size does not match the minimum landing size for Plaice (27cm).

In the **Western English Channel** (VIIE), spawning stock biomass has increased since 2008 and has been well above the MSY B trigger in the last five years due to the above-average recruitment in 2009-2011. Fishing mortality increased slightly until 2007, and has decreased since then, especially during 2009, and currently is around Fmsy. Discarding in the Western Channel is high, about 20%, but much lower than for other plaice stocks.

In the **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) and **Celtic Sea** (VIIg) previous reference points (201 longer considered appropriate by ICES and no new reference points are defined for these stocks. The assessment is only indicative of trends. The average of the stock size indicator (SSB from the survey) in the last two years (2012-2013) is stable in comparison with the three previous years (2009-2011). Spawning stock biomass reached its highest level between 1988 and 1990, declined significantly after 1997, and has increased gradually since 2004 and been stable since 2008. Although fishing mortality is

considered to be uncertain, it appears that for some fleets it is stable over the time-series and it could increase during the last two years. Recruitment has fluctuated over time-series and the 2013 recruitment is considered to be low. Discards have been increasing since 2004 and are very high in the fishery, in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 they represented 62%, 72%, 68% and 75% respectively of the total catches. Discards are in excess of landings, more than double the landings in 2011-2013. Data landings suggest that for 2012 and 2013 total landings were 17% and 11% above the agreed TAC.

In the **Celtic Sea South** (VIIh), **Southwest of Ireland East & West** (VIIj,k) new assessment available for this stock do not change the perception of the stock. Stock status is unknown, available indicators point that stock biomass is low and stable since 2005, while Plaice in VIIj is clearly overexploited and heavily discarded. No reference points are defined for this stock since the analysis for this assessment area is only based on landings and does not take discards in to account even when they are considered to be substantial. The average spawning-stock biomass in the past two years (2013-2014) is 6% lower than the average of the three previous years (2010-2012). Fishing mortality has been stable since 2008 and well above potential reference points. Discard rates are too high to maintain a sustainable exploitation of the resource; in 2012 and 2013, 30% and 36% of the Plaice in weight were discarded, although it had been on average over 60% of the catch in weight in past years. Data landings were above agreed TAC by 14% in 2012.

In the **Bay of Biscay** (VIII) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa), there is not enough information to evaluate stock trends and exploitation status. New landings data available for this stock do not change the perception of the stock; therefore plaice status in the region is unknown and it is considered a data-limited stock. No reference points are defined for the stocks.

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Rockall, West of Scotland** (VI), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X), **North of Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV) and **CECAF 34.1.1**, there is no scientific

assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

Any measure which leads to a reduction in discards will favour an increase in future productivity of the fishery. More efforts and technical measures should be introduced to reduce unsustainable discard rates.

For **Skagerrak** (IIIa, subdivision 20) ICES advises on the basis of data limited stocks analysis that landings in 2015 should be no more than 6287 tonnes in Skagerrak, which implies no more than 7232 tonnes if the discard rate does not change from the average of 2012-2013. In the Eastern Skagerrak, no direct fisheries should occur and by-catch and discards should be minimized. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach recommends that unless the management between Western and Eastern Skagerrak is differentiated, TAC in this area should not be increased, due to the depletion of the Eastern Skagerrak stock.

For **Kattegat** (IIIa, subdivision 21), ICES advises that, based on the approach to data-limited stocks, the catches in 2015 should be no more than 4031 tonnes, if discard rate do not change from the 2013 ratio, this implies a landings of no more than 2626. Oceana agrees with the scientific recommendation, which is supported by the uptrend of plaice abundance indicators, although it should be noted that almost half of the increase in catches will be discarded. Kattegat plaice is assessed together with the Belts and Sound place.

For the **North Sea** (IV) stock, ICES advises on the basis of the agreed management plan that landings in 2015 should be no more than 128376 tonnes, resulting in a 15% TAC increase, which implies catches of no more than 179301 tonnes if discard rates do not change from the average of the last three years (2011-2013). Otherwise the MSY framework results in a 2% TAC increase. Due to the stocks' exceptionally good status and rate of exploitation, Oceana agrees with both proposals although because of possible overshoot of by-catch species, recommends the adoption of the MSY

framework. Technical measures should be introduced to reduce discard rates and transitional arrangements should be established to the second stage of the management plan.

For the **Irish Sea** (VIIa), ICES advises, based on an assessment of data limited stocks, that landings should be no more than 394 tonnes, a 0% TAC increase, which implies catches of no more than 1244 if discard rates do not change from the average of the past three years (2011-2013). It should be added that the TAC is not restrictive and landings are much below the agreed TAC. Oceana agrees with the advice but is deeply worried about the high discard rate, 70% in 2013, due to the discrepancy between the minimum landing size and the mesh size of the gear being used. Technical measures should be introduced urgently to reduce the high discard rates, as previous measures have had little effect. Efforts to reduce plaice by-catch in nephrops fisheries, like the introduction of grids, are expected to have positive results in the reduction of discards in the area.

For the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) and **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), ICES advises, based on the approach for data limited stocks, that landings be no more than 30 tonnes. The advice is based on a precautionary reduction of catches because of missing or non-representative data. In the last ten years, TACs were 2-5 times larger than landings. It should be noted that the average landings over the last four years, 24,5 tonnes, is lower than ICES recommendation, so proposed reduction would not affect fishing fleet. Although this stock is listed in the joint statement of the Commission and Council (Doc 5315/13 PECH 15) that provide the possibility to maintain the 2013 TAC. Oceana, due to precautionary approach and based on ICES data limited approach recommends fixing a TAC of 30 tonnes.

For the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), ICES advises on the basis of assessment for data limited stocks that landings should be no more than 2657 tonnes, which implies a decrease in the TAC by xx%. Catches cannot be calculated as discards, known to be high, cannot be quantified. ICES recommends to set fishing mortality to 0.27 in order to move towards the Fmsy. Scientific recommendations concerning catch levels have been consistently ignored for decades

despite agreed TACs have been larger than official landings. Both English Channel stocks (VIId and VIIE) are managed together, so the management measures implemented must be effective at controlling mortality for both stocks. Technical measures should be introduced urgently to reduce the high discard rates, in particular to improve the matching of the mesh size with the minimum landing size.

For the **Western English Channel** (VIIE), ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach, that landings in 2015 should be no more than 1546 tonnes and a 0.25 fishing mortality. If discard rates do not change from the average of the last two years (2012-2013) this implies catches of no more than 1885. Oceana agrees with the proposal that would allow an increase to plaice biomass in 2016 by 4%. Both English Channel stocks (VIId and VIIE) are managed together, so the management measures implemented must be effective at controlling mortality for both stocks. Oceana recommends to set fishing opportunities variation according to this criteria.

For the **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) and **Celtic Sea**, (VIIg) stocks ICES advises, on the basis of assessment for data limited stocks, that landing should be no more than 420 tonnes. If discard rates do not change from the average of the previous three years, this implies catches of no more than 1500 tones. Considering the stable trend in SSB, Oceana recommends no changes in catches as ICES suggests, and keeping the previous level of TAC, if discard mitigation measures are implemented. If not, Oceana recommends reducing catches by 15%, because of the high discard rates that exceeds landings. Oceana in consequence also recommends to urgently implement technical measures, like the use of larger mesh size gear, to reduce discards in the mixed fishery, stemming from a mismatch between mesh size and the minimum landing size.

In the **South Celtic Sea** (VIIf), and **Southwest of Ireland East&West** (VIIj,k) ICES advises on the basis of the approach for data limited stocks that landings in 2015 be no more than 135 tonnes, which implies no changes in catches respect 2014. As discards, which are known to occur, cannot be quantified total catches cannot be calculated. TACs established have not been restrictive during many years. Plaice catches in Division VIIk are

negligible. Considering that the stock is estimated to be overexploited and that the biomass level is unknown, Oceana recommends also considering a precautionary reduction of the TAC by 15%. By-catch. Discards should be also urgently reduced.

For stocks in the **Bay of Biscay** (VIII) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) ICES advises, based on the approach for data limited stocks, that catches should decrease by 20% from the average of the last three years. ICES does not provide catch figures due to the uncertainty in the landing data. Although this stock is listed in the joint statement of the Commission and Council (Doc 5315/13 PECHE 15) that provide the possibility to maintain the 2013 TAC. Oceana asks for a reduction of 20%. This is especially important given that these stocks are managed under the same TAC as other stocks for

which status is completely unknown. Furthermore, agreed TACs have been more 20%, higher, than official landings during past decade. It is unclear whether there should be more than one management unit for these stocks.

For the rest of the managed stocks, for which there is no information **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Rockall, West of Scotland** (VI), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X), **North of Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV) and **CECAF 34.1.1**, Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, proposes a minimal reduction in catches of 15% for those stocks that are not managed together with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 8. Comparative table of plaice TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
IIIa (Skagerrak)	Skagerrak (West)	10056 (+10%)	Unknown stable (western component) uptrend (eastern component)	7232 [^] (-28%)
IIIa (Kattegat)	Kattegat (East)	2160 (+20%)	Unknown uptrend	2626* (+21%)
IV, EU waters of IIa, IIIa not covered by Skagerrak and Kattegat	EU Waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea, and waters not covered by Ska&Katt	111631 (+15%)	Above MSY B trigger (IV) Completely unknown (IIa, IIIa not covered by Skagerrak and Kattegat)	113864 (+2%)
VI, EU and internat waters of Vb, internat waters of XII and XIV	Rockall, West of Scotland, EU and internat waters of Faeroes Grounds, internat waters of North of Azores and East Greenland	658 (0%)	Completely unknown (Vb, VI, XII, XIV)	559 (-15%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	1220 (-25%)	Unknown possibly above reference points (VIIa)	1220 (0%)
VIIb and VIIc	West of Ireland and Porcupine Bank	74 (0%)	Unknown (VIIbc)	30 (-59%)
VIIId VIIe	English Channel	5322 (-17%)	Unknown increasing (VIIId) above MSY B trigger (VIIe)	4203 (-21%)
VIIIf and VIIg	Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea North	461 (+25%)	Unknown (VIIIfg)	420 (-9%)
VIIh, VIIj and VIIk	Celtic Sea South, Southwest of Ireland East&West	135 (-4%)	Unknown (VIIhjk)	135 (0%)
VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds and EU waters of CECAF 34.1.1	395 (0%)	Unknown (VIII, IXa) Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	233 (-20%)

[^]No direct fisheries should occur in the Eastern Skagerrak; *Figure also includes catches in the Belts and Sound;

Pollack (*Pollachius pollachius*)

Species description

Pollack is a marine benthopelagic species distributed throughout the North East Atlantic, from Iceland and Norway to the Bay of Biscay – and in the southern Baltic Sea-, in areas with hard bottoms at 40-100m depths (but they can be found as deep as -200 m). Juveniles are pelagic, spending two to three years near the coast, in rocky areas, kelp beds, sandy shores and estuaries. Larger individuals move to the open sea and are often found around rocky areas.

State of the stocks

Information is very limited for pollack fisheries and therefore both the state of the population and its rate of exploitation are unknown. TACs are not restrictive for the fishery as they are higher than official landings, which have decreased during the past decades. This can be interpreted as an overexploitation sign. The management of the species in European waters lacks sustainability guarantees.

In the **Rockall and West of Scotland (VI)**, and **Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, Southwest of Ireland (VII)** new data available for this stock do not change the perception of the stock, meaning that the 2012 advice is valid for 2015. Available information is insufficient to evaluate the exploitation and trends in this area. Catch and landing figures are incomplete and erratic and further scrutiny of available information is required. No reference points have been defined for this stock. TACs are not restrictive for the fishery, although quotas can be restrictive for some countries. There are indications of high catches by recreational fisheries on a local scale but these have not been reported.

Available information is insufficient to evaluate stock trends and exploitation status in **Bay of Biscay (VIII)**, and **Portuguese waters East (IXa)** ecoregions. No reference points have been defined for the fishery. TACs are set higher than landings, so they are not restrictive.

Landings decreased towards the end of the 1980s and have, over the past two decades, stably remained at low levels. Recreational fisheries are an important component of the catch.

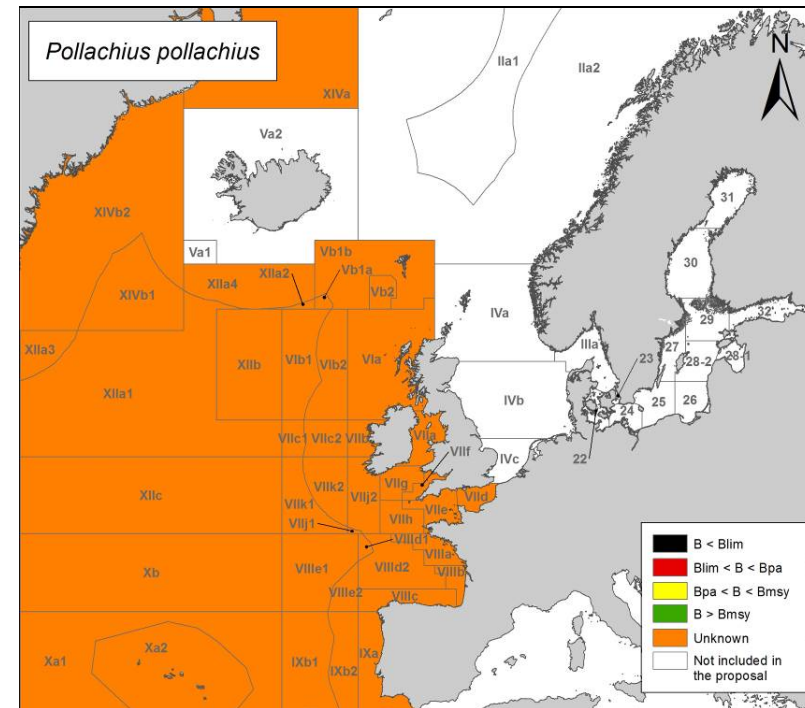


Figure 9. Pollack stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **Faeroes Grounds (Vb)**, **Portuguese waters West (IXb)**, **Azores Grounds (X) North of Azores (XII)**, **East Greenland (XIV)**, and **CECAF 34.1.1**, there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

In order to ensure the sustainable exploitation of pollack and avoid potential risks, Oceana recommends improving data collection and scientific assessments.

For the **Rockall and West of Scotland** (VI), and **Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, Southwest of Ireland** (VII) ICES advises, based on assessment methods for data limited stocks, that commercial landings be no more than 4200 tonnes in 2015, which represents a landings reduction by 10% respect the average landings over the last three years. The advice is based on estimates from the Depletion-Corrected Average Catch (DCAC) method, which uses historical catch data and estimates of stock depletion over the catch time series to estimate sustainable yields. This stock is listed in the joint statement of the Commission and Council (Doc 5315/13 PECHE 15) that suggests maintaining the 2013 TAC. Oceana, due to precautionary approach and based on ICES data limited approach recommends fixing a TAC of 4200 tonnes (50 tonnes for VI, and 4150 for VII) instead 2013 TAC. It

should be noted that fixed TACs are 3-8 times higher than official landings: for example the combined TAC approved in 2013 was 13892 tonnes when the official landings were 4833 tonnes.

For the **Bay of Biscay** (VIII), and **Portuguese waters East** (IXa) ICES advises, based on assessment methods for data limited stocks, that landings should be no more than 1316 tonnes, which represents a decrease by 20% in relation to the average of the last three years landings. Due to the uncertainty of the discards data, ICES is not able to quantify the resulting catches. Although this stock is listed in the joint statement of the Commission and Council (Doc 5315/13 PECHE 15) that suggests maintaining the 2013 TAC, Oceana recommends the precautionary reduction suggested by scientist unless there is ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate for the stock.

For the rest of the managed stocks **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Portuguese waters West** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X) **North of Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV), and **CECAF 34.1.1**, Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, proposes a minimal reduction in catches of 15% for those stocks that are not managed together with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 9. Comparative table of pollack TACs (landings in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
VI, EU and international waters of Vb, international waters of XII and XIV	VI, EU and international waters of Vb, international waters of XII and XIV	397 (0%)	Unknown (VI) completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	50 (-87%)
VII	VII	13495 (0%)	Unknown (VII)	4150 (-69%)
VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIId, VIIE	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIId, VIIE	1482 (0%)	Unknown (VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIId, VIIE)	977 (-34%)
VIIIc	VIIIc	231 (0%)	Unknown (VIIIc)	152 (-34%)
IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	282 (0%)	Unknown (IXa) completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	186 (-34%)

Sole (*Solea solea*)

Species description

The sole is distributed throughout the East Atlantic, from the Norwegian Sea -including the Baltic Sea and the North Sea- down to Senegal. The species is non-gregarious, lives buried in sandy or muddy bottoms and its diet consists of molluscs, annelids and small crustaceans. Sole is a nocturnal predator and therefore more susceptible to be captured at night than in daylight.

State of the stocks

The general state of sole stocks is slowly improving from last decade's dismal scenario, with several areas currently exploited in accordance with the MSY framework. However, problems continue for other stocks, such as those in the Irish Sea, Skagerrak, Kattegat, Sound and Belts, which present evidence of overexploitation.

In **Skagerrak, Kattegat (IIIa)**, and **Subdivisions 22-24**, the spawning stock biomass has decreased since 2006 and has been below the MSY framework since 2007, and below safe biological limits since 2013, showing a worrying trend. Fishing mortality have been fluctuating above F_{msy} since 2005. Recruitment has decreased during the last 11 years and currently it is at historical low. Discard rates are moderate or low, so most of the catches are assumed to be landed. It should be noted that cod in the Kattegat is depleted which is taken as by-catch in the sole fishery.

In the **North Sea (IV)** the spawning stock biomass has fluctuated between B_{lim} and B_{pa} for the last decade but during 2012 and 2013 it has increased and currently it is above MSY B trigger. Fishing mortality has shown a declining trend since 1995 and it is estimated to be right above F_{msy} in 2013. The North Sea is the most northern border of this species distribution. There are indications that in recent years sole discarding has increased, although it cannot be fully quantified the rate of discard is in the order of 20%.

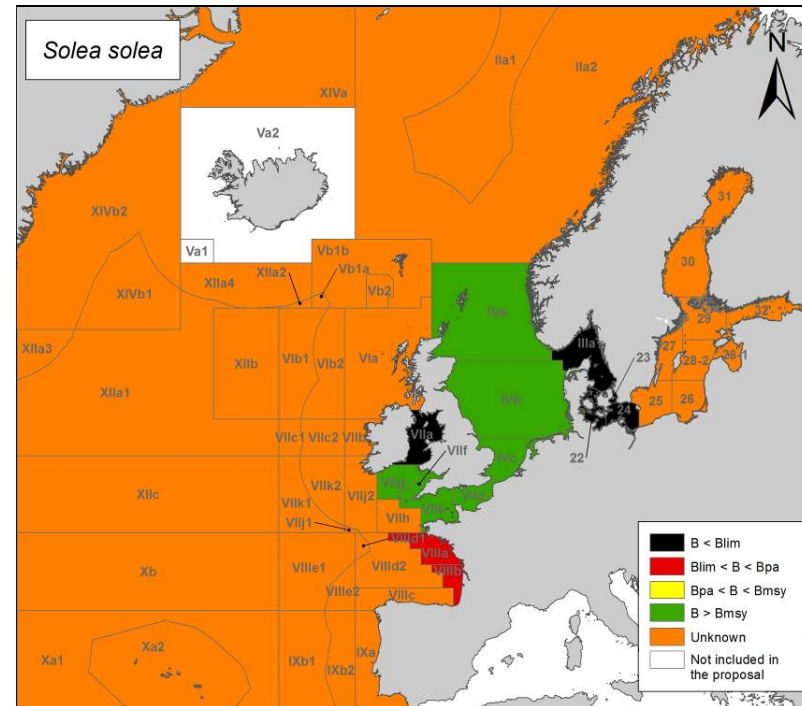


Figure 10. Sole stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹⁴.

In the **Irish Sea (VIIa)** the stock is clearly overexploited with a worrying trend and no sign of recovery in the short term. Biomass has continuously declined since 2001, and is so far below safe biological limits since 2005 that the stock is at its lowest level and in danger of collapse. Catch reductions from previous years were much lower than those recommended by scientists, and have not been able to reverse the biomass downtrend. Fishing mortality has been

¹⁴ Stock status based on trends for IIIa, 22-24, VIIe.

high for more than 40 years it has shown a steady but slight reduction since mid-1980s and dropped from Fpa to just above Fmsy in 2013. In addition, recruitment over the past eight years has been at its lowest, marked by its lowest point in the 2011 time series. Information from observer trips indicates that sole discards make up around 5% of the total weight in 2011-2013 (6% in 2013), although rates for other species can be considerable.

In the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) and **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc) there is not enough information to evaluate the stocks status and rate of exploitation as catches in this area are too low to support the collection of necessary information for an assessment. The new data available do not change the perception of the stock. No reference points are defined for the stock. Landings have been low for several decades.

In the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), the spawning stock biomass has been fluctuating without trend above precautionary and MSY B trigger levels for most of the time series. For the last 15 years, fishing mortality has fluctuated between precautionary and safe biological limits and is therefore well above MSY framework; it has been above Fpa since 2005. Although fishing mortality should be reduced, there are indications that the stock is harvested in an unsustainable way. Recruitment has been above average for the last decade, but recruitment on 2012 and 2013 are the lowest of the time series. Most of the catches are assumed to be landed, discards are known to take place but are not fully quantified, in the order of 10% in the last three years (2011-2013).

In the **Western English Channel** (VIle), stock assessments are favourable. Spawning stock biomass has been fluctuating around the MSY B trigger framework for about two decades with an increase since 2009. Fishing mortality has been over the MSY framework since the early 1990s and after a significant reduction in 2009 it is now below it. Recruitment is fluctuating without trend, but the 2010 to 2012 year classes are estimated to be below average. All catches are assumed to be landed so discards are considered to be low.

The stock in the **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) and **Celtic Sea North** (VIlg, North) is in good condition although fishing mortality has dramatically

increased during last two years. Spawning stock biomass has been fluctuating around the MSY B trigger framework since 1987 and above this reference point since 2001 but it is declining since 2011. Fishing mortality has decreased from Flim in 2003 to Fmsy in 2005 and remained there until 2011. In 2012 it increased to above Fpa and in 2013 it increased to above Flim in a very worrying trend. Recruitment is fluctuating without a clear trend around average except in 2009 when it was the lowest of the time series. All catches are assumed to be landed so discards are considered to be negligible.

In the **Celtic Sea South** (VIIh) **South West of Ireland** (VIIj, VIIk), the status of the stock is unknown and no reliable assessment can be presented. No reference points are defined for this stock. However, a qualitative evaluation of fishing mortality suggests that it has decreased over the period 2003-2006 and since 2007 it seems to remain stable below possible reference points. In response of this trend biomass indicator was progressively increasing since 2005, and currently it keeps stable, so the average SSB in the last two years (2012-2013) is the same than the average of the three previous years (2009-2011). Recruitment is estimated to have been low in the last three years. All catches are assumed to be landed.

In the **North** and **Central Bay of Biscay** (VIIIab), the stock biomass appears to have recovered from its lowest point in the time series, in 2003, but has been decreasing since 2013 and is currently just below MSY B trigger. After years of excessive fishing mortality it has declined since 2002 and fluctuated around the precautionary reference point, but during 2012 and 2013, in a worrying trend, it increased and it is again over the precautionary reference point and over the MSY framework. Recruitment values since 2004 are the lowest in the time-series, in particular 2012 and 2013 recruitments and with the exception of the 2009 recruitment. All catches are assumed to be landed.

In the Iberian Peninsula waters, which comprise the areas **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa), the stocks state and their rate of exploitation are unknown because available information is insufficient to evaluate them. New landings

available do not change the perception of the stock. Sole is poorly suited for monitoring by the surveys carried out in this area. Therefore, no reference points are defined for these stocks. Landings, which are incomplete and erratic, are mainly taken from Division IXa, have declined significantly since the late 1980s and are much lower than agreed TACs, which are therefore not restrictive.

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **Norway Waters** (IIa), **Baltic Sea** (25-32) **Rockall, West of Scotland** (VI), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Offshore and West of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIde), **Portuguese waters West** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X) **North of Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV), and **CECAF 34.1.1**, there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

For **Skagerrak, Kattegat** (IIIa) and **Sound, Belt Sea** (22-24), ICES advises, on the basis of the MSY approach, that landings in 2015 should be no more than 205 tonnes, resulting in a -42% TAC reduction, which implies catches of no more than 211 tonnes if discard rates do not change from last year (2013). Oceana recommends following this advice in order to move to the MSY framework and stabilise the status of the stock in the area. A higher TAC would prevent the proper recovery of the stock. Note that catches and by-catch of cod, which is depleted in the Kattegat, should be avoided.

that landings in 2015 should be no more than 128376 tonnes, resulting in a 15% TAC increase, which implies catches of no more than 179301 tonnes if discard rates do not change from the average of the last three years (2011-2013).

In the **North Sea** (IV), ICES advises on the basis of stage two of the EU management plan (Regulation (EC) N° 676/2007) that landings in 2015 should be no more than 10973 tonnes, meaning an 8% TAC reduction. This advice matches with the MSY approach. Advice corresponding with total catches cannot be calculated because the discards, which are known to occur, cannot be quantified. Stage one

of the plan was to restore the stock within safe biological limits and then to exploit the stock at MSY. The TAC for sole has not been fully utilized in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. Oceana suggests that the 2015 TAC should follow the management plan and the MSY approach. TAC reduction would not imply a big impact to the fishing sector.

In the **Irish Sea** (VIIa), ICES advises, based on the precautionary approaches, that there should be no direct fisheries in 2015 and that by-catch and discards should be minimised. The MSY approach suggests a TAC reduction by 5%, this implies catches of no more than 95 tonnes if discard rates do not change from the average of the last three years. This is expected to lead to a biomass of 1582 tonnes in 2016, which is still below Blim. However, considering the low SSB and low recruitment since 2000, ICES recognizes that it is not possible to identify any non-zero catch which would be compatible with the MSY or precautionary approaches. Oceana considers that, given the stock status and trends, a zero TAC is the only suitable option to guarantee the population recovery above safe limits as quickly as possible, even if it will leave the stock below safe biological limits in 2015.

For the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) and **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), ICES advises, based on assessment methods for data limited stocks that catches should be no more than 30 tonnes in 2015. The advice is based on a precautionary reduction of catches of 20% in relation to the average landings of the last three years due to missing or non-representative data. Although this stock is listed in the joint statement of the Commission and Council (Doc 5315/13 PECHE 15) that recommends maintaining the 2013 TAC, Oceana considers that a precautionary reduction of catches like the one proposed by ICES be implemented unless there other information indicates that the current exploitation is sustainable.

For the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), ICES advises, based on the MSY approach that landings in 2015 be no more than 1931 tonnes, which lead to a 60% TAC decrease. This proposal represents a 23% increase in biomass, and a reduction of fishing mortality below

precautionary limits of 0.27. Oceana agrees with this advice and is confident that this proposal would help reduce the high mortality rate.

For the **Western English Channel** (VIIe) ICES advises, based on the MSY approach, that catches in 2015 be no more than 851 tonnes, which means a 2% TAC increase. All catches are assumed to be landed. This advice matches the level of catches and fishing mortality corresponding to the management plan (Regulation (EC) N° 509/2007), which was not assessed by ICES. Oceana agrees with both proposals. Landings during last years exceeded the agreed TAC.

For the **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) and the **Celtic Sea North** (VIIg) stocks, ICES advises, based on the MSY approach, that catches in 2015 be no more than 652 tonnes, which represents a -35% TAC decrease. All catches are assumed to be landed. Oceana agrees with this proposal as it would slightly increase the current level of biomass by 6% and reduce the fishing mortality to 0.31.

For the **Celtic Sea South** (VIIh) **South West of Ireland** (VIIj, VIIk), ICES advises, based on assessment methods for data limited stocks that catches be no more than 225 tonnes in 2015. All catches are assumed to be landed. Oceana agrees with this precautionary approach and suggests that the Commission follow ICES advice. Landings in recent years have been much lower, around half, than the agreed TAC, so the TAC is not restrictive, except for a few countries. Oceana recommends implementing restrictions in fishing effort to limit landings. Furthermore, based on the state of plaice in this area, technical measures should be implemented to reduce plaice by-catch and discards.

In the **North** and **Central Bay of Biscay** (VIIIab) ICES advises, based on the MSY approach, that catches in 2015 be no more than 2407 tonnes, which implies a 37% TAC reduction. All catches are assumed to be landed. This proposal also implies a fishing mortality reduction to 0.26. Oceana supports this proposal to stabilise the recovery of the stock and reduce the fishing mortality. It is worth noting that the multiannual plan for sole in the Bay of Biscay (Regulation (EC) No 388/2006) the target of which is estimated to be achieved, does not provide any basis for TAC advice for 2015.

For the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) ICES advises, based on the assessment method to data limited stocks that catches should decrease by 20% in relation to the average of the last three years. Due to uncertainty in landing information, ICES is not able to quantify the resulting TAC for 2015. Oceana, following the precautionary approach and stock trends of landings, asks for a 20% TAC reduction for 2015 to bring the TAC closer to total landings. It is unclear whether there should be more than one management unit in this area.

For the rest of the managed stocks, for which there is no information **Baltic Sea** (25-32), **Rockall, West of Scotland** (VI) **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Offshore and West of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIde), **Portuguese waters West** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X) **North of Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV), and **CECAF 34.1.1**, Oceana, following the precautionary approach, proposes a reduction in catches of at least 15% for those stocks that are not managed together with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 10 Comparative table of sole TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
EU waters II, IV	EU Waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	11900 (-15%)	Above MSY B trigger (IV), completely unknown (II)	10973 (-8%)
IIIa, EU waters of IIIb-d (22-32)	Skagerrak, Kattegat, EU waters of Sound, Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea,	353 (-37%)	Below Blim (IIIab, 22-24) Completely unknown (25-32)	205 (-42%)
VI, EU and international waters of Vb, internat Waters of XII, XIV	Rockall, West of Scotland, EU and internat waters of Faeroes Grounds, internat waters of North of Azores and East Greenland	57 (0%)	Completely unknown (VI, Vb, XII, XIV)	48 (-15%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	95 (-32%)	Below Blim (VIIa)	0 (-100%)
VIIb VIIc	West of Ireland , Porcupine Bank	42 (0%)	Unknown (VIIbc)	30 (-29%)
VIIId	Eastern English Channel	4838 (-18%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIId)	1931 (-61%)
VIIe	Western English Channel	832 (-7%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIe)	851 (+2%)
VIIIf VIIg	Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea North	1001 (-9%)	Above MSY B trigger (VIIIfg)	652 (-35%)
VIIh, VIIj and VIIk	Celtic Sea South, Southwest of Ireland East and West	382 (-5%)	Unknown (VIIh-k)	225 (-41%)
VIIIa and VIIIb	Bay of Biscay North and Central	3800 (-7%)	Below PA (VIIIa,b)	2407 (-37%)
VIIIc, VIId and VIIIe, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay South, Offshore and West, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds and CECAF 34.1.1	1072 (0%)	Unknown (VIIIc, IXa) Completely Unknown (VIId, IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	869 (-19%)

2000. Analytical assessments are based on surveys, historical yields and catch composition, although there is uncertainty in the historical reported landings. Fishing mortality has decreased since 2000 and it is now at historically low levels, well below the precautionary reference point. It is therefore expected that the biomass will increase in abundance if recruitment does not continue to be discarded at the current rate observed. Recent recruitment has been very weak since 2002, at historically low levels, although there are signs that recruitment has increased in 2009 and 2011. The proportion of whiting discards is very high, more than half of the annual catch weight, and appears to have increased in recent years with levels as high as 74%, 60% 70% and 81% in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively. Approximately 80% of these discards come from the Nephrops (TR2) fishery. There are strong indications that management control is not effective to limit the catch.

In **Rockall** (VIb) there is not enough information to evaluate the status of the stock and its rate of exploitation. There are no new data available that change last year perception of the stock. No reference points are defined. There are doubts on the accuracy of the reported landings as these are reported by vessels operation in both Divisions Via and VIb. Landings in Rockall seem to have decreased dramatically from 105 tonnes in 2006 to a negligible 1 ton in 2012. This reduction is not a consequence of the TAC reduction as landings are only around <5% of allowed catches, but is a sound example of the unsustainable rate of exploitation implemented during decades.

In the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) new data does not change the perception of the stock; therefore, the same catch advice is still applicable for 2015. Since 2003, low landing levels have resulted in poor sampling coverage. The presented assessment is only indicative of trends. Information on historical yields and catch composition indicate that the present stock size is extremely low. Although no reference points are defined, qualitative evaluation indicates that biomass and fishing mortality are above and below possible reference points respectively and obviously far from possible MSY targets. Landings have shown a worrying decline from around 12000 tonnes in the 80's to 100 tonnes this decade and there is no remaining targeted whiting fishery in the

Irish Sea. Whiting is caught as by-catch in other Irish Sea fisheries and almost all the catches are discarded, particularly the one of smaller size. Discard estimates are available for the main fleets but are imprecise: it is estimated that more than 1000 tonnes of whiting are discarded annually since 2007.

In the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) **Porcupine bank** (VIIc) **Western English Channel** (VIIe), **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) **Celtic Sea North and South** (VIIgh), and **Southwest of Ireland - East and West** (VIIjk), the status of whiting has improved in the past few years and is in good shape. Spawning stock biomass has been increasing since 2008, after a strong decline from the mid-1990s, and it has been decreasing since 2011, but remains over the MSY B trigger. Fishing mortality has shown a declining trend since 2007 and is below Fmsy since 2011. 2010, 2011 and 2012 year classes are estimated to be below average whereas the 2013 year class is estimated to be the second highest in the series. Good recruitment in 2008 and 2009 entered the fishery and are contributing to the spawning stock. Discard rates are high and variable, accounting for around 40% of total catches in 2011, or 17% in 2013 – no new estimations are available, due to the low market value, particularly for smaller individuals. This is especially worrying as spawning stock biomass is highly dependent on incoming recruitment.

In the **Bay of Biscay** (VIII) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) there is not enough information to assess the status of the stock and its rate of exploitation, therefore the state of whiting in the area is unknown. There is no reference points defined for this stock. Fishing statistics are currently being compiled. The stock unit definition in this area is not clear and further work is required.

For the rest of the managed stocks, in the **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X), **North Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV), and **CECAF 34.1.1**, there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

In **Skagerrak and Kattegat** (IIIa) ICES advises, based on the approach for data limited stocks, that catches be no more than 500 tonnes. If discard rates do not change from the average of last three years, this implies landings of no more than 212 tonnes. In previous years, TACs were set high, up to 15 times higher than catches. Oceana requests that the TAC for 2015 be reduced by more than 50%, based on landing trends, unknown stock status, and precautionary considerations.

For the **North Sea** (IV) and **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), ICES advises on the basis of the EU-Norway plan, that combined catches be no more than 28317 tonnes in 2015, 15% TAC decrease. If discard rates do not change from average of the last three years this implies landings of no more than 17190 tonnes (13678 tonnes in the North Sea and 3512 in the Eastern Channel). According to ICES, the plan is considered as precautionary. In the absence of MSY reference points, Oceana agrees with the TAC according to the agreed plan as it is expected to lead to a 16% increase in biomass in 2015. Management for Division VIId should be separated from the rest of Subarea VII.

For the **West of Scotland** (VIa), ICES advises based on precautionary considerations, that there should not be directed fishery and by-catch should be minimized. Given the low biomass and recruitment in recent years it is not possible to identify any non-zero catch which would be compatible with the precautionary approach. Even a zero TAC would not recover the stock over precautionary limits in 2016. Oceana urges a fishery closure and the establishment of a minimal by-catch TAC. Measures to reduce whiting discards in the Nephrops fishery should be implemented urgently, taking advantage of the strong 2009 and 2011 recruitments and accelerate stock recovery.

For **Rockall** (VIb), ICES advises based on assessment methods for data limited stocks, that catches in 2014 be no more than 11 tonnes. As this stock is managed together with VIa Division (West of Scotland), the worrying downtrend in landings, and the TAC

undershoot, Oceana also requests setting an 11 tonne limit for by-catch in the area.

For the **Irish Sea** (VIIa), after years of having recommended the closure of the fisheries, ICES has advised, based on precautionary considerations, that catches should be reduced to the lowest level possible. As there is no direct whiting fishery in the area and all whiting catches are by-catch of other fisheries Oceana agrees with the TAC reduction. Oceana values the efforts made to reduce the high rates of discards of juveniles through the implementation of mandatory technical measures (such as the square mesh panel, grids, separator trawls...).

For the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) **Porcupine bank** (VIIc) **Western English Channel** (VIIe), **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) **Celtic Sea North and South** (VIIgh), and **Southwest of Ireland - East and West** (VIIjk), ICES advises, based on the MSY approach that landings in 2015 be no more than 14230 tonnes, a 4% TAC reduction, which implies catches of no more than 18501 tonnes, if discards rates do not change from the average of the last three years. Oceana agrees with this proposal as it is expected to lead to a spawning biomass of 77208 tonnes in 2016, above the MSY biomass trigger. Additional technical measures should be urgently introduced to reduce discards rates of whiting and haddock. The assessment area of the stock does not correspond to the TAC area (VIIb-k).

For the **Bay of Biscay** (VIII) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) ICES advises that, based on the assessment method for data limited stocks, catches in 2015 be reduced by 20% in relation to the average of the last three years. Due to uncertainty in the landing data, the resulting catch could not be quantified by ICES. For years, landings have been much lower than the agreed TAC: on average, landings hardly represented 40% of the agreed TAC during 2009-2012 periods. Oceana considers that a precautionary reduction of catches should be implemented until enough information is available to guarantee that the exploitation is sustainable. It is still not clear whether there should be one or more management units.

For the rest of the managed stocks, for which there is no information **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **West Portuguese**

Waters (IXb), Azores Grounds (X), North Azores (XII), East Greenland (XIV) and CECAF 34.1.1 Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, proposes a reduction in catches of at least 15% for those stocks that are not managed with other stocks for which there is a scientific advice.

Table 11. Comparative table of whiting TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision for 2014, stock status and Oceana proposal for 2015. Figures in unshaded rows refer to weight in catches, in shaded rows refer to weight in landings. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2014	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2015
IIIa	Skagerrak (West) and Kattegat (East)	1050 (0%)	Unknown (IIIa)	500 (-53%)
IV, EU waters of IIa	North Sea and EU Waters of Norwegian Sea	16092 (-15%)	Unknown – above Blim (IV) Completely unknown (IIa)	13678 (-15%)
VI EU and internat waters of Vb, internat waters of XII and XIV	Rockall, West of Scotland, EU and internat waters of Faeroes Grounds, internat waters of North Azores and East Greenland	292 (0%)	Below Blim (VIa), unknown (VIb) Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	11* (-96%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	80 (-5%)	Below Blim (VIIa)	0 (-100%)
VIIb-h, VIIj-k	West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland (East and West)	20668 (-15%)	Above MSY (VIIb-c,e-k), Unknown above Blim (VIIId)	17742 (-14%)
VIII	Bay of Biscay	3175 (0%)	Unknown (VIII)	1671 (-47%)
IX, X,CECAF (EU)	Portuguese Waters , Azores Grounds and EU Waters of CECAF	(Portugal)	IXa (unknown) Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	251 (-x%)

* No direct fisheries should occur in VIa

References

COM (2006) 360. Implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield.

COM(2014) 338. Communication from the Commission concerning a consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2015.

Council Regulation (EC) No 423/2004. Establishing measures for the recovery of cod stocks.

Council Regulation (EC) No 811/2004. Establishing measures for the recovery of the Northern hake stock

Council Regulation (EC) No 2166/2005. Establishing measures for the recovery of the Southern hake and Norway lobster stocks in the Cantabrian Sea and Western Iberian Peninsula,

Council Regulation (EC) No 388/2006. Establishing a multiannual plan for the sustainable exploitation of the stock of sole in the Bay of Biscay.

Council Regulation (EC) No 509/2007. Establishing a multi-annual plan for the sustainable exploitation of the stock of sole in the Western Channel.

Council Regulation (EC) No 676/2007. Establishing a multiannual plan for fisheries exploiting stocks of plaice and sole in the North Sea.

Council Regulation (EC) No 1300/2008. Establishing a multi-annual plan for the stock of herring distributed to the west of Scotland and the fisheries exploiting that stock.

Council Regulation (EC) No 1342/2008. Establishing a long-term plan for cod stocks and the fisheries exploiting those stocks and repealing

Council Regulation (EC) No 1262/2012. Fixing for 2013 and 2014 the fishing opportunities for EU vessels for certain deep-sea fish stocks.

Council Regulation (EC) No 1380/2013. On the Common Fisheries Policy.

Council Regulation (EC) No 43/2014. Fixing for 2014 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks, applicable in EU waters and, to Union vessels, in certain non-EU waters.

Council Regulation (EC) No 315/2014. Amending Regulation (EU) No 43/2014 as regards certain catch limits.

Council Regulation (EC) No 432/2014. Amending Regulation (EU) No 43/2014 as regards fishing opportunities.

Council Regulation (EC) No 732/2014. Amending Regulations (EU) No 754/2009 and (EU) No 43/2014 as regards certain fishing opportunities.

ICES. 2012. ICES Implementation of Advice for Data-limited Stocks in 2012 in its 2012 Advice. ICES CM 2012/ACOM 68. 42pp.

ICES. 2014. Advice 2015. <http://www.ices.dk/advice/icesadvice.asp>

UN. 2002. World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg, South Africa.

UNCLOS. 1982. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Acknowledgements

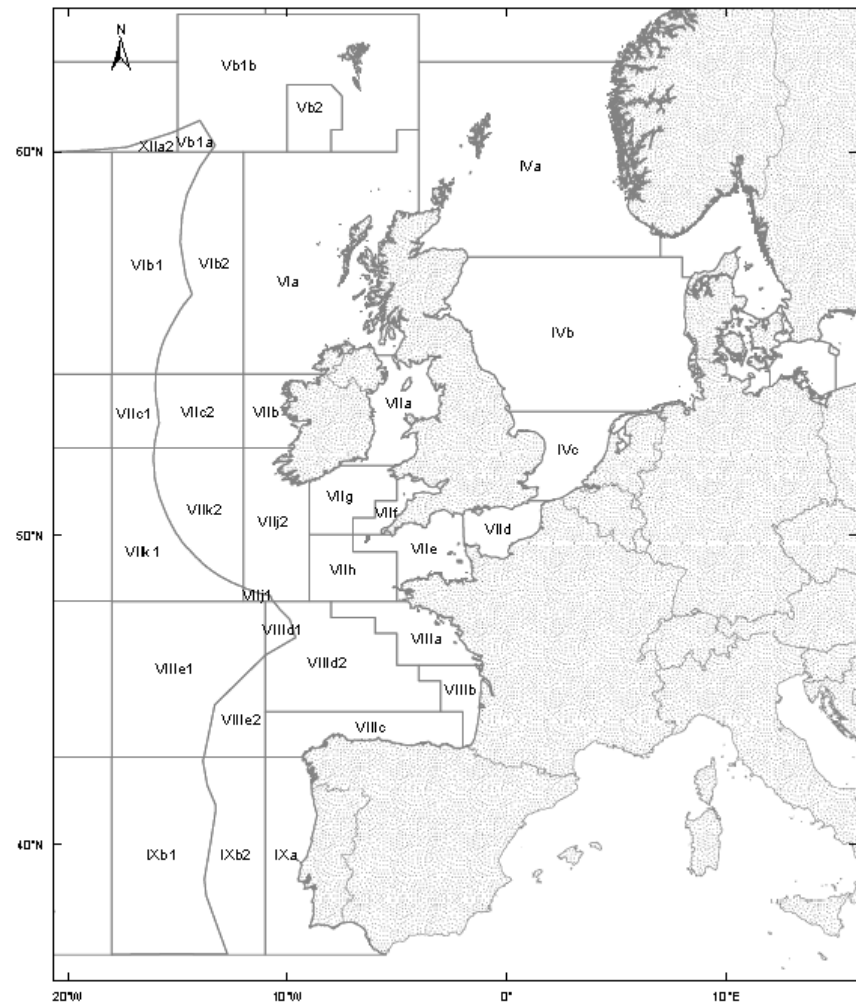
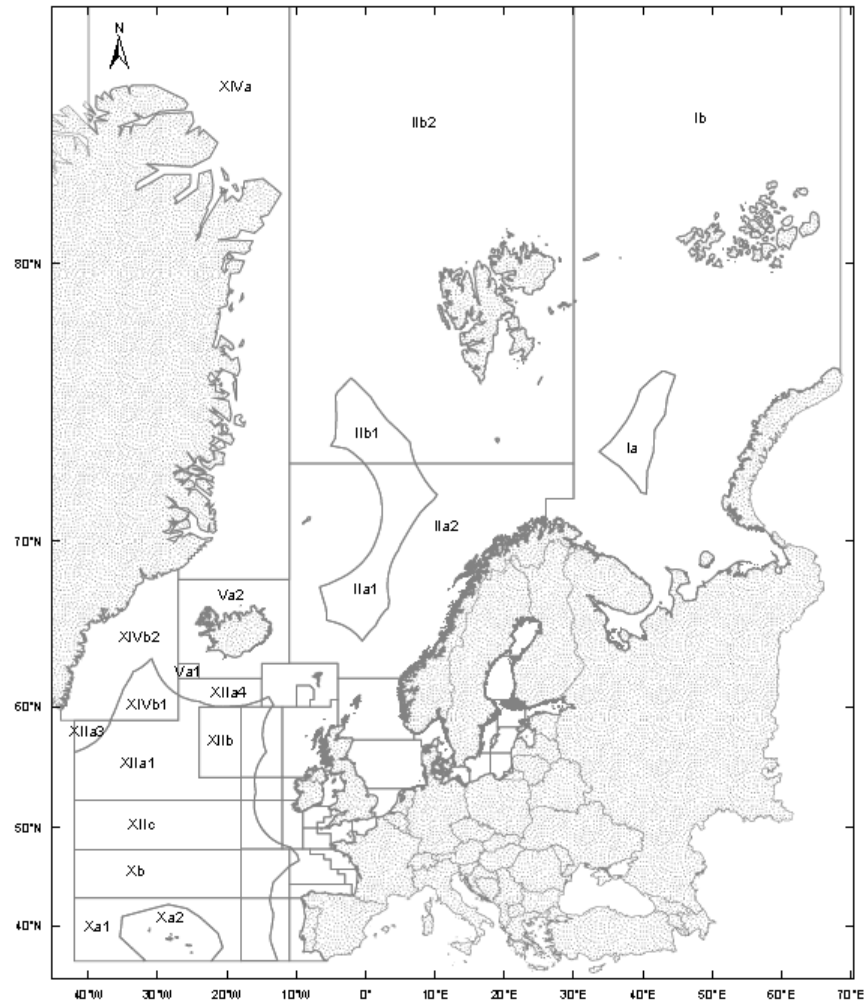
All the maps of this document have been elaborated thanks to the material downloaded from ICES website. Oceana wishes to thank ICES and Technical University of Denmark, National Institute of Aquatic Resources (DTU Aqua) for their free distribution.

Most of the species descriptions in this document have been taken from Fishbase (www.fishbase.org).

Description of ICES areas

Subarea	Division	Subdivision	Description
Subarea I			Barents Sea
Subarea II	Division IIa Division IIb		Norwegian Sea, Spitzbergen, and Bear Island Norwegian Sea Spitzbergen and Bear Island
Subarea III	Division IIIa Division IIIb,c Division IIId	Subdivision 22 Subdivision 23 Subdivision 24 Subdivision 25 Subdivision 26 Subdivision 27 Subdivision 28 Subdivision 29 Subdivision 30 Subdivision 31 Subdivision 32	Skagerrak, Kattegat, Sound, Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea, the Sound and Belt together known also as the Transition Area Skagerrak (West) and Kattegat (East) Sound and Belt Sea or the Transition Area Belt Sea Sound Baltic Sea Baltic West of Bornholm Southern Central Baltic – West Southern Central Baltic - East West of Gotland East of Gotland or Gulf of Riga Archipelago Sea Bothnian Sea Bothnian Bay Gulf of Finland
Subarea IV	Division IVa Division IVb Division IVc		North Sea Northern North Sea Central North Sea Southern North Sea
Subarea V	Division Va Division Vb	Subdivision Vb1 Subdivision Vb2	Iceland and Faeroes Grounds Iceland Grounds Faeroes Grounds Faeroe Plateau Faeroe Bank
Subarea VI	Division VIa Division VIb		Rockall, Northwest Coast of Scotland and North Ireland, (the Northwest Coast of Scotland and North Ireland also known as the West of Scotland) Northwest Coast of Scotland and North Ireland, or as the West of Scotland Rockall
Subarea VII	Division VIIa Division VIIb Division VIIc Division VIId Division VIIe		Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland - East and West Irish Sea West of Ireland Porcupine Bank Eastern English Channel Western English Channel

Subarea	Division	Subdivision	Description
	Division VIIf		Bristol Channel
	Division VIIfg		Celtic Sea North
	Division VIIfh		Celtic Sea South
	Division VIIfj		Southwest of Ireland / East
	Division VIIfk		Southwest of Ireland - West
Subarea VIII			Bay of Biscay
	Division VIIIa		Bay of Biscay / North
	Division VIIIb		Bay of Biscay / Central
	Division VIIIc		Bay of Biscay / South
	Division VIIfd		Bay of Biscay / Offshore
	Division VIIfe		West of Bay of Biscay
Subarea IX			Portuguese Waters
	Division IXa		Portuguese Waters / East
	Division IXb		Portuguese Waters / West
Subarea X			Azores Grounds
	Division Xa		Azores Grounds
	Division Xb		Northeast Atlantic South
Subarea XI			
Subarea XII			North of Azores
	Division XIIa		Southern mid-Atlantic Ridge (Southern Reykjanes Ridge south to Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone)
	Division XIIb		Western Hatton Bank
	Division XIIc		Central Northeast Atlantic - South
Subarea XIII			
Subarea XIV			East Greenland
	Division XIVa		Northeast Greenland
	Division XIVb		Southeast Greenland
		Subdivision XIVb1	Southeast Greenland - Parts of NEAFC Regulatory Area
		Subdivision XIVb1	Southeast Greenland - Non-NEAFC Regulatory Area





Plaza España-Leganitos 47
28013 Madrid, Spain
Ph.: + 34 911 440 880
Fax: + 34 911 440 890

Rue Montoyer 39
1.000 Brussels, Belgium
Ph.:+32 (0) 2 513 22 42
Fax: +32 (0) 2 513 22 46

Nyhavn 16, 4 sal
1051 Copenhagen, Denmark
Ph.:+45 33151160

E-mail: europa@oceana.org **Web:** www.oceana.org

Oceana campaigns to protect and restore the world's oceans. Our team of marine scientists, economists, lawyers and other collaborators are achieving specific changes in the legislation to reduce pollution and prevent the irreversible collapse of fish stocks, protect marine mammals and other forms of marine life. With a global perspective and devoted to conservation, Oceana has offices in Europe, North America, South America and Central America. Over 300,000 collaborators and cyber activists in 150 countries have already joined Oceana. For more information, visit www.oceana.org