

**Oceana recommendations to
European Council decision
concerning fishing opportunities
for 2012**



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Introduction

State of resources

As concluded in the Communication from the Commission concerning Fishing Opportunities¹, fish stocks in European waters are improving. This is confirmed by the downward trend in the number of overfished and collapsed stocks. But the progress achieved in European fisheries management in relation to the fishing opportunities is clearly insufficient and Oceana is concerned about the state of resources.

The current situation, as described by the Commission, is that 63% and 82% of the managed stocks in the Atlantic and Mediterranean respectively are overfished. These figures are unacceptable. Clear actions and policies are obviously needed to phase out overfishing and guarantee the sustainable exploitation of resources.

Council Regulation fixing the fishing opportunities is one available tool to move towards more sustainable fisheries and to fix catch levels based on the principles and commitments of the Common Fisheries Policy².

Management plans' successes and mistakes

Oceana supports the concept of long term management plans (LTMP) for stocks in European Waters, and calls on the European administrations to increase the number of stocks managed in this way.

¹ COM(2011) 298. Communication from the Commission concerning a consultation on Fishing Opportunities

² EC. 2002. Council Regulation (EC) No. 2371/2002 of 20 December 2002 on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy.

However, it is worth highlighting that while some of these plans are working properly (Haddock in North Sea and Skagerrak, Northern Hake Stock, or Plaice in North Sea), others go against the precautionary approach (Cod in Irish Sea) or are inadequately implemented (Cod in Kattegat, West of Scotland, North Sea, Eastern Channel, and Skagerrak; Haddock in West of Scotland; or Nephrops and Hake in South Bay of Biscay).

Oceana suggests that management plans are reviewed and adapted based on the current management objectives of fishing opportunities, using the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) reference point (like multi-annual plan for the stock of herring distributed to the West of Scotland). If implemented, this process should also include integrated steps towards reaching a good environment status, such as the protection of essential fish habitats (spawning, nursery, feeding...), the reduction of detrimental impacts on species or habitats through best available technologies (BATs), and the regulation of effort management, among others. Oceana also recommends the integration of ICES into the plan design process, or at least the ICES evaluation, before putting force into the management plan.

MSY starting point for responsible managing of stocks

Oceana considers that the application of MSY will lead to a significant improvement of the state of the resources, profitability of the catching sector and viability of the communities dependent on the resources. So for several stocks of cod, herring, nephrops, plaice, and sole achievement of MSY framework makes possible to adopt an increase in their catch in 2012. That's why Oceana agrees that MSY should be the basis to manage the stocks and calls the Commission for rebuilding all possible fisheries to MSY framework by 2015 and fulfilling the international commitments^{3,4}.

³ UNCLOS. 1982. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

⁴ UN. 2002. World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg, South Africa.

Unfortunately, despite the Commission's recommendations⁵ only 13 Atlantic stocks and 11 Mediterranean stocks are fished at or in transition to MSY by 2015, the rest of stocks for which maximum sustainable yield rate of fishing (Fmsy) is available, do not comply with MSY framework because breach of scientific advice.

Poor data for managed stocks and unmanaged stocks

There's a significant lack of scientific recommendations regarding many stocks and areas, due to the uncertainty of fishing parameters, especially concerning fishing mortality. In fact, the Commission recognized in its Communication that currently two-thirds of the TACs of managed species are assigned in the absence of scientific advice. As such, management measures implemented based on these TACs are incorrect and cannot guarantee sustainability, much less MSY.

To correct this situation, the EU Commission has proposed this year, on the basis of precautionary approach, to reduce catches by 15-25% for stocks where scientific advice on overfishing is unavailable. Oceana agrees with this proposal and urges to the Commission to apply this measure.

Oceana would also like to draw attention to the fact that only a small fraction of species is actually managed, leaving a significant proportion of total catches and landings in the EU unmanaged. Oceana requests that the European administrations ensure the management of all exploited fish stocks and, therefore, increase the number of scientifically assessed and managed stocks.

Oceana's principles for proposing TACs for 2012

In accordance with the situation described, Oceana has based its proposal on the following principles:

⁵ COM (2006) 360. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield.

- When MSY advice is available, it will be proposed; although in the case that an agreed management plan also fulfils MSY framework, this case will have preference to propose TAC.
- If there is no MSY reference point defined for the stock, and it is managed under a management plan that fulfils Precautionary Approach, or there is evidence that it leads good results, a TAC according to the management plan will be proposed, otherwise precautionary considerations will be assumed.
- If stock biomass is below safe biological limits and there is no evidence of recovering, a strong reduction (50%) or closure recommendation is proposed whether the stock is managed by a management plan or not.
- For stocks with uncertain information, about its status and/or its fishing rate, a 15-25% reduction will be proposed. If there is indication that fishery trends are improving, or keeping at precautionary levels, an exception in the form of a lower reduction or even no constrain in catches could be proposed.

Oceana wants to contribute to this decision making process through this report which expresses its constructive opinion on the ways total allowable catches (TACs) should be fixed, and hopes that the recommendations contained in this document are taken into account by the European Fisheries Council when final decision is taken.



Xavier Pastor, Executive Director of Oceana Europe

Oceana TACs proposal (in tonnes) for main EU stocks in the Northeast Atlantic. Brackets compare TAC difference in % from previous year.

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
<i>Ammodytes spp.</i>	Norwegian Waters of IV	Not relevant	pm	Above MSY (IVb,c), unknown (IVab)	Not relevant (-15%)
<i>Ammodytes spp.</i>	EU Waters of IIa, IIIa and IV	242250 (+36%)	pm	Above MSY (IVb,c), completely unknown (IIa) unknown (IIIa, IVab)	181688 (-15%)
<i>Argentina silus</i>	EU and international waters of I and II	103 (-8%)	77 (-25%)	Unknown (EU and int waters I and II)	77 (-25%)
<i>Argentina silus</i>	EU waters of III and IV	1176 (-8%)	882 (-25%)	Unknown (EU waters of III and IV)	882 (-25%)
<i>Argentina silus</i>	EU and international waters of V, VI and VII	4691 (-8%)	3518 (-25%)	Unknown (EU and int waters V, VI and VII)	3518 (-25%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	IIIa and EU waters of 22-32	24 (0%)	20 (-15%)	Unknown (IIIa), completely unknown (22-32)	18 (-25%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	EU and international waters of I, II and XIV	21 (0%)	pm	Unknown (XIV)	18 (-15%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	EU waters of IV	196 (0%)	pm	Unknown (IV)	147 (-25%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	EU and international waters of V, VI and VII	294 (0%)	pm	Unknown (V, VI, VII)	221 (-25%)
<i>Brosme brosme</i>	Norwegian waters of IV	170	pm	Unknown (IV)	128 (-25%)
Caproidae	EU and international waters of VI, VI, VIII	33000	pm	Unknown (EU and int waters of VI, VI, VIII)	33000 (0%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	IIIa	25504 (-12%)	pm	Above PA (IIIa)	29329 (+15%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Union and Norwegian waters of IV (N 53°03')	115464(+23%)	pm	Above PA (IV)	132783 (+15%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Norwegian waters south of 62°N	846 (0%)	pm	Above PA (IV)	967 (+15%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	By-catches IIIa	6659 (-11%)	pm	Above PA (IIIa)	6659 (0%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	By-catches IV, VIId and Union waters of IIa	16539 (+22%)	pm	Above PA (IV, VIId), Completely unknown (IIa)	16539 (0%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	IVc, VIId	26536 (+16%)	pm	Above PA (IVc, VIId)	30516 (+15%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Vb, VIb, VIaN	21755 (-8%)	pm	Completely unknown (VIa) Unknown (Vb, VIb)	17404 (-20%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VIa (S), VIId, VIId	4471 (-40%)	3353 (-25%)	Possibly below PA (VIaS, VIIdbc), above PA(VIId)	2235 (-50%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VI Clyde	?	p.m.	Below possible reference points	(-50%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VIIa	5280 (+10%)	3960 (-25%)	Possibly above PA (VIIaS), unknown (VIIaN)	4488 (-15%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VIIe and VIIf	980 (-5%)	833 (-15%)	Completely unknown (VIIe,f)	735 (-25%)
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	VIIg, VIIh, VIIj, VIIk	13200 (+30%)	21100 (+60%)	Above PA (VIIg-h)	21100 (+60%)
<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	IX, X and CECAF 34.1.1	7600 (-5%)	6460 (-15%)	Unknown (IXa) and completely unknown (IXb, X and CECAF 34.1.1)	5700 (-25%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	IIIa (West-skagerrak)	3711 (-20%)	pm	Below Blim (IIIa-W)	2783 (-25%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	IIIa (East-kattegat)	190 (-50%)	0 (-100%)	Below Blim (III-E)	0 (-100%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	IV, EU waters IIa, IIIa not covered by Ska-Kat	22279 (-20%)	pm	Below Blim (IV), Above PA (IIa),	16709 (-25%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	Norwegian waters south of 62°N	382 (0%)	pm	Below Blim (IV, IIIa),	0 (-100%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIb, EU and international Waters of Vb (west of 12°W), XII and XIV	78 (-3%)	59 (-25%)	Unknown (VIb, XIV), below PA (Vb1), completely Unknown (XII)	0 (-100%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIa, EU and international Waters of Vb (east of 12°W)	182 (-24%)	0 (-100%)	Below Blim (VIa), below PA (Vb1), unknown (Vb2)	0 (-100%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIIa	506 (-25%)	0 (-100%)	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)	4023 (0%)	9679 (+141%)	Above MSY (VIIe-k), completely unknown (VIIbc, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	4023 (0%)
<i>Gadus morhua</i>	VIIId	1564 (-20%)	pm	Below Blim (VIIId)	1173 (-25%)
<i>Lamna nasus</i>	I to XIV, French Guyana, Kattegat, EU waters of Skagerrak, EU waters of CECAF	0 (0%)	pm	Protected	0 (0%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	EU Waters of IIa and IV	1845 (+5%)	1568 (-15%)	Completely Unknown (IIa, IVbc), Unknown (IVa)	1384 (-25%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	VI, EU and international Waters of Vb, intern waters of XII and XIV	3387 (+10%)	2879 (-15%)	Unknown (VI), Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	2540 (-25%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	VII	18300 (0%)	13725 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIb-k), Completely unknown (VIIa)	13725 (-25%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIId, VIIIE	1806 (-15%)	1355 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIabd), Completely unknown (VIIIE)	1354 (-25%)
<i>Lepidorhombus spp.</i>	VIIIc IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	1094 (-15%)	1182 (+8%)	Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1), unknown (VIIIc, IXa)	1094 (0%)
<i>Limanda limanda & Platichthys flesus</i>	EU waters of IIa and IV	18434 (-2%)	pm	DAB- completely unknown (IIa), unknown (IV) FLE- completely unknown (IIa), unknown (IV)	15669 (-15%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
Lophiidae	EU waters of IIa, IV	9643 (-15%)	pm	Unknown (IIa, IV)	7232 (-25%)
Lophiidae	Norwegian waters of IV	1500 (-3%)	pm	Unknown (IV)	1125 (-25%)
Lophiidae	VI, EU and international waters of Vb , international waters of XII and XIV	5456 (-2%)	4092 (-25%)	Unknown (VI). Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	4092 (-25%)
Lophiidae	VII	32292 (0%)	24219 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIb-k). Completely unknown (VIIa)	24219 (-25%)
Lophiidae	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIE	8653 (-5%)	6490 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIIabd). Completely unknown (VIIE)	6490 (-25%)
Lophiidae	VIIIc, IX, X, and CECAF34.1.1 (EU)	1571 (+5%)	3300 (+110%)	Unknown (VIIIc, IXa). Completely unknown IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1	1964 (+15%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	IIIa, EU waters of Subdivisions 22-32	2007 (+9%)	pm	Above MSY (IIIa W), Completely unknown (IIIa,b,c,d)	1505 (-25%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	IV, EU waters of IIa	26432 (-2%)	pm	Above MSY (IV, IIa)	27754 (+5%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	Norwegian waters south of 62°N	707 (0%)	pm	Above MSY (IV, IIIa west)	813 (+15%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	EU and international waters VIb, XII, XIV	3748 (-25%)	3300 (-12%)	Above MSY (VIb), Completely unknown (XII, XIV)	2811 (-25%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	EU and international waters of Vb, VIa	2005 (-25%)	2506 (+25%)	Below Blim (Vb, VIa)	0 (-100%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	VIIa	1317 (-8%)	988 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIa)	988 (-25%)
<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	VIIb-k, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	13316 (+15%)	9987 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIb-k) Completely unknown (VIII, IX, X)	9987 (-25%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	IIIa	1031 (+300%)	pm	Unknown	773 (-25%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	IV, EU waters of IIa	13349 (+19%)	pm	Unknown (IV) Completely unknown (IIa)	1012 (-25%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	VI EU and international waters of Vb, international waters of XII and XIV	323 (-25%)	242 (-25%)	Possibly below PA (VIa), unknown (VIb) Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	161 (-50%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	VIIa	118 (-25%)	89 (-25%)	Possibly below PA (VIIa)	59 (-50%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	VIIb-h, VIIj-k	16568 (+15%)	12426 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIe-k) Completely unknown (VIIb-d)	12426 (-25%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	VIII	3175 (-2%)	2699 (-15%)	Unknown (VIII)	2381 (-25%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius</i>	IX, X,CECAF (EU)	?	pm	IXa (unknown) Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	? (-25%)
<i>Merlangius merlangius & Pollachius pollachius</i>	Norwegian waters south of 62°N	190 (0%)	pm	WHG- Unknown (IIIa, IV) POL- Unknown (IIIa, IV)	143 (-25%)
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	IIIa, EU waters of IIIb and IIIc, IIId (22-32)	1661 (0%)	1482 (-11%)	Possibly above MSY (IIIa) & Completely unknown (IIIbcd)	1412 (-15%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	EU waters of IIa and IV	1935 (0%)	1726 (-11%)	Completely unknown (IIa) & Possibly above MSY (IV)	1645 (-15%)
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	VI, VII, EU waters of Vb, int waters of XII, XIV	30900 (0%)	27575 (-11%)	Possibly above MSY (VI, VII) & Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	26265 (-15%)
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIIe	20609 (0%)	18391 (-11%)	Possibly above MSY (VIIIabd) & Completely unknown (VIIIe)	17518 (-15%)
<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	10695 (+15%)	12299 (+15%)	Unknown (VIIIc, IXa), Completely unknown (IXb, X)	9091 (-15%)
<i>Micromesistius poutassou</i>	Norwegian waters of II and IV	0 (not relevant)	pm	Above PA (II, IV),	Not relevant (+686%)
<i>Micromesistius poutassou</i>	EU and international waters I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIIe, XII, XIV	10042 (-85%)	pm	Above PA (II, IIIa, IV V, VI, VII, VIIIabde, XII, XI),	69930 (+686%)
<i>Micromesistius poutassou</i>	VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	1030 (-93%)	pm	Above PA (VIIIc, IX), completely unknown (X, CECAF 34.1.1)	2719 (+164%)
<i>Micromesistius poutassou</i>	EU waters of II, IVa, V, VI north 56°30'N and VII west 12°W	Not relevant	pm	Above PA (II, IVa, V, VI, VII)d	Not relevant (+686%)
<i>Microstomus & Glyptocephalus</i>	EU waters II, IV	6391 (-2%)	pm	WIT -Unknown (IV) & completely unknown (II) WHB – Above PA (II, IV)	5435 (-15%)
<i>Molva dypterygia</i>	International waters of XII	815	611 (-25%)	Unknown (International waters of XII)	0 (-100%)
<i>Molva dypterygia</i>	EU waters and international waters Vb, VI, VII	1717 (-1%)	pm	Unknown (Vb, VI, VII)	1288 (-25%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	EU and international waters I, II	36 (0%)	pm	Unknown	8000 included non EU countries
<i>Molva molva</i>	IIIa, EU waters of Subdivisions 22-32 (IIIbcd)	92 (0%)	78 (-15%)	Unknown (IIIa), completely unknown (IIIbcd)	78 (-15%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	EU waters of IV	2428 (0%)	pm	Unknown (IVa), completely unknown (IVb,c)	1821 (-25%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	EU and international waters of V	33 (-5%)	pm	Unknown (Va, Vb)	28 (-15%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	EU and international waters of VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	7804 (0%)	pm	Unknown (VI, VII, VIII, IX, XII, XIV), Completely unknown (X)	6633 (-15%)
<i>Molva molva</i>	Norwegian waters IV	850 (0%)	pm	Unknown (IVa), completely unknown (IIIa, IVb,c)	723 (-15%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	IIIa, EU waters of Subdivision 22-32	5170 (0%)	pm	Unknown (IIIa) Completely unknown (IIIbc, 22-32)	3878 (0%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	EU Waters of IIa and IV	23454 (-5%)	20849 (-11%)	Above MYS (FU of IV) Unknown (IIa, FU of IV)	17590 (-25%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	Norwegian waters IV	1200 (0%)	pm	Above MYS and Unknown	900 (-25%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	VI, EU and international waters Vb	13681 (-15%)	13950 (+2%)	Above MYS and Unknown (VIa) Completely unknown (Vb, VIb)	11628 (-15%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	VII	21759 (-3%)	17551 (-19%)	Unknown (VII)	16319 (-25%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	VIIIa,b,d,e	3899 (0%)	3314 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIIab) Completely unknown (VIIIde)	2924 (-25%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	VIIIc	91 (-10%)	82 (-10%)	Unknown	0 (-100%)
<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i>	IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	303 (-10%)	273 (-10%)	Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 43.1.1) Unknown (IXa)	0 (-100%)
<i>Pandalus borealis</i>	IIIa	4448 (-15%)	pm	Unknown, downward trend (IIIa)	3336 (-25%)
<i>Pandalus borealis</i>	EU waters of IIa, IV	3598 (-15%)	pm	Above MSY (IIa), Unknown, downward trend (IVa)	2699 (-25%)
<i>Pandalus borealis</i>	Norwegian waters south of 62°00' N	480 (-14%)	pm	Unknown, downward trend (IIIa, IVa)	360 (-25%)
<i>Penaeus spp.</i>	French Guyana Waters	?	pm		No advice
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	IIIa (Skagerrak)	7791 (-15%)	pm	Unknown	58433 (-25%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	IIIa (Kattegat)	1988 (-13%)	pm	Unknown	1491 (-25%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VI, EU waters of IIa, IIIa not covered by Skagerrak and Kattegat	68862 (+15%)	pm	Above MSY (IV) Completely unknown (IIa)	58233 (-15%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VI, EU and international waters of Vb, international waters of XII and XIV	693 (-5%)	589 (-15%)	Completely unknown (Vb, VI, XII, XIV)	520 (-25%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIa	1627 (0%)	1220 (-25%)	Possibly above PA	1627 (0%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIb, VIIc	78 (-5%)	66 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIbc)	36 (-53%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIId, VIIe	4665 (+9%)	4179 (-10%)	Unknown (VIIId) above MSY (VIIe)	3965 (-15%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIIf, VIIg	410 (-9%)	308 (-25%)	Unknown (probably below PA)	308 (-25%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIIh, VIIj, VIIk	185 (-15%)	139 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIhjk)	139 (-25%)
<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	395 (-5%)	336 (-15%)	Unknown (VIII, IXa) Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	296 (-25%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	VI, EU and international waters of Vb, international waters of XII and XIV	397 (-2%)	298 (-25%)	Unknown (VI) completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	298 (-25%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	VII	13495 (-2%)	10121 (-25%)	Unknown (VII)	10121 (-25%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIId, VIIIE	1482 (-2%)	1260 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIId, VIIIE)	1112 (-25%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	VIIIc	231 (-2%)	196 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIIc)	173 (-25%)
<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>	IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (UE)	282 (-2%)	240 (-15%)	Unknown (IXa) completely unknown (IXb, CECAF 34.1.1)	212 (-25%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
<i>Pollachius virens</i>	IIIa and IV, EU waters IIa, IIIb, IIIc, Subdivisions 22-32	43842 (-13%)	pm	Completely unknown (IIIa, IIIbc 22-32) IIa (PA) Below PA (IIIa, IV)	32004 (-27%)
<i>Pollachius virens</i>	VI, EU and international Vb, XII, XIV	9682 (-13%)	pm	Below PA (VI) Above MSY (Vb) Completely unknown (XII, XIV)	7067 (-27%)
<i>Pollachius virens</i>	Norwegian waters south 62°N	880 (0%)	pm	Below PA (IV)	624 (-27%)
<i>Pollachius virens</i>	VII, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (UE)	3343 (-2%)	2841 (-15%)	Completely unknown (VII, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	2507 (-25%)
<i>Psetta & Scopthalmus</i>	EU waters IIa, IV	4642 (-2%)	pm	TUR-Unknown (IV), completely unknown (IIa), BLL- Unknown (IV), completely unknown (IIa)	3946 (-15%)
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters IIa, IV	1397 (0%)	pm	Depending on species (Unknown for most species)	(0%)
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters IIIa	58 (0%)	pm	Depending on species (Unknown for most species)	(0%)
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters VIa, VIb, VIIa-c, VIIe-k	11379 (-15%)	pm	Depending on species (Unknown for most species)	9900 (-21%)
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters VIId	887 (0%)	pm	Depending on species (Unknown for most species)	(0%)
<i>Rajidae</i>	EU waters VIII and IX	4640 (-15%)	pm	Depending on species (Unknown for most species)	4200 (-10%)
<i>Reinhardtius hippoglossoides</i>	EU waters IIa, IV, EU and international waters Vb, VI	169 (-35%)	pm	Unknown, possibly below any reference point (Vb, VI), completely unknown (IIa, IV)	0 (-100%)
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	IIIa, IV, EU waters IIa, IIIb, IIIc, Subdiv 22-32	20002 (-11%)	pm	Above MSY (IV), Unknown (IIa, IIIabc)	13802 (-31%)
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	VI, VII, VIIIa, VIIIb, VIId, VIIle, EU and internat waters Vb, internat waters IIa, XII, XIV	258684 (-12%)	pm	Above MSY (VI, VII,) Unknown (VIIIabde, Vb, IIa, XII, XIV)	178492 (-31%)
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF (EU)	29572 (-13%)	pm	Above MSY (VIIIc, IXa) Unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	20405 (-31%)
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	Norwegian waters of IIa, IVa	11240	pm	Above MSY (IVa) Unknown (IIa)	7756 (-31%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	IIIa, EU waters of IIIb-d (22-32)	840 (+20%)	520 (-38%)	Possibly above PA (IIIabc) Completely unknown (25-32)	773 (-8%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	EU waters II, IV	14050 (0%)	pm	Completely unknown (II) MSY (IV)	11943 (-15%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VI, EU and international waters of Vb, internat Waters of XII, XIV	60 (-2%)	51 (-15%)	Completely unknown (VI, Vb, XII, XIV)	45 (-25%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIa	390 (-3%)	220 (-44%)	Below Blim (VIIa)	0 (-100%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIb VIIc	44 (-4%)	37 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIb VIIc)	37 (-15%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIId	4852 (+15%)	5300 (+9%)	MSY (VIId)	5600 (+15%)

Species	Fishing area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIe	710 (+15%)	777 (+9%)	Above PA (VIIe)	740 (+4%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIIf VIIg	1241 (+25%)	1060 (-15%)	MSY (VIIIf VIIg)	1060 (-15%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIh, VIIj and VIIk	423 (-15%)	360 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIh, VIIj and VIIk)	317 (-25%)
<i>Solea solea</i>	VIIIa and VIIIb	4250 (-12%)	3755 (-12%)	MSY (VIIIa and VIIIb)	4000 (-6%)
<i>Solea spp.</i>	VIIIc, VIId and VIIE, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	1072 (-5%)	911 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIIc, IX) Completely Unknown (VIIde, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	804 (-25%)
<i>Sprattus sprattus & by-catches</i>	IIIa	48100 (0%)	pm	Unknown (IIIa)	36075 (-25%)
<i>Sprattus sprattus & by-catches</i>	EU waters IIa, IV	149924 (-1%)	pm	Completely unknown (IIa), unknown (IV)	112443 (-25%)
<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>	VIId and VIIe	5421 (+2%)	4066 (-25%)	Unknown	4066 (-25%)
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	EU waters of IIIa	0	pm	Below possible reference points	0 (0%)
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	EU waters of IIa and IV	0	pm	Below possible reference points	0 (0%)
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	EU and international waters of I, V, VI, VII, VIII, XII, XIV	0	pm	Below possible reference points	0 (0%)
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	VIIIc	25137 (-1%)	pm	Unknown (VIIIc)	21367 (-15%)
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	IX	29585 (-5%)	pm	Unknown (IXa), completely unknown (IXb)	25147 (-15%)
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	X, CECAF 34.1.1 (Azores)	3072	pm	Unknown (Xa2)	2611 (-15%)
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	CECAF 34.1.1 (Madeira)	?	pm	Completely unknown (CECAF Madeira)	(-25%)
<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	CECAF 34.1.1 (Canary Islands)	?	pm	Completely unknown (CECAF Canary Islands)	(-25%)
<i>Trachurus spp. & by-catches</i>	EU waters IVb, IVc, VIId	42955 (-2%)	pm	Unknown (IVb, IVc, VIId)	36512 (-15%)
<i>Trachurus spp. & by-catches</i>	EU waters IIa, IVa, VI, VIIa-c, VIIe-k, VIIIa, VIIIb, VIId, VIIE, EU and internat waters Vb, internat waters XII, XIV	156587 (-1%)	pm	Unknown (IIa, IVa, Vb, VIa, VIIa-c,e-k, VIIIa-e), completely unknown (VIb, XII, XIV)	156587 (0%)
<i>Trisopterus esmarki & by-catches</i>	IIIa, EU waters IIa, IV	0 (-100%)	pm	Above reference points (IIIa, IV) Completely unknown (IIa)	0 (0%)
<i>Trisopterus esmarki</i>	Norwegian waters IV	0 (-100%)	pm	Above reference points (IV)	0 (0%)

Anglerfish (*Lophius spp.*)

Species description

Anglerfish are found in the majority of the world's oceans. The two species found in the North Atlantic are the angler (*Lophius piscatorius*) and black-bellied angler (*Lophius budegassa*). Anglerfish are distributed from the south-west of the Barents Sea to the Straits of Gibraltar and the African coasts, including the Mediterranean and Black Seas. *L. budegassa* has a more southern distribution than *L. piscatorius*. The black-bellied angler is distributed more towards the south. Anglerfish live on soft or muddy bottoms where they bury themselves waiting for prey, mainly fish.

State of the stocks

There are serious shortcomings in the knowledge of the state of the anglerfish stocks. Their state differs depending on stock and on species. The management of these stocks does not differ for the two species being caught (*L. piscatorius* and *L. budegassa*), both caught on the same grounds and by the same fleets.

In the **Norwegian Sea (IIa)**, **Skagerrak and Kattegat (IIIa)** and **North Sea (IV)**, **Western Scotland and Rockall (VI)**, for the stock as a whole there is no solid analytical assessment, because of major uncertainties concerning catch-at-age and effort data, as well as limited knowledge about population dynamics. However, scientific estimates warn of a drop in abundance since 2005 and in biomass since 2008. A large portion of catches consist of immature fish, making the stock susceptible to recruitment overfishing. There have been reports of big discrepancies between the catches declared and those carried out, of around 40-60%, so the true extent of the activity taking place is unknown. The vulnerability of these species to overexploitation has recently increased due to the development of fisheries in deeper waters which are considered as spawning areas.

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 Offshore of Bay of Biscay (VIIIa,b,d) there is no solid assessment of the state of the stocks and the exploitation status is also unknown. Indications from survey data show that biomass has been slowly recovering until 2008, as a consequence of the good recruitment, not because of a significant decrease in TAC or effort. After 2008 this positive trend has changed and biomass has been decreasing. The majority of the anglerfish catches consist of young fish and there are indications that discards have increased in recent years. It is estimated that there are also significant volumes of undeclared catches.

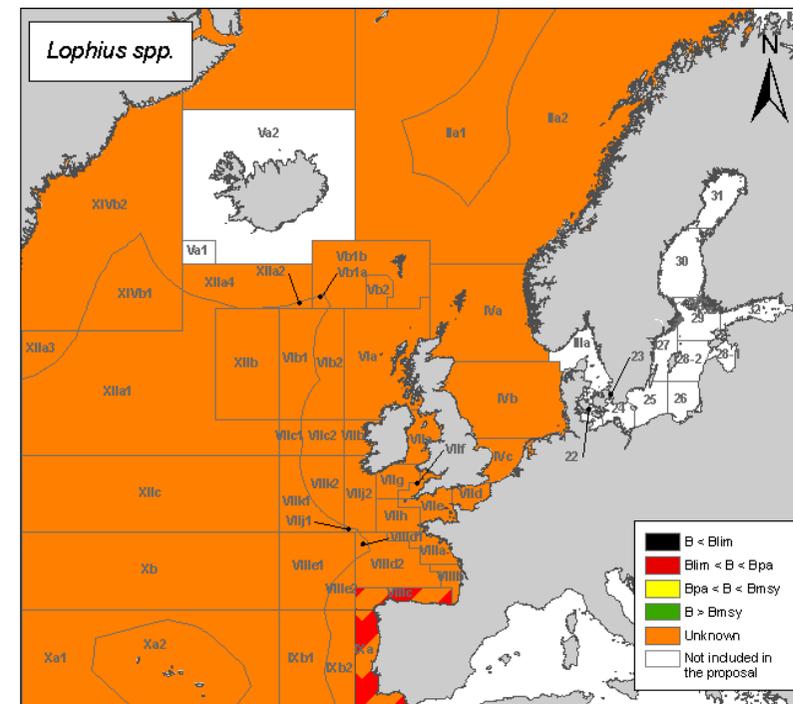


Figure 1. Anglerfish stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass⁶.

⁶ Stock status based on trends for VIIIc, IXa

In the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **West of Portuguese waters** (IXa) stocks of anglerfish present different status depending on the species, while black-bellied anglerfish is presently 91% of MSY biomass, white anglerfish is estimated to be at a very low level, approximately 30% of MSY biomass (at a possible proxy for safe biological limits biomass). Estimated fishing mortality has decreased during last year and is currently below the MSY framework in both species, so a change in stock tendency is expected. The anglerfish species with the greatest amount of catches has the worst status. Discards has been considered low for many years although a large proportion of the catches involve immature fish. Landings have amounted to double the established TACs.

In the rest of the managed stocks **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**, there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

Oceana urges setting a minimum landing size linked to the reproductive size, currently there is only a minimum weight of 500g for anglerfish, and increasing the mesh opening for the nets used for this fishery in accordance with this criteria. The situation endangers the possible positive evolution of the stock by preventing the young individuals that have resulted from the latest good levels of recruitment.

On catching and registering the landings of the two species together, they are subject to a combined TAC. The species requires a management plan, based on objective scientific criteria to control its exploitation. Implementation of improvements to the control system is required.

For the stock of **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Skagerrak and Kattegat** (IIIa) and **North Sea** (IV), **Western Scotland and Rockall** (VI), ICES, based on precautionary considerations, has stated that although there is no reliable assessment of the stock, a reduction in catches should be approved. Oceana agrees with Commission proposal of catches reduction by 25% due to the lack of reliable stock information. Management measures are also required to ensure sufficient numbers to survive to spawning size.

For 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** (VIIIb-k), **North, Central and Offshore of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIa,b,d) ICES explicitly advise requests for catches to be reduced. Oceana agrees with this measure as there is no information to indicate that biomass is recovering, and proposes, like the Commission, a 25% catch reduction based on precautionary considerations.

For the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **West of Portuguese waters** (IXa), ICES advises, that based on the MSY approach, landing of megrim in 2012 should be no more than 3300t, which implies an 111% increase in TAC. This increase has been proposed by the Commission. Oceana considers it overestimated as other completely unknown status stocks (IXb, X and CECAF 34.1.1) are managed together with these stocks through the same TAC. Otherwise the application of the prior TAC according to this criteria has not confirmed the recovery of the stock either, white anglerfish biomass is around safe biological limits, probably due to the high level of unreported landings. Oceana suggests increasing the TAC by 15%, which leads to an increase in biomass of around 25% confirming stock recovery.

For the rest of the 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, according to the Commission proposal for stocks with lack of information, proposes a 25% catches reduction.

Table 1. Comparative table of anglerfish TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
EU Waters of IIa and IV	EU waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	9643 (-15%)	9643 (-15%)	Unknown (IIa, IV)	7232 (-25%)
Norwegian Waters of IV	Norwegian Waters of North Sea	1500 (-3%)	1500 (-3%)	Unknown (IV)	1125 (-25%)
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	5456 (-2%)	4092 (-25%)	Unknown (VI). Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	4092 (-25%)
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	32292 (0%)	24219 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIb-k). Completely unknown (VIIa)	24219 (-25%)
VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIIe	Bay of Biscay North, Central, Offshore and West	8653 (-5%)	6490 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIIabd). Completely unknown (VIIIe)	6490 (-25%)
VIIIc, IX, X, and CECAF34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay South, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds and EU waters of CECAF34.1.1	1571 (+5%)	3300 (+110%)	Unknown (VIIIc, IXa). Completely unknown IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1	1964 (+15%)

Blue Whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*)

Species description

Blue whiting is found on the coasts of the North-East and North-West Atlantic. In the North-East Atlantic, this species is found from the Barents Sea and south along the African coast to Cape Bojador. It is found on the continental shelf and slope down to 1000 meters where it feeds mainly on small crustaceans.

State of the stocks

It has been suggested that there is likely to be more than one stock in the Northeast Atlantic, but it has not been confirmed yet, so blue whiting is assessed as one single stock.

Although there are recognised shortfalls in the evaluations of this species' stock levels during last years, the clear tendency of indicators led this species to be classified as overexploited in EU waters.

Spawning stock biomass, just above precautionary levels, has been declining for 8 years, from a peak of 7.0 million tonnes in 2003 to 2.4 million tonnes in 2011, in a very worrying trend.

Although attempts to rebuild blue whiting stocks have been made, fishing mortality has also declined from a high of 0.6 in 2004 to a low of 0.2 in 2010, it has not managed to reverse the biomass trend. Available information suggests that recruitment is estimated to be very poor since 2006 and that stock currently consist mainly of older fish so there is no evidence of a possible rebuilding of stock in the short term and it is expected that recruitment will continue at minimal levels, even with the setting of low catch levels.

It is expected that the decline of the stock will have an impact on the ecosystem because the species plays an important role in the pelagic environment not only as a predator, but also as prey for important commercial species for which it is a source of food.

Discarding is considered to be minor.

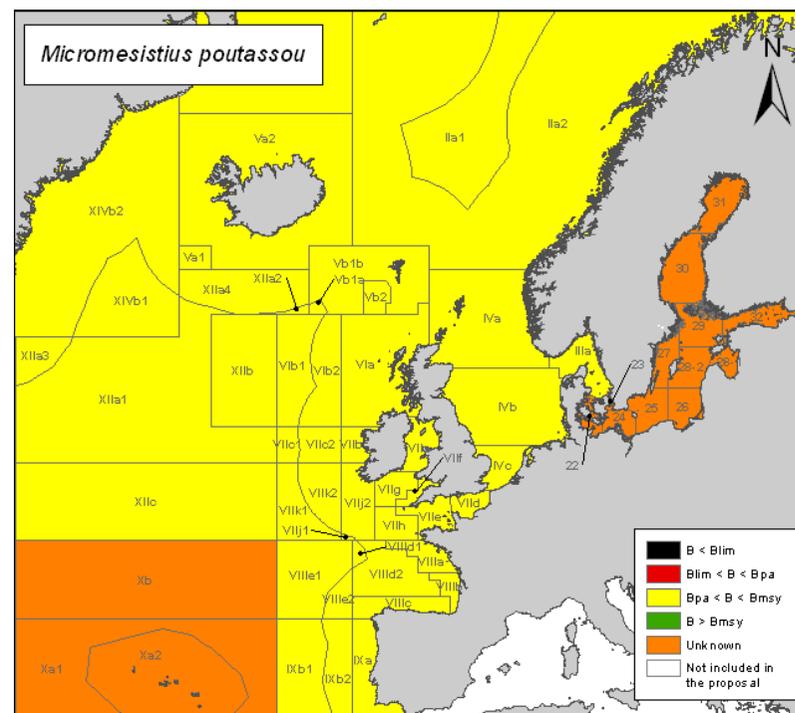


Figure 2. Blue whiting stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

Oceana's Position

TACs and quotas for blue whiting stock are set during annual negotiations between the EU, Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands on the basis of the management agreed in 2008 by these countries and endorsed by NEAFC. According to ICES management plan is in compliance with the precautionary approach, if fishing mortality is drastically reduced in the first years of its operation.

ICES advises on the basis of the management plan that catches in 2012 should be no more than 391000 tonnes, which represents an increase in catches by 876%. ICES has warned that because this increase in catches level and the poor recruitment it is forecasted that spawning biomass will continue declining in the future and will likely fall below precautionary levels in 2013. This would require a decrease in fishing mortality during next year. It should be noted that the management plan reacts directly to fluctuation in the estimate of the stock biomass and has no TAC stability constraints to dampen interannual variability in assessment results.

Oceana considers this increase contrary to precautionary recommendations and suggests fixing for next year a TAC increase lower than 686%, which represents a TAC of 315000 tonnes. This increase is fully justifiable because it will maintain spawning biomass over precautionary reference point during 2013 although biomass will decrease by 7%. ICES has also pointed that for recovering stock in short term catches should be limited to about 100000 tonnes which represents a 164% increase in catches.

Table 2. Comparative table of blue whiting TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
Norwegian Waters of II and IV	Norwegian waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	0 (-100%)	pm	Above PA (II, IV),	(+686%)
EU and internat Waters of I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIIa,b,d,e, XII, XIV	EU and international Waters of Barents Sea, Norwegian Sea, Spitzbergen and Bear Island, Skagerrak, Kattegat, Sound, Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea, North Sea, Iceland and Faeroes Grounds, 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 - East and West, Bay of Biscay North Central, Offshore and West, North of Azores, East Greenland	10042 (-85%)	pm	Above PA (II, IIIa, IV V, VI, VII, VIIIabde, XII, XI),	69930 (+686%)
VIIIc, IX, X, EU waters of CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay South, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds, European waters of CECAF 34.1.1	1030 (-93%)	pm	Above PA (VIIIc, IX), completely unknown (X, CECAF 34.1.1)	2719 (+164%)
EU waters of II, IVa, V, VI north of 56°30'N and VII west of 12°W	European waters of Norwegian Sea, Spitzbergen and Bear Island, Northern North Sea, Iceland and Faeroes Grounds, Rockall and West of Scotland north of 56°30'N and 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 west of 12°W	Not relevant	pm	Above PA (II, IVa, V, VI, VII)d	(+686%)

North Sea (IV) Eastern Channel (VIId) and Skagerrak (IIIa, West), although the stock has risen since its historical low of 2006, it is still below the safe biological limits, confirming that overexploitation is still taking place. Fishing mortality was reduced after 2000. It is estimated that it is just above precautionary mortality and much higher than the MSY objective. It is likely that the management plan objective of reducing fishing mortality by 35% in 2010 compared to 2008 has not been achieved and the real decrease is estimated to be only around 3%, confirming that the management plan has not been implemented and enforced adequately. Recruitment has been poor since 2000.

Norwegian Waters south of 62°N, stock status is the same as the North Sea and Skagerrak stocks because areas overlap.

Rockall (VIb), although there is insufficient information to evaluate the status of the stock and fishing mortality due to lack of reliable information, current catch levels are 20 times lower than those carried out in the 1980s. This fact is proof of its depletion and sound evidence that the catch and effort implemented are not sustainable.

East Greenland (XIV), 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. Otherwise available information indicates that the cod biomass is low compared to before the 1990s. The stock management is divided into two components, the offshore component which has been severely depleted since 1990, with some slight signs of recovery since 2005, and the inshore component whose stock size and exploitation rate are unknown. This component has shown signs of improvement in the recruitment since 2000. The stock is managed since 2008 through a management plan agreed by Greenland and the EC.

West of Scotland (VIa), collapse is being perpetuated by the biomass level which remains well below safe biological limits since 1997. Management plan has not been implemented and enforced adequately and it has not been successful in reducing fishing mortality to the required levels which continues to be high. Recruitment during the last decade remains low in line with spawning stock biomass and rising sea temperature in waters has also been shown to have a negative impact on cod recruitment. Discards

reported to ICES in the area are five times greater than landings, making catch (landings + discards) six times greater than landings.

Irish Sea (VIIa), the situation of collapse is deeply worrying by biomass level which is 80% below safe biological limits. Spawning stock biomass has declined since the late 1980s and it is currently placed at historical lows. Recruitment has been below average for the past eighteen years and eight of the last nine are amongst the lowest on record due to low spawning stock biomass and poor environmental conditions. Scientists have spent 10 years, including 2011, unsuccessfully recommending the closure of this fishery. Fishing mortality is very high and clearly above any reference points (biological security, precautionary or MSY). Despite a more accurate catch, reporting total removals continue to vary around 2 to 3 times the reported landings. ICES has concluded that the management plan is not in accordance with the precautionary approach.

W English Channel (VIle), Bristol Channel (VIIf), N&S Celtic Sae (VIlg,h), Great Sole (VIIf), W Great Sole (VIIk), although predicted stock size may be overestimated, spawning biomass is clearly above the precautionary reference point and close to the MSY objective. Fishing mortality has been decreasing since the year 2000 but it is still above MSY mortality. The stocks are in good status.

In the rest of the managed **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 stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

Bearing in mind the worrying state of conservation and development of most of the Atlantic cod stocks, Oceana urges the Council to adopt strong reductions in TACs, including closure of the fisheries, to guarantee the recovery of the populations above precautionary biomass as quickly as possible.

Oceana also warns that the aforementioned plan, implemented for the stocks of Western Scotland, the Irish Sea, Kattegat, the North Sea, Skagerrak and the eastern English Channel, does not seem to be enforced adequately or it is not in accordance with the precautionary approach. Design and implementation of the current management plan should be reviewed.

Because of the absence or uncertainty in fishing parameters, especially concerning fishing mortality and landings, no analytical assessment is available for several stocks, therefore reliable fishing possibilities cannot be projected, including MSY mortality.

Kattegat (IIIa, East), according to the management plan, TAC and effort should be reduced by 25%. Due to the continuing critical stock status with biomass below Blim since 2000 and uncertain mortality, Oceana, based on precautionary considerations, considers, in line with ICES advice, that there should be no directed fisheries and by-catch should be minimised as much as possible. Oceana agrees with Commission proposal to close the fishery.

For the **North Sea** (IV) **Eastern Channel** (VIIId) and **Skagerrak** (IIIa, West), based on the EU-Norway management plan landings in 2012 should be no more than 31800t, which leads to a 1% TAC reduction. Oceana considers that as biomass is slightly below safe biological limits and fishing mortality is above the precautionary mortality, the reduction proposed is insufficient to firmly recover the stock. Oceana considers that to get a more rapid transition to biomass recovery a 25% TAC reduction should be proposed to move steadily towards a responsible exploitation. This reduction will increase biomass by 71% (although below the precautionary reference point) and mortality to 0.25 (below precautionary but over MSY framework). Oceana also wants to warn that even a zero catch in 2012 is not expected to result in spawning biomass reaching precautionary biomass in 2013.

Norwegian Waters south of 62°N, same recommendation as North Sea and Skagerrak, as areas overlap, zero catch.

Rockall (VIb) despite a lack of available knowledge to evaluate stocks trends and rate exploitation, Oceana considers that the huge reduction in landings described is enough to reduce catch levels as

much as possible, by 50% minimum, until a significant change in trends is shown. Therefore Commission proposal to reduce catches by 25% is considered insufficient.

East Greenland (XIV), in response to recommendations by ICES, based on precautionary considerations, no fishery should take place in 2012 to improve the likelihood of spawning stocks. Oceana agrees with this advice and also urges to improve the data of the fishery. Therefore Commission proposal to reduce catches by 25% is considered insufficient.

West of Scotland (VIa), the stock is considered data poor, so according to the management plan, TAC and associated effort should be reduced by 25%. The management plan also suggests that if any of the cod stocks is failing to recover properly, as in this case, TAC could be set at levels lower than provided. ICES suggests, based on the precautionary considerations, that catches and by-catches in 2012 should be reduced to the lowest possible level. According to this criteria Commission has proposed to reduce catches to zero. Oceana agrees with these proposals and requests to the Council the closure of the fishery because of critical low biomass, below Blim since 1997, and low recruitment.

Irish Sea (VIIa), ICES has warned that the management plan is not in accordance with precautionary approach so it makes no sense to continue setting TAC in this way. ICES estimates that landings in 2010 were 30% below fixed TAC, so TAC does not result restrictive. No forecast is provided because recent mortality values are highly uncertain. Commission has proposed zero catches be taken in 2012. Oceana, in line with ICES advice and Commissions proposal, urges the Council to close the fishery in 2012 to firmly recover the stock, TAC reductions are not enough to guarantee stocks recovery. By-catches in the Irish Sea should also be reduced to the lowest possible level.

W English Channel (VIIe), **Bristol Channel** (VIIIf), **N&S Celtic Sea** (VIIg,h), **Great Sole** (VIIj), **W Great Sole** (VIIk), the good stock status, allows maintaining or increasing the TAC in respect of last year. ICES advises, based on the MSY framework, that landings in 2012 should be no more than 10000t with a 0.4 mortality rate, which

leads to a 149% TAC increase. According to this advice Commission has proposed to increase catches by 141% for 2012. Oceana considers that this increase should not be applied as these stocks are managed together with others for which there is no information about their status. Oceana suggests maintaining previous TAC. This will increase stock biomass and also guarantee transition to MSY.

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, according to the Commission proposal for stocks with lack of information, proposes a 25% catches reduction.

Table 3. Comparative table of cod TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa (West)	Skagerrak	3711 (-20%)	3711 (-20%)	Below Blim (IIIa-W)	2783 (-25%)
IIIa (East)	Kattegat	190 (-50%)	0 (-100%)	Below Blim (III-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	22279 (-20%)	22279 (-20%)	Below Blim (IV), Above PA (IIa),	16709 (-25%)
Norwegian Waters S of 62°N	Norwegian Waters South of 62°N	382 (0%)	382 (0%)	Below Blim (IV, IIIa),	0 (-100%)
VIb, 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	78 (-3%)	59 (-25%)	Unknown (VIb, XIV), Below PA (Vb1) Completely Unknown (XII)	0 (-100%)
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	182 (-24%)	0 (-100%)	Below Blim (VIa), Below PA (Vb1) Unknown (Vb2)	0 (-100%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	506 (-25%)	0 (-100%)	Below Blim (VIIa),	0 (-100%)
VIIb, VIIc, VIIE, VIIf, VIIG, VIIH, VIIJ, VIIK, VIIL, IIX, 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	4023 (0%)	9679 (+141%)	Above MSY (VIIe-k) & Completely unknown (VIIbc, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	4023 (0%)
VIIId	Eastern English Channel	1564 (-20%)	1564 (-20%)	Below Blim (VIIId)	1173 (-25%)

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 generally acceptable and biomass is within precautionary limits. However, this is a recent occurrence and the situation is not stable. Threats in different areas stem from problems caused by unsustainable exploitation, discards and undeclared catches.

In the **North Sea** (IV) and **Skagerrak** (IIIa west) stocks are in a good condition. Spawning stock biomass is over MSY since 2001 and fishing mortality rates are below the MSY framework since 2008. On the other hand, recruitment over the last ten years has been poor, except in 2005 and 2009. The haddock discards in these areas are high.

In a state of concern is the stock of **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb) with a spawning stock biomass that has been decreasing since 2003 and is currently at its historical lowest, just below safe biological limits. Fishing mortality has been around the precautionary level and is currently above this limit. Since the mid 1970s recruitment has fluctuated around 1-3 strong year classes followed by several weak ones. Scientific work is ongoing to define MSY reference points.

In **the West of Scotland** (VIa) although the stock is managed under a management plan it presents a worrying state with biomass below safe biological limits. Biomass has been decreasing since 2003 and seems established since 2007, with its lowest levels in 2010 in over 35 years, therefore reductions established in previous years have not

been sufficient enough to recover the stock. Fishing mortality has been well above the precautionary level for most years since 1987, but since 2005 it has dropped and since 2008 it has been below the MSY framework. 2010 discards in this area represented around 50% of catches, influenced also by lobster fisheries.

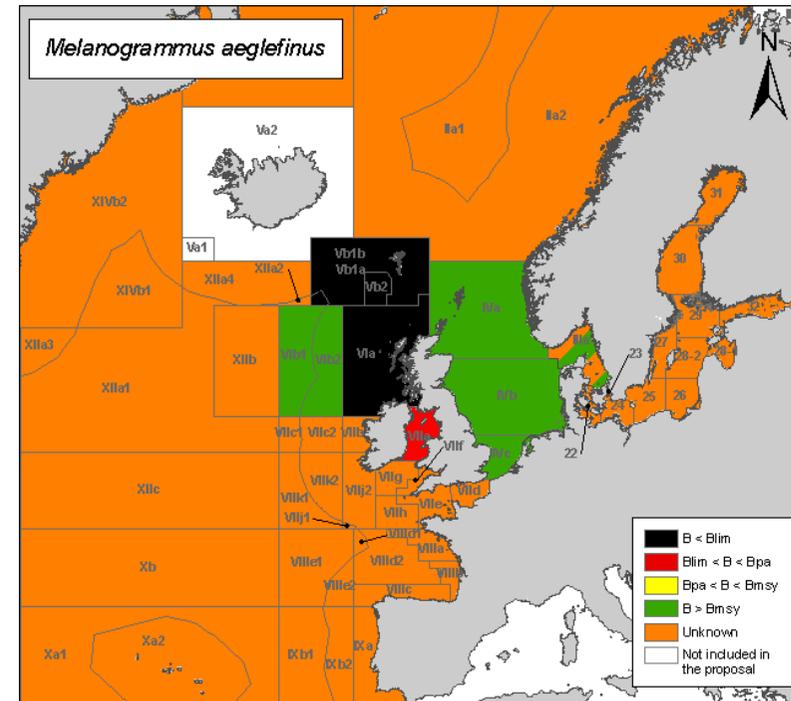


Figure 4. Haddock stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass⁸.

⁸ Stock status based on trends for VIIa

There is a similar situation with the **Rockall** stock (VIb), for which spawning stock biomass is above the MSY objective, and fishing mortality has declined over time and is now below the MSY framework. Nevertheless, the marked downward trend for biomass since 2008 and the extremely weak recruitment since 2007 is worrying. Discard ratio in the recent period 1999-2009 is around 34%. An improved time series of landings and discard is needed.

The stocks of the **West of Ireland** (VIIb), **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), **E&W English Channel** (VIId-e), **Bristol Channel** (VIIf), **Celtic Sea N&S** (VIIg-h), **Southwest of Ireland E&W** (VIIj-k), have shown established low biomass values during the last years except for 2011 when it increased due to a 2009 exceptionally good recruitment year class. Exploitation status is unknown and assessment is indicative of trends only. Recruitment is highly variable. Low spawning stock biomass can be explained by the high levels of discards which, over the last 10 years are estimated at around 70% of all catches (45% by weight), for 2010 total discards were 55% of catches. This situation seriously compromises stock status, as future catches and biomass will be highly dependent on the strength of incoming year classes. Fishing mortality has been stable over recent years.

Since 2008 the breeding stock biomass in the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) has suffered a worrying and significant drop, with levels 46% lower than the three preceding years, although during last year this tendency was corrected with an increase in biomass, current level of biomass is below any possible reference points. Fishing mortality remains stable. Discards in this area are high and represent a serious problem for this stock. Discard rates by number for 2010 were estimated at 92-100% for one year old recruits; 22-96% for two year olds; 3-68% for three year olds. Recruitment is highly variable. These assessments are indicative of trends only as recent levels of catch are uncertain.

In the rest of the managed stocks **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) and **CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)**, there is no scientific

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

Oceana proposal

Due to the little control over real catches and the high levels of discards of haddock, the regulation of its exploitation solely through TAC variations is not suitable. It is necessary to urgently introduce management measures linked to improving fishing selectivity. These measures must guarantee the reduction of the current levels of discards with the aim of maximising additional recruits to the breeding stock biomass and future catches.

For the **North Sea** (IV) and **Skagerrak** (IIIa west) the management of stocks is dependent on the EU-Norway management plan, which according to the plan landings in 2012 should be no more than 41575t, which represents a 15% increase in catches and a mortality increase of 23%. ICES has provisionally assessed the plan and concludes that it can be accepted as precautionary. This TAC meets the MSY framework, therefore Oceana believes that it is suitable.

Oceana also wants to note that the objective of the management plan is to maintain a minimum level of biomass greater than 10000t while MSY biomass is greater than 140000t, so according to this plan, in future years TAC might not be appropriate. Work to reduce discard levels must be encouraged.

For **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb) ICES advises, based on the precautionary approach, that there should be no directed fishery on haddock in 2012. It is the fourth consecutive year that scientists recommend closing the fishery. Commission contrary to ICES advice has proposed to increase catches by 25%. Oceana agrees with ICES advice to ensure the recovery of the stock over safe biological limits as quickly as possible. Oceana also want to add that even a zero fishing mortality in 2012 will not result in getting the stock above precautionary biomass in 2013. Measures to minimize by-catches of haddock in other fisheries should be put in place. Oceana request a recovery plan for this stock.

For the **West of Scotland** (VIa) according to the agreed plan, TAC in 2012 would result in 2506t, which represents a 25% increase in landings and a 77% decrease in mortality. ICES has evaluated the plan in accordance with precautionary principle. Although the stock is just below the safe biological limit. Paradoxically, the 25% increase in TAC fulfils the MSY objective and will place biomass over the MSY framework. Otherwise ICES advises that based on the MSY framework, landings should be no more than 10200t. Commission has proposed to increase catches by 25% according with the management plan. Oceana proposes to follow the managed plan agreed but only if Faeroes Grounds (Vb) is closed to fishing as these two Divisions are managed together under the same TAC. Measures to reduce discarding and to improve the fishing pattern should be actively encouraged.

For the **Rockall** stock (VIb), ICES advises that based on the MSY framework landings in 2012 should be no more than 3300t, which represents an 11% TAC reduction. ICES has stated that if a higher TAC is adopted there is a high probability that biomass will decrease below precautionary levels in 2013. In the short term, if the incoming recruitment continues as low as it has been during the past years, there is also a high probability that biomass will decrease below precautionary levels. Oceana supports the 11% reduction in TAC, which implies a 5% reduction of biomass in 2013, and will keep biomass over MSY. Further management measures are needed to reduce discarding of small haddock in order to maximize their contribution to future yield.

For the **West of Ireland** (VIIb), **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), **E&W English Channel** (VIId-e), **Bristol Channel** (VIIf), **Celtic Sea N&S** (VIIg-h), **Southwest of Ireland E&W** (VIIj-k), previously agreed TACs have not been restrictive compared to official landings. Oceana, despite last years increase in biomass, based on the unknown exploitation status, asks to the Council to follow Commission proposal to reduce catches by 25%. This reduction fulfills the no increase catches ICES advice and also takes the opportunity to stabilize the good increase of biomass. The high rates of discards mentioned above puts the stock at risk, so technical measures are needed to mitigate the increased discarding of the recruiting year class.

The management of the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) stock during recent years has been based on its abundance, without considering the fall in recruitment or in the abundance itself. ICES, based on precautionary considerations, advises that the TAC should be lower than last year to increase biomass level. Oceana agrees with Commission reduction proposal by 25% and asks to the Council to follow this recommendation. Technical measures should also be introduced to reduce discards.

For the rest of the managed stocks **Kattegat** (IIIa East), **Sound** (IIIb), **Belt Sea** (IIIc), **Baltic Sea** (24-32), **Bay of Biscay** (VIII), **Portuguese Waters** (IX), **Azores Grounds** (X) **int waters of North Azores** (XII) and **East Greenland** (XIV) and **CECAF 34.1.1**, Oceana according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

Table 4. Comparative table of haddock TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa, EU waters of IIIb,c,d (22-32)	Skagerrak, Kattegat, Sound, Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea	2007 (+9%)	1743 (-5%)	Above MSY (IIIa W), Completely unknown (IIIaE,b,c,d)	1505 (-25%)
IV, EU Waters of IIa	North Sea, EU Waters of Norwegian Sea	26432 (-2%)	25686 (-5%)	Above MSY (IV, IIa)	27754 (+5%)
Norwegian waters of South 62°	Norwegian waters South of 62°	707 (0%)	707 (0%)	Above MSY (IV, IIIa west)	813 (+15%)
EU and Internat Waters of VIb, XII and XIV	EU and Internat Waters of Rockall, North of Azores, East Greenland	3748 (-25%)	3748 (-25%)	Above MSY (VIb), Completely unknown (XII, XIV)	2811 (-25%)
Vb, VIa	Faeroes Grounds, West of Scotland	2005 (-25%)	2506 (+25%)	Below Blim (Vb, VIa)	0 (-100%) or 2506* (+25%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	1317 (-8%)	988 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIa)	988 (-25%)
VIIb-k, VIII, IX, X, CEEAF 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, CEEAF 34.1.1	13316 (+15%)	9987 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIb-k) Completely unknown (VIII, IX, X)	9987 (-25%)

* 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 fish during its adult stages and crustaceans during its juvenile stages.

State of the stocks

The management of hake in European Waters distinguishes between two big stocks: the northern and the southern stocks. After years of overexploitation the state of both stocks is improving. These populations are managed through recovery managed plans^{9,10}.

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)**, news is still positive because since 1998 biomass has tended to increase, particularly in the last three years. For 2011 spawning stock biomass is estimated to be record high above any potential reference point.

Equally positive is the tendency for fishing mortality, which has decreased in recent years but it is still above MSY mortality. This new situation for the stock, which had been subjected to high levels of exploitation from late 1980s to mid 2000s, has meant that recently the breeding stock biomass has finally risen to within established precautionary limits. In any event there is still a great amount of

uncertainty concerning the total number of catches due to the undeclared discards, especially for juveniles that can be substantial in some areas and fleets.

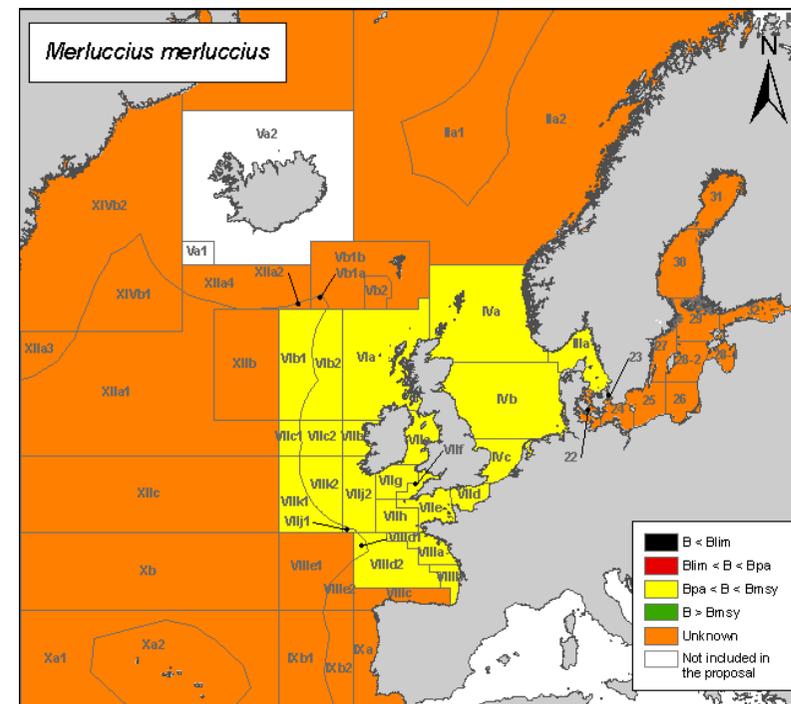


Figure 5. Hake stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹¹.

The state of the southern stock, **South of Bay of Biscay (VIIIc)** and **East of Portuguese waters (IXa)**, has been improving since 1998, when spawning biomass was placed at historical lows. Fishing

⁹ Council Regulation (EC) No 811/2004 of 21 April 2004 establishing measures for the recovery of the Northern hake stock.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Stock status based on trends for IIIa, IV, VI, VII, VIIIab

mortality has been high and stable over the last two decades, about three times greater than MSY mortality, except during last year when it was estimated to decrease by 37% from 2009. Recruitment has been high since 2005 which has helped the recovery of the stocks. In the past, scientific recommendations and/or annual reductions according to the management plan have been ignored. This means that a big opportunity for significant recovery of stock has been lost.

Catch levels and landings have exceeded the approved TACs during the past years due to a lack of control and commitment from the fleets. In addition, a very high rate of discards has been measured, representing, since the management plan was put into place, an average of 20.4% of the weight of unloaded catches. There is no correspondence between minimum landing size and the trawl mesh size, resulting in high discard rates.

In 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)**, there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

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

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)**, recovery plan implies a 15% TAC maximum reduction. Commission has proposed an 11% TAC reduction. Otherwise according to the transition to the MSY framework a 6% reduction in TAC should be proposed. Oceana, in line with transition to MSY, proposes a 6% decrease in TAC.

TAC corresponding to the recovery plan, a 15% constraint, should not be considered because as ICES has stated the plan uses target values based on precautionary reference points that are no longer appropriate. Spawning biomass and the long-term yield can be substantially improved by reducing mortality of small fish through technical measures.

For the Southern stock, **South of Bay of Biscay (VIIIc)** and **East of Portuguese waters (IXa)**, the current management plan, not evaluated by ICES, implies a 10% reduction in fishing mortality and a 15% constraint on TAC between years. Commission has proposed a 15% increase in catches. Oceana agrees with this proposal as effort reduction and increase catches meets the transition level proposed by ICES to achieve the MSY objective and takes into account the precautionary approach. It is worth remembering that although ICES has not carried out an in-depth assessment of it, it has stated that the target of the plan is no longer valid due to a new perception of the historical stock dynamics.

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 of lack of fishing parameters. Oceana according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

Table 5. Comparative table of hake TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa, EU waters of IIIb and IIIc, IIId (22-32)	Skagerrak, Kattegat, EU waters of Sound, Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea	1661 (0%)	1482 (-11%)	Possibly above MSY (IIIa) & Completely unknown (IIIbcd)	1412 (-15%)
EU waters of IIa and IV	European Waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	1935 (0%)	1726 (-11%)	Completely unknown (IIa) & Possibly above MSY (IV)	1645 (-15%)
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 .	30900 (0%)	27575 (-11%)	Possibly above MSY (VI, VII) & Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	26265 (-15%)
VIIIa, VIIIb, VIId, VIIIe	Bay of Biscay (North), Bay of Biscay (Central), Bay of Biscay (Offshore), West of Bay of Biscay	20609 (0%)	18391 (-11%)	Possibly above MSY (VIIIabd) & Completely unknown (VIIIe)	17518 (-15%)
VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay (South), Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds	10695 (+15%)	12299 (+15%)	Unknown (VIIIc, IXa), Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	9091 (-15%)

Herring (*Clupea harengus*)

Species description

Herring is found throughout the North Atlantic. In the North-East Atlantic, it 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 the fisheries exploiting the stock of herring¹², in waters of Faeroes Grounds (Vb), Rockall (VIb), and part of West of Scotland (VIa), which ICES has assessed as being in compliance with the precautionary approach. The plan has not yet begun to show positive results. Herring, mainly juvenile, is usually caught as by-catch of industrial fisheries

The stocks in **Skagerrak** (IIIa West), **Kattegat** (IIIa East), **North Sea** (IV) and the **Eastern English Channel** (VIIId) look in good condition and could be classified as being at full reproductive capacity. Fishing mortality is below MSY since 2008 and so is harvest sustainably. The spawning stock biomass has been increasing since 1977, after several years of collapse with lowest time-series biomass, and is currently just over precautionary limit. Although recruitment in 2008 and 2009 are estimated to be above the long-term geometric mean ICES still 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.

In the **West of Ireland** (VIIb), **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc) and **West of Scotland-South** (VIa South), stocks, although no reliable assessment can be presented because of the lack of sufficiently long survey data, it seems that, on the basis of biological trends, stocks are in a situation of complete overexploitation and collapse. Since the early 1990s the levels of biomass and recruitment have remained minimal, without any evidence of a change in trend or recovery.

¹² Council Regulation (EC) 1300/2008

Recent mortality is unknown but is likely to be increasing and obviously above MSY.

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 also been fluctuating around MSY in recent years. There has been a reduction of the productivity of the stock since the late 1980s; recruitment has been especially low since 2003.

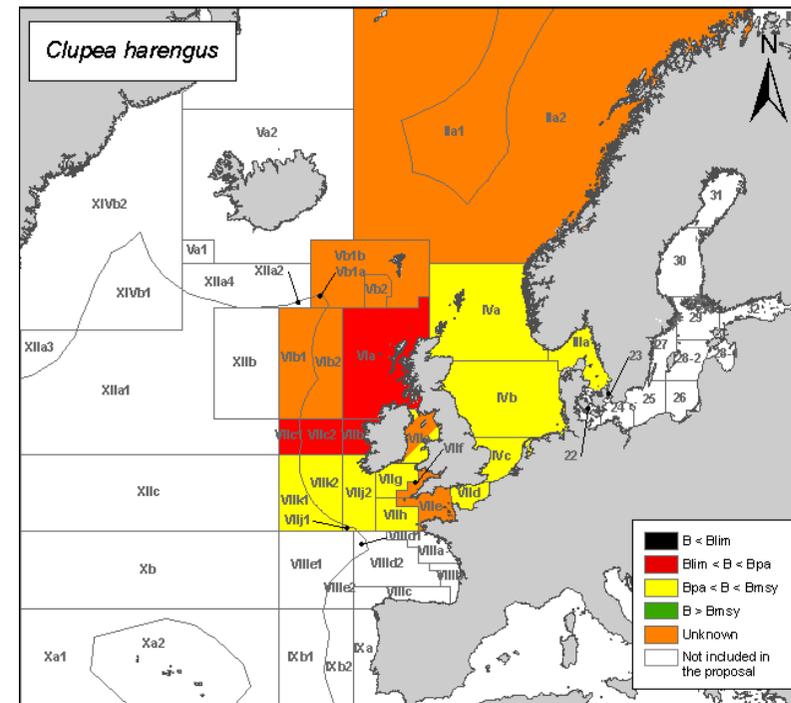


Figure 6. Herring stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹³.

¹³ Stock status based on trends for VIa, VIIbc.

In the **Irish Sea-North** (VIIa North), because of lack of information the stock assessment is indicative of trends only. Spawning stock biomass seems to be increasing during recent years and it is currently at its highest abundance in the 18 years time-series. Fishing activity (landings) has not varied considerably. Recruitment in recent years has been stable and close to average in the time series.

All stocks from **Irish Sea-South** (VIIa South), **Celtic Sea** (VIIg,h) and **Southwest of Ireland** (VIIj,k), present a good status. Although MSY biomass is still unknown spawning stock biomass has increased during the past years and is currently at the highest level since the late 1960s. Fishing mortality is well below MSY mortality at a historical low as well.

In the rest of the managed stocks **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 about its stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

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 agreed EU-Norway management plan, that catches in 2012 should be no more than 248000t, which implies a 15% increase in TAC. The management plan is considered to be consistent with the precautionary approach and the MSY by ICES. So Oceana agrees with the TAC proposed in the management plan which would let biomass increase by 17% and remain above the MSY framework.

The sub-TAC for **Southern North Sea** (IVc) and **Eastern English Channel** (VIIId) was established for the conservation of the spawning aggregation of Downs herring. It seems that the Downs herring has returned to its pre-collapsed state and is now again a major component of the stock. It is probable that exploitation of Downs herring has been relatively high. In the absence of data to the contrary ICES proposes that a share of 11% of the total North Sea

TAC (average share 1989–2002) would still be appropriate for Downs herring. According to estimates by Oceana this advice implies an increase of 40% 37070t (Oceana asks for a precautionary 15% increase in catches where there is no reliable information).

For the West of **West of Ireland** (VIIb), **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc) and **Scotland-South** (VIa South), divisions, landings in 2012 should be reduced on the basis of precautionary considerations. Scientists have recommended the closure of the fishery for the past five consecutive years. For 2012 ICES advises that landing should be reduced, and according to this advice Commission has proposed a 25% reduction in catches. Oceana, due to the critical stock situation, considers that a stronger reduction in catches is needed to achieve the recovery objective, so it proposes a 50% TAC reduction.

For the stock of the **West of Scotland-North** (VIa North), on the basis of the agreed management plan, the TAC for 2012 should be no more than 22900t, which represents a 2% increase in catches. ICES has evaluated the plan and concludes that it is in accordance with the precautionary approach. Commission has not proposed a TAC for next year yet. Oceana considers that due to the low capacity of the management plan to recover the stock, just above safe biological limits, a 20% reduction in catches, which will lead to a 7% biomass increase, should be adopted to move the stock away from safe biological limits.

For the **Irish Sea North** (VIIa North), reference points for its management are not defined and stock status is not well known. ICES advises on the basis of precautionary considerations that catches should not be allowed to increase. Oceana on the basis of precautionary considerations asks for a 15% reduction in TAC.

For the **Irish Sea South** (VIIa South), **Celtic Sea** (VIIg,h) and **Southwest of Ireland** (VIIj,k), stocks, the managed plan agreed by the Irish industry results in a TAC of 17200, which represents a 30% increase in catches. Although ICES has not evaluated the plan other scientific institutions like the Irish Marine Institute concluded it to be precautionary. Otherwise ICES advises, on the basis of the MSY, that landing in 2012 should be no more than 26900t, which represents a 60% increase in catches. Both proposed TACs are

compatible with the MSY framework. Oceana is therefore in agreement with their adoption and has no objections to the Commission proposal.

For the rest of managed **EU waters of Norwegian Sea** (IIa), **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Rockall** (VIb), **Western English Channel**

(VIIe) and **Bristol Channel** (VIIIf) Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

Table 6. Comparative table of herring TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa	Skagerrak and Kattegat	25504 (-12%)	27504 (-5%)	Above PA (IIIa)	29329 (+15%)
EU and Norwegian Waters of IV north of 53°30'	EU and Norwegian Waters of North Sea (north of 53°30')	115464 (+23%)	115464 (+23%)	Above PA (IV)	132783 (+15%)
Norwegian Waters south of 62°	Norwegian Waters south of 62°	846 (0%)	846 (0%)	Above PA (IV)	967 (+15%)
by-catches IIIa	by-catches in Skagerrak and Kattegat	6659 (-11%)	6659 (-11%)	Above PA (IIIa)	6659 (0%)
by-catches in IV, VIIId and EU waters of IIa (by-catches)	by-catches in North Sea, Eastern English Channel and EU waters of Norwegian waters	16539 (+22%)	16539 (+22%)	Above PA (IV, VIIId), Completely unknown (IIa)	16539 (0%)
IVc, VIIId	Southern North Sea and Eastern English Channel	26536 (+16%)	26536 (+16%)	Above PA (IVc, VIIId)	30516 (+15%)
EU and int Waters of Vb, VIb, and VIa (N)	EU and int waters of Faeroes Grounds, Rockall and north of west of Scotland (N)	21755 (-8%)	21755 (-8%)	Completely unknown (VIa) Unknown (Vb, VIb)	17404 (-20%)
VIa (S), VIIb, VIIc	West of Scotland (S), West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern English Channel	4471 (-40%)	3353 (-25%)	Possibly below PA (VIaS, VIIbc) Above PA(VIIId)	2235 (-50%)
VI Clyde			p.m.		(-20%)
VIIa (South & (North)	Irish Sea	5280 (+10%)	3960 (-25%)	Possibly above PA (VIIaS), unknown (VIIaN)	4488 (-15%)
VIIe and VIIIf	Western English Channel and Bristol Channel	980 (-5%)	833 (-15%)	Completely unknown (VIIe,f)	735 (-25%)
VIIg, VIIh, VIIj, VIIk	Celtic Sea North and South, Southwest of Ireland East and West	13200 (+30%)	21100 (+60%)	Above PA (VIIg-h)	21100 (+60%)

It should be noted that the management plan has not been followed and there was no international agreement on TACs for 2010 and 2011, when several countries unilaterally decided to increase their catch quotas even more than by 200%. This attitude endangers the coordinated exploitation of the resource, with unpredictable biological consequences, as well as risking other fishing agreements. Oceana urges these governments to seek a consensus which will enable the sustainable exploitation of common fishery resources

According to the management plan catches in 2012 should be no more than 586000-639000 tonnes, which implies a catch reduction between 31% and 37%. These figures are consistent with the precautionary and MSY approach, so Oceana has no objections to it being applied, provided that it is ensured that catches do not exceed the agreed level and the fishing mortality is reduced to 0.22.

It should be added that ICES advises that the existing measures to protect the North Sea spawning component should remain in place, these measures are:

- There should be no fishing for mackerel in Divisions IIIa and IVb,c at any time of the year;
- There should be no fishing for mackerel in Division IVa during the period 15 February–31 July, and
- The 30 cm minimum landing size at present in force in Subarea IV should be maintained.

Controlling excess catches continues to be a problem for this species. Catch levels consistently and continuously exceed agreed TACs, established by the management plan, for this species in all areas of exploitation. This lack of control leads to mortality rates which exceed the real fishing opportunities, are not in accordance with the objectives which have been set, and seriously threatens the evolution of the stock.

Table 7. Comparative table of mackerel TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa, IV, EU waters of IIa, IIIb, IIIc, 22-32	Skagerrak and Kattegat, North Sea, European waters of Norwegian Sea, Sound and Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea	20002 (-11%)	pm	Above MSY (IV), Unknown (IIa, IIIabc)	13802 (-31%)
VI, VII, VIIIa,b,d,e, EU and internat waters Vb, internat waters IIa, XII, XIV	Rockall and 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 - East and West, Bay of Biscay North, Central, Offshore, West, European and international waters of Faeroes Grounds, international waters of Norwegian Sea, North of Azores and East Greenland	258684 (-12%)	pm	Above MSY (VI, VII,) Unknown (VIIIabde, Vb, IIa, XII, XIV)	178492 (-31%)
VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay South, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds and European waters of CECAF 34.1.1	29572 (-13%)	pm	Above MSY (VIIIc, IXa) Unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	20405 (-31%)
Norwegian waters of IIa and IVa	Norwegian waters of Norwegian Sea and Northern North Sea	11240	pm	Above MSY (IVa) Unknown (IIa)	7756 (-31%)

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 this species is widely distributed, after years of management the stocks status is still uncertain with signs of overexploitation. Of the two jointly managed species, *L. whiffiagonis*, which contributes 20% of the total catches, is in the worst state of conservation.

In the **Northern North Sea** (IVa) and **West of Scotland** (VIa) there are no analytical assessments to evaluate the stock status and rate of exploitation as no sound information is available. No reference points are defined for these stocks. Scientific surveys show a slightly increasing trend in biomass between 2005 and 2010. Overall, mortality seems to have declined and established at reduced levels in recent years.

In the **Rockall** (VIb) there is no analytical assessment for this stock and no reference points have been defined for this stock. Survey indices for Rockall show an increase in biomass over the time series from 2005 to 2010. There has been a substantial reduction in effort during recent years and landings are below TAC.

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), the state of the stock and exploitation rate is uncertain. The management

implemented for this stock in previous years has not followed the recommendations for catches made by scientists. However, although it is not possible to claim that there have been any significant changes in the abundance within the analysed time series, biological trends do not show signs of recovery.

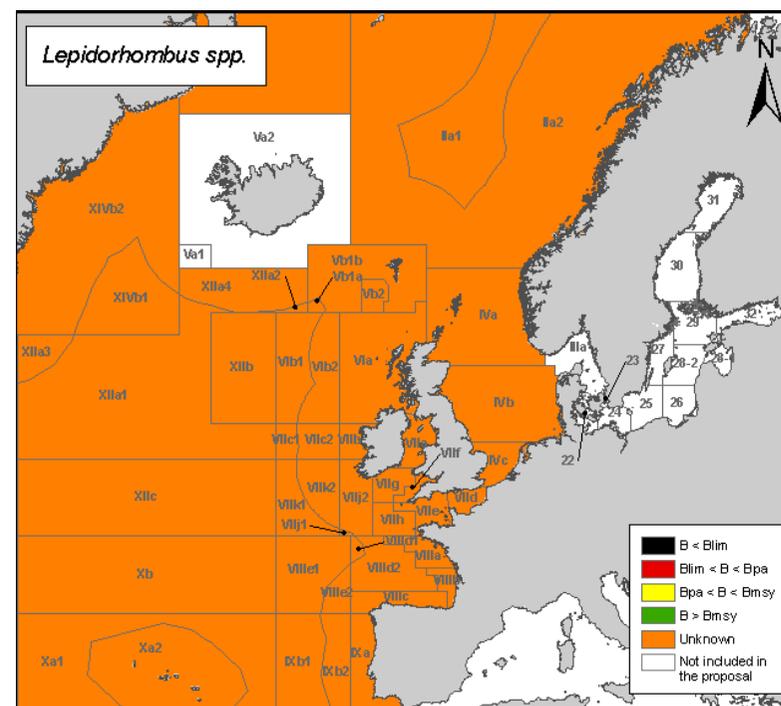


Figure 8. Megrims stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

In the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **East of Portuguese waters** (IXa), although stocks biomass has stopped decreasing and in recent years there has been a slight upward trend it is still very low. The fishing mortality is still clearly above the MSY framework for *L. boscii*, while for *L. whiffiagonis* it is below the MSY

framework since 2009. The TACs, which for many years have been greater than those recommended by scientists, are putting the stock under sustained excessive pressure from fishing. The range of discards for both species is between 40-60% and 10-45% respectively although this is considered an underestimate.

In 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** there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

The poor state of 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.

Since the two megrim species are not separated in the landings the management of the stocks must be set for the two species in accordance with the species in a poor state of preservation. In the same case for different stocks managed together under the same TAC, the constraint in catch or effort will be defined on the basis of the stock in worst status.

For the **Northern North Sea** (IVa) and **West of Scotland** (VIa) ICES advises, on the basis of precautionary considerations, that there should be no increase in catch. Oceana considers that although there is no sound information about the fishery according to the good biomass and mortality tendency 2012 TAC should be equal or lower than 2011 TAC, so Oceana recommends keeping current exploitation levels.

For the **Rockall** (VIb) stock ICES advises, on the basis of precautionary considerations, that there should be no increase in catch because exploitation rate is unknown. Oceana considers that although there is lack of information, according to the good tendency in trends TAC in 2012 should be equal or lower than 2011 TAC, so Oceana recommends keeping current exploitation levels.

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 MSY approach, that catch and effort should be reduced. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, agrees with the Commission proposal and also asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

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 860t, which represents a 22% TAC reduction, while on basis of MSY transition landings should be no more than 1250t, which represents a 14% TAC increase. Oceana agrees with these advices, but as these stocks are managed together with unknown stock status (IXb, X and CECAF 34.1.1) Oceana recommends keeping current exploitation level fulfil the MSY framework.

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** Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

Table 8. Comparative table of megrim TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
EU Waters of IIa and IV	EU Waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	1845 (+5%)	1568 (-15%)	Completely Unknown (IIa, IVbc), Unknown (IVa)	1384 (-25%)
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	3387 (+10%)	2879 (-15%)	Unknown (VI), Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	2540 (-25%)
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	18300 (0%)	13725 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIb-k), Completely unknown (VIIa)	13725 (-25%)
VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc, VIIE	North, Central, Offshore and West Bay of Biscay	1806 (-15%)	1355 (-25%)	Unknown (VIlabd), Completely unknown (VIIE)	1354 (-25%)
VIIIc IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	South Bay of Biscay, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds, CECAF 34.1.1	1094 (-15%)	1182 (+8%)	Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1), unknown (VIIIc, IXa)	1094 (0%)

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

The general situation of the stocks is not unfavourable, with several areas exploited in accordance with the precautionary approach. However, problems continue to deteriorate for stocks which are in a worse condition, such as in the north and west areas of the Iberian Peninsula. ICES provides specific information on the state of the species in functional units.

In **Skagerrak** and **Kattegat** (IIIa), there are two functional units, Skagerrak (FU3) and Kattegat (FU4), which are assessed together. Although there is no sound information about the stocks, biological indicators suggest that during recent years the stock has been exploited in a sustainable manner. The plentiful capture of small individuals indicates high levels of recruitment. It must be stressed that discards (in weight) in 2009 and 2010 represented 56% and 39% respectively of total catches. *Nephrops* fisheries in Skagerrak and Kattegat are heavily influenced by the management of cod.

In the **North Sea** (IV) stocks are assessed as nine separate functional units which for several no reference points have been defined. In an overall view catches grew constantly until 2006, doubling in a period of ten years. Since that year, catches have slowly started to decline. 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 in the way it is currently managed. In this way, half of the units show a “good” condition: Farn Deepes (FU6) and Fladen Ground (FU7), Moray Firth (FU9) and Firth of Forth (FU8), although this last one has a high fishing mortality

above the MSY framework. For the rest of functional units, Botney Gut-Silver Pit (FU5), Noup (FU10), Norwegian Deepes (FU32), Off Horn’s Reef (FU33) and the group of other rectangles, status is overexploited or unknown.

In the **West of Scotland** (VIa) there are three functional units: North Minch (FU11), South Minch (FU12) and Firth of Clyde+Sound of Jura (FU13) that seem to be in good state, however, the latter is lacking in assessment. For the rest of the Division there is no information available on the trend of the stock or exploitation status.

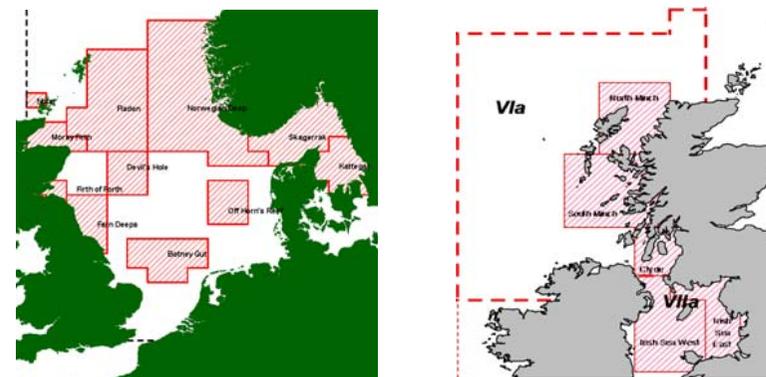


Figure 9. *Nephrops* functional units in the North Sea and Skagerrak-Kattegat (left) and in the West of Scotland (right). Source: ICES.

In Subdivisions of **Subarea VII** stocks are assessed as six separate functional units belonging to different regions: FU14 and FU15 (Irish Sea-VIIa), FU16 (West of Ireland-VIIb, Porcupine Bank-VIIc, South West of Ireland-VIIjk), FU17 (West of Ireland-VIIb), FU19 (Irish Sea VIIa, Celtic Sea North VIIg, South West of Ireland East VIIj) FU20, 21,22 (Celtic Sea- VIIgh). The state of the stocks varies among functional units. For FU15, 14 and 17 the stock status seems good although for the last two MSY biomass reference point is not defined yet. For the rest of the functional units FU16, 19, 20, 21 and 22 stock status and rate of exploitation are unknown. Most of the landings are

catch in Irish Sea West (FU15) and Celtic Sea (FU20-22). There are also small catches from areas outside these functional units.

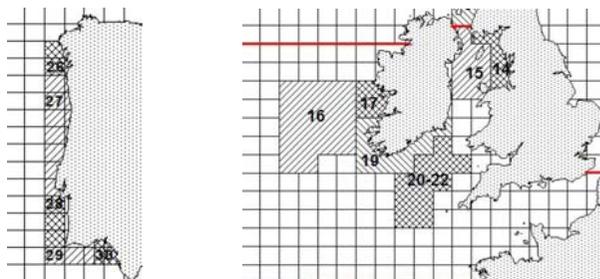


Figure 10. Nephrops functional units in the East of Portuguese Waters and Subarea VII. Source: ICES.

In the **North** and **Central Bay of Biscay** (VIIIab), there are two functional units (FU23) and (FU24) that are assessed together. The condition of the stock is completely unknown.

In the **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) the situation is not much better. Stocks are assessed as two separate functional units: North Galicia (FU25) and Cantabrian Sea (FU31) both in a poor situation. Annual TAC reductions of 10%, according to the management plan, have been ineffective in reducing fishing mortality, as was expected. Also established TACs are not restrictive as landings are well below the agreed TAC, therefore in 2010 only 34% of the agreed TAC was landed in all VIIIc area. This situation leads the stock to an overexploitation situation. Current management of Nephrops does not provide adequate guarantees to ensure that effort is sufficiently limited to avoid depletion in the functional units.

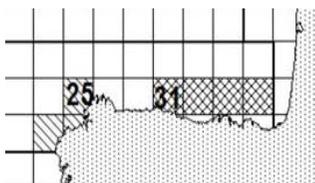


Figure 11. Nephrops functional units in the Subarea VIIIc. Source: ICES.

In the **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) stocks are assessed as five separate functional units. After many years of management the stocks continue to decrease and be overexploited with extremely low biomass levels. The established TACs exceed fishing possibilities and, as such, are useless and the fleet catches as much as it can, depleting the stock. Under these conditions, the state of the stock is so poor that in 2010 less than 250 tonnes were landed in IXa when agreed TAC was 337t¹⁴.

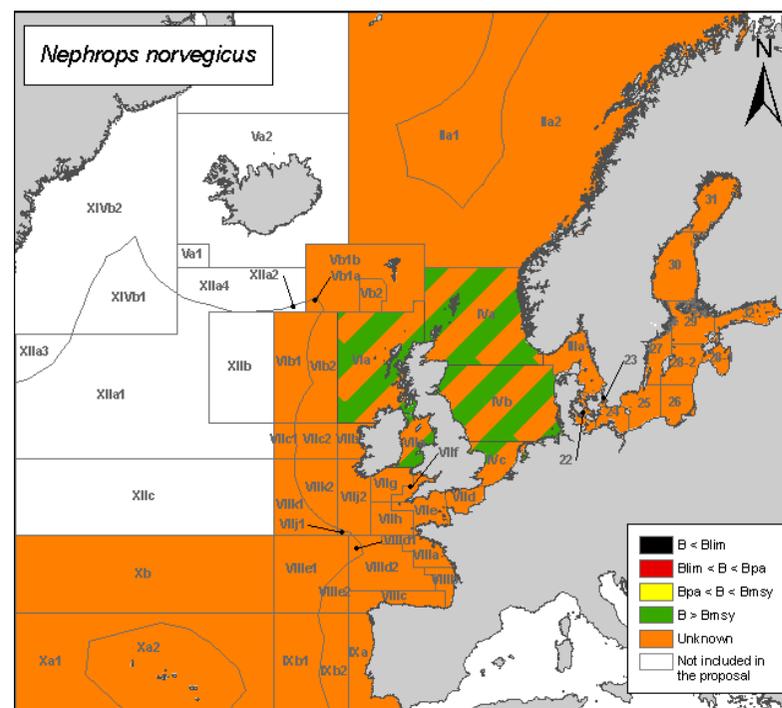


Figure 12. Norway lobster stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

¹⁴ Together with X and EU Waters of CECAF 34.1.1

In the rest of 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** there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

Nephrops is limited to a muddy habitat. 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.

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 traditional ICES areas, are defined on the basis of the actual differentiated distribution of the species.

Management at the functional unit level should provide the controls to 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.

In the current situation 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 and this has historically resulted in inappropriate harvest rates from some units. Therefore, Oceana also considers that management should be at functional unit rather than the ICES division level

The volume of discards in this fishery is significant. Furthermore, the use of this fishing gear causes a significant amount of by-catch and discards of other species, such as Atlantic cod, haddock and whiting. Scientists have repeatedly signalled the need to introduce improvements in the selectivity of fishing gear. Scientific studies

recommend an increase in mesh size and the use of square mesh panels as an appropriate method for reducing these catches. The survival rate of discards in Norway lobster fisheries is estimated at around 30%.

For **Skagerrak** and **Kattegat** (IIIa), ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach that landings in 2012 should be no more than 6000t, which implies a 15% TAC increase. Due to the lack of information about current biomass level and biomass reference point, Oceana proposes to keep TAC of previous years and no increased catches, on the basis of precautionary considerations all the more since this stock is managed together with others for which there is no information about their status.

For the **North Sea** (IV) nephrops, except in the case of Fladen Ground (FU7) for which ICES recommends a 6%TAC increase, for the rest of functional units reductions in TACs are necessary to move towards the sustainable exploitation of the stock. So Oceana based on ICES assessments requests 25% TAC reduction for Botney Gut-Silver Pit (FU5), Farn Deep (FU6), Noup (FU10), Norwegian Deep (FU32), Off Horn's Reef (FU33), and 15% TAC reduction for Moray Firth (FU9) and Firth of Forth (FU8). Commission has proposed an 11% TAC reduction in catches for this Division. If management cannot be adapted by functional units Oceana recommends a general 25% reduction for the North Sea.

For the **West of Scotland**, (VIa) functional units can admit slight increases of 3% 37%, 13% for FU11, FU12 and FU13 respectively, on the basis of the MSY framework. If management cannot be adapted by functional units Oceana recommends keeping the same catch level as last year in the West of Scotland.

For Subdivisions of **Subarea VII** landings in the time-series were always well below agreed TACs, so TAC has never been restrictive and there is no justification to increase it. ICES advises slight increases for FU14, FU15 and FU17, no increase catches in FU16 (same advice for FU18 and other areas outside functional units for which there is no information available on the trend in stock nor exploitation status) and for last reductions in catches for FU19, FU20, FU21 (for FU22 trend ICES advise is uncertain). Commission has

proposed a 19% TAC reduction. As all functional units are still managed together Oceana request, on the basis of precautionary considerations, a 25% TAC reduction for subarea VII.

For the **North** and **Central Bay of Biscay** (VIIIab), ICES advises the adoption of the transition to the MSY framework that catches should decrease. Commission has proposed a 15% TAC reduction. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and due to the lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

For the **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) after years of implementing the management plan, the stocks instead of recovering are still declining. Perpetuated situation of overexploitation explains that this year is the 11th that scientists advice zero catches for this fishery. Commission has proposed a 10% TAC reduction. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, urges the Council to approve a 0 TAC to this fishery.

For the **East Portuguese Waters** (IXa) situation of the stocks have led scientists to recommend the closure of the West Galicia (FU26) and North Portugal (FU27) functional units, and significant reductions in the rest of the units. Commission has proposed to reduce TAC by 10% for 2012. Oceana agrees to the closure of the West Galicia (FU26) and North Portugal (FU27) and recommends a 25% TAC reduction for Southwest Portugal (FU28), South Portugal (FU29) and the Gulf of Cadiz (FU30) on the basis of precautionary considerations. If management cannot be adapted by functional units Oceana recommends a zero catch for 2012.

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** (VIIId,e), **West Portuguese Waters** (IXb), **Azores Grounds** (X), and **CECAF 34.1.1** Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

Table 9. Comparative table of Norway lobster TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa EU waters of IIIb-c and Sub 22-32	Skagerrak (West) and Kattegat (East), EU waters of Belt Sea – Sound, and Baltic waters	5170 (0%)	4700 (-9%)	Unknown (IIIa) Completely unknown (IIIbc, 22-32)	3878 (0%)
EU Waters of IIa and IV	EU Waters of North Sea and Norwegian Waters	23454 (-5%)	20849 (-11%)	Above MYS (FU of IV) Unknown (IIa, FU of IV)	17590 (-25%)
Norwegian waters of IV	Norwegian waters of North Sea	1200 (0%)	1200 (0%)	Above MYS and Unknown	900 (-25%)
VI, EU and internat waters Vb	Rockall, West of Scotland, EU and internat waters of Faeroes Grounds	13681 (-15%)	13950 (+2%)	Above MYS and Unknown (VIa) Completely unknown (Vb, VIb)	11628 (-15%)
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	21759 (-3%)	17551 (-19%)	Unknown (VII)	16319 (-25%)
VIIIa,b,d,e	Bay of Biscay North Central Offshore West	3899 (0%)	3314 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIIab) Completely unknown (VIIIde)	2924 (-25%)
VIIIc	Bay of Biscay / South	91 (-10%)	82 (-10%)	Unknown	0 (-100%)
IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds and EU Waters of CECAF 34.1.1	303 (-10%)	273 (-10%)	Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 43.1.1) Unknown (IXa)	0 (-100%)

Plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*)

Species description

European plaice 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. Plaice is the most important flat fish in European fisheries.

State of the stocks

Plaice stocks present different conservation status but what is a generality for all stocks is the high discard rates that compromise the responsible exploitation of the stocks. Some fisheries reach discard rates of 80%, due to an imbalance between minimum landing sizes and fishing gear mesh sizes.

In the **North Sea** (IV) it looks like the management plan implemented by the EU for plaice and sole in this area is yielding good results, and stock is well within precautionary limits. Biomass is well above the MSY framework and has reached its highest level in time series. Otherwise fishing mortality has been reduced since 2000 from levels over safe biological limits to below the MSY framework in 2008. Recruitment in recent years has been around the long-term average. Discards represents a substantial part of the total catch as mesh size is smaller than landing size. For 2010 discard was 43% of the catches.

In **Skagerrak** and **Kattegat** (IIIa) there is no sound information about stock status and rate of exploitation. Differences in biological measurements of biomass and recruitment present contradictory results for these stocks. Fishing mortality is unknown and it is thought that 95% of landings are taken in Skagerrak. In this area, mesh sizes are smaller than the minimum landing size which generates high rates of discards.

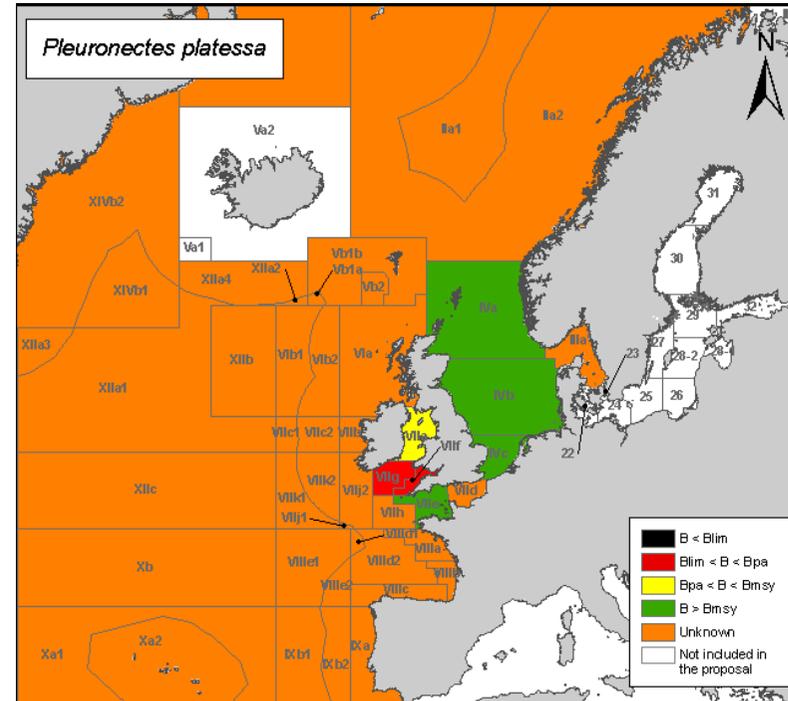


Figure 13. Plaice stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹⁵.

In the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) there is no sound information to evaluate the stock status and exploitation rate and assessment is indicative of trends only. No reference points are defined for this stock, previous precautionary reference points are no longer considered appropriate. Although absolute estimates of spawning stock biomass are uncertain, trends indicate an increase in stock size since the mid 1990s, which has subsequently stabilised since 2004. Fishing mortality has shown a downward trend since the beginning of the 1990s and since 2000 it seems to be established. Biomass and fishing mortality are above and below possible precautionary

¹⁵ Stock status based on trends for VIIa, VIIfg.

reference point respectively. Recruitment has been slightly lower than average in recent years. Discard sampling studies have indicated high variable discarding rates up to 80%, for 2010 catch 13% were landings and 87% discards.

In the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) and **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc) stocks status is unknown because there is insufficient information to evaluate the stock and available catch statistics are not considered reliable enough to estimate trends in abundance. Therefore no reference points are defined for these stocks. Landings during the last ten years were between 2-5 times less than established TACs, which can be considered as a sound evidence of overexploitation.

In the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), the stock status and rate of exploitation are unknown; therefore assessment is indicative of trends only. No reference points are defined for these stocks. Spawning stock biomass has been declining continuously since 1990, and has stabilised at historical low levels since 2004. Fishing mortality has declined since 2002 and is currently below average time series. Survey information indicates that discard rates are up to 50% in number.

In the **Western English Channel** (VIle), spawning stock biomass has increased during recent years and is above the MSY trigger in the last two years. Fishing mortality has been increasing slightly until 2007, from this year it has significantly decreased but it is still well above, more than double, the MSY framework. Discards in the Western Channel are much lower compared to other plaice stocks.

In the **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) and **Celtic Sea**, (VIIg) although there are no reference points defined, because of lack of information, the stock biomass and mortality are considered to be below and above any possible reference points respectively. The assessment is indicative of trends only. Spawning stock biomass reached its highest level between 1988 and 1990. After 1997 it declined significantly and since 2005 it has increased to a stable level but is considered to be well below historic levels. Fishing mortality appears to have fallen since 2002, but it may be underestimated and in any case is above levels that would increase biomass and achieve MSY. Recruitment was high during the 1980s, but has remained low since then and has

recently been fluctuating without a clear trend. Discards are high for these stocks and have ranged from 30% to 70%, for example for 2010, the last available year data, discards (62%) exceed landings (38%).

In the **Celtic Sea South** (VIIh), **Southwest of Ireland East&West** (VIIj,k) stocks status and rate of exploitation are unknown. The only reference point defined is MSY mortality and estimates of mortality suggest that recent mortality is well above the MSY framework. TACs established for the last ten years were between 1.5-4 times greater than landings, so TACs have not been restrictive.

In the **Bay of Biscay** (VIII) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) there is not enough information to evaluate stock trends and exploitation status, therefore no reference points are defined.

In the rest of the managed stocks **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 stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

Any measure which brings about a reduction in discards will favour an increase in future productivity of the fishery. Technical measures should be introduced to reduce unsustainable discard rates

For the **North Sea** (IV) stock ICES advises on the basis of the agreed management plan that landings in 2012 should be no more than 84410t, resulting in a 15% TAC increase. ICES evaluation of the plan concluded that it is precautionary. Otherwise the MSY framework results in a 1% TAC increase (74000t) and increased mortality to 0.25. Oceana agrees with both proposals and recommends the adoption of the management plan as it is an agreed EU regulation. Oceana also wants to add that technical measures should be introduced to reduce discard rates and transitional arrangements should be established to the second stage of the plan.

For **Skagerrak** and **Kattegat** (IIIa) ICES advises on the basis of precautionary considerations that catches in 2012 should be reduced. Scientific recommendations made in the last three years have not been followed and TACs exceeding these recommendations have been adopted. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012. Measures to reduce discarding should be introduced. It is considered that the current stock boundaries are inappropriate.

For the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) ICES advises on the basis of precautionary considerations that catches of plaice should not increase. Although there are indications of a possible overestimate of the size of the stock and an underestimate of mortality and real stock status is unknown. Commission has proposed a 25% TAC reduction. Oceana considers that the current rate of exploitation seems to work and the stock is stably in a good condition, therefore Oceana proposes to keep previous TAC for 2012, although technical measures should be introduced urgently to reduce discard rates.

For the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) and **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that no increase of catch should take place in 2012. TACs established for the last ten years were between 2-5 times greater than landings. Oceana, due to the stock overexploitation, recommends reducing TAC to average landings of the last five years, 36.6t, which represents a 53% TAC reduction, while Commission has proposed a 15% TAC reduction that will not be restrictive.

For the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), ICES advises on the basis of precautionary considerations that catches should not be allowed to increase in 2012 and discarding should be reduced. Scientific recommendations concerning catch levels have been consistently ignored for 20 years and agreed TAC have been greater than official landings. Agreed TACs are well above official landings. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, asks for reducing TACs to average landings of the last five years, which represents a 15% TAC reduction for 2012, otherwise Commission has proposed a 10% TAC reduction that could not be restrictive. Measures to reduce discarding

should be introduced, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information,

For the **Western English Channel** (VIle), ICES advises on the basis of the transition to the MSY approach that landings in 2012 should be no more than 1440t, which also implies a fishing mortality reduction to 0.35. The MSY framework would imply 840t TAC and a 0.19 fishing mortality. Oceana agrees with both proposals. Both stocks of the **English Channel** are managed together so management measures implemented must be effective at controlling mortality in both stocks.

For the **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) and **Celtic Sea**, (VIlg) stocks ICES advises, on the basis of precautionary considerations, that catches should be reduced. Considering that biomass is low compared to historical time-series and fishing mortality is high, Oceana agrees with the Commission proposal and according to the precautionary approach asks also for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

In the **Celtic Sea South** (VIIf), **Southwest of Ireland East&West** (VIIf,k) ICES advises on the basis of precautionary considerations that catches in 2012 should be reduced. TACs established for the last ten years were between 1.5-4 times greater than landings, so TACs have not been restrictive, this persistence in maintaining excessive TACs is not logical. Oceana, due to the stock overexploitation, recommends reducing TAC to average landings of the last five years, 140t, which represents a 25% TAC reduction, which is consistent with Commission proposal.

For the **Bay of Biscay** (VIII) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that catches should not increase in 2012. Agreed TACs have been much greater than official landings. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012, especially when these stocks are managed under the same TAC with other completely unknown stock status. Commission has proposed a 15% TAC reduction that will not be restrictive as it is 35% greater than the landings average of the last 4 years. It is not clear 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 Commission proposal for stocks with lack of information, proposes a 25% catches reduction.

Table 10. Comparative table of plaice TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa (West)	Skagerrak (West)	7791 (-15%)	7791 (-15%)	Unknown	58433 (-25%)
IIIa (East)	Kattegat (East)	1988 (-13%)	1988 (-13%)	Unknown	1491 (-25%)
EU Waters of IIa and IV, and waters not covered by Ska&Katt	EU Waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea, and waters not covered by Ska&Katt	68862 (+15%)	68862 (+15%)	Above MSY (IV) Completely unknown (IIa)	58233 (-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 of Azores and East Greenland	693 (-5%)	589 (-15%)	Completely unknown (Vb, VI, XII, XIV)	520 (-25%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	1627 (0%)	1220 (-25%)	Possibly above PA	1627 (0%)
VIIb and VIIc	West of Ireland and Porcupine Bank	78 (-5%)	66 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIbc)	36 (-53%)
VIIId VIIe	English Channel	4665 (+9%)	4179 (-10%)	Unknown (VIIId) above MSY (VIIe)	3965 (-15%)
VIIIf and VIIg	Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea North	410 (-9%)	308 (-25%)	Unk probably below PA	308 (-25%)
VIIh, VIIj and VIIk	Celtic Sea South, Southwest of Ireland East&West	185 (-15%)	139 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIhjk)	139 (-25%)
VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	Bay of Biscay, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds and EU waters of CECAF 34.1.1	395 (-5%)	336 (-15%)	Unknown (VIII, IXa) Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	296 (-25%)

Saithe (*Pollachius virens*)

Species description

Saithe is distributed throughout the North-West and North-East Atlantic. In the case of the North-East Atlantic, the species occurs from the Barents Sea to the Bay of Biscay and around Iceland. A gregarious fish, the saithe migrates to and from the North and South, feeding predominantly on other fish.

State of the stocks

In the **Norwegian Sea** (IIa) biomass has been well above the precautionary reference point since 1995, but it should be added that it has declined in the last four years. Fishing mortality has been below the precautionary reference point since 1996 but it has increased during the last five years and is currently close to exceeding the precautionary limit. Although there is no MSY reference points defined for this stock, saithe in the Norwegian Sea can be considered to have been in a good state for 15 years, after a long period of low biomass prior to that.

In the **North Sea** (IV), **Skagerrak** (IIIa West), **Western Scotland and Rockall** (VI), stocks status has deteriorated in recent years and biological parameters show a worrying tendency. Spawning stock biomass, which has been above precautionary limits between 2001 and 2008, has declined and is currently about to drop below safe biological limits. This is a result of an increase of fishing mortality from below the MSY framework in 2004 to above safe biological limits in 2010. Recruitment has been poor during recent years. The current exploitation rate is clearly unsustainable.

On the other hand, the status of the stock in the **Faroe Islands** (Vb) has improved since the late 1990s with spawning stock biomass above the MSY framework. Fishing mortality has been fluctuating since the early 1980s, but it has always been high and above MSY. Recruitment in 2010 is above average for the time series available.

It should be mentioned that the fishery in this area operates under a system of fishing effort control that is not functioning properly. Scientists have been recommending a reduction in fishing effort for more than 20 years.

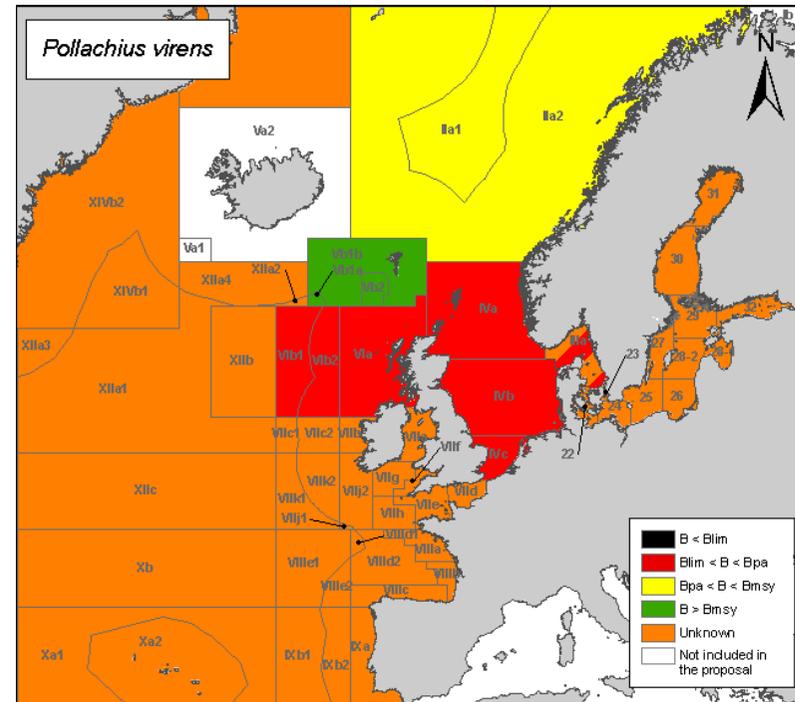


Figure 14. Saithe stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass

In the rest of the managed stocks included in the proposal **Kattegat** (IIIaE), **Belt Sea, Sound and Baltic Sea** (IIIbc, 22-32), **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** (VII), **Bay of Biscay** (VIII), **Portuguese Waters** (IX), **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 stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

For the **Norwegian Sea** (IIa) on the basis of the management plan taken by Norway, catches in 2012 should be no more than 164000t, which represents a TAC decrease of 5%. ICES evaluated the plan and concluded that it is consistent with the precautionary approach. Therefore, as no MSY reference point is defined for this stock, Oceana supports its implementation.

For the **North Sea** (IV), **Skagerrak** (IIIa West), **Western Scotland and Rockall** (VI) according to the agreed management plan, catches in 2012 should be no more than 87544, which represents a 15% decrease in the TAC level. Due to the critical trend in fishing parameters, scientists have recommended to invoke paragraph 6 of the management plan to reduce catches beyond the 15%. Oceana agrees with this proposal and urges to the Commission to propose a 27% reduction in TAC to stop the downward trend and fulfil the transition to the MSY framework.

For the **Faroe Islands** (Vb), ICES advises, on the basis of the MSY approach that fishing mortality should be reduced by 38% in 2012. The ICES proposal would achieve rate mortality according to the MSY. The mortality reduction requested, would also help to increase recruitment and maintain the temporary closure of the spawning areas. As spawning stock biomass is in good condition no TAC constraints are necessary, although according to the MSY an increase of 2% would be possible. Oceana agrees with the decreased mortality proposed.

For the rest of the managed stocks, for which there is no information **Kattegat** (IIIaE), **Belt Sea, Sound and Baltic Sea** (IIIbc, 22-32), **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** (VII) , **Bay of Biscay** (VIII), **Portuguese Waters** (IX), **Azores Grounds** (X), **North of Azores** (XII), **East Greenland** (XIV) and **CECAF 34.1.1** Oceana, according to the Commission proposal for stocks with lack of information, proposes a 25% catches reduction until there is sustainability guarantees of the exploitation.

Table 11. Comparative table of saithe TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa, IV, EU waters of IIa, IIIbc 22-32	Skagerrak (West) and Kattegat (East), North Sea, EU waters of Norwegian Sea, Belt Sea, Sound and Baltic Sea	43842 (-13%)	43842 (-13%)	Completely unknown (IIIaE, IIIbc 22-32) IIa (PA) Below PA (IIIaW, IV)	32004 (-27%)
VI, EU and internat waters of Vb, XII and XIV	Rockall, West of Scotland, EU and internat waters of Faeroes Grounds, North of Azores, East Greenland	9682 (-13%)	9682 (-13%)	Below PA (VI) Above MSY (Vb) Completely unknown (XII, XIV)	7067 (-27%)
Norwegian waters south of 62° N	Norwegian waters south of 62° N	880 (0%)	880 (0%)	Below PA (IV)	624 (-27%)
VII, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1 (EU)	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 , Bay of Biscay, Portuguese Waters, Azores Grounds, EU Waters of CECAF 34.1.1	3343 (-2%)	2842 (-15%)	Completely unknown (VII, VIII, IX, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	2507 (-25%)

Sandeel (*Ammodytidae*)

Species description

Sandeels include the species *Ammodytes marinus*, *Ammodytes tobianus* and *Ammodytes lanceolatus* that are distributed throughout the North-East Atlantic, from the waters of the Barents Sea to the coasts of the Iberian Peninsula. These species are usually territorial and largely stationary after settlement, burying themselves in the seabed during the winter and feeding on plankton.

State of the stocks

The state of the majority of sandeel stocks is unknown due to insufficient or inadequate information. In the absence of data that allow correct management guidelines to be established, and the non-application of precautionary considerations, the trend in catches shows significant declines in all areas compared to 10 years ago.

The abundance and biomass of sandeel stocks may have been underestimated during recent years, due to the variability of this type of pelagic species and its high rate of natural mortality.

In the **North Sea** (IV) and **Skagerrak-Kattegat** (IIIa) there is a complex of seven local sub-stocks, so assessment is provided in seven areas. Updated information is available for areas 1, 2, 3 and 4, and as there is no new information, for areas, 5, 6, and 7 assessment is based on previous data.

In **Dogger Bank** (SA1) the stock seems to be in good condition owing to the large recruitment in 2009, fishing mortality decreased in 2005 from a high level and has since fluctuated without a trend.

In **South Eastern** (SA2) due to the low values of mortality since 2007 and strong 2009 recruitment, biomass is estimated around twice as high as the precautionary level.

In **Central Eastern** (SA3) stock has recovered from a record low biomass in 2004 to above precautionary level in 2010. Fishing

mortality was reduced in the year 2000 and has remained below time-series average since then.

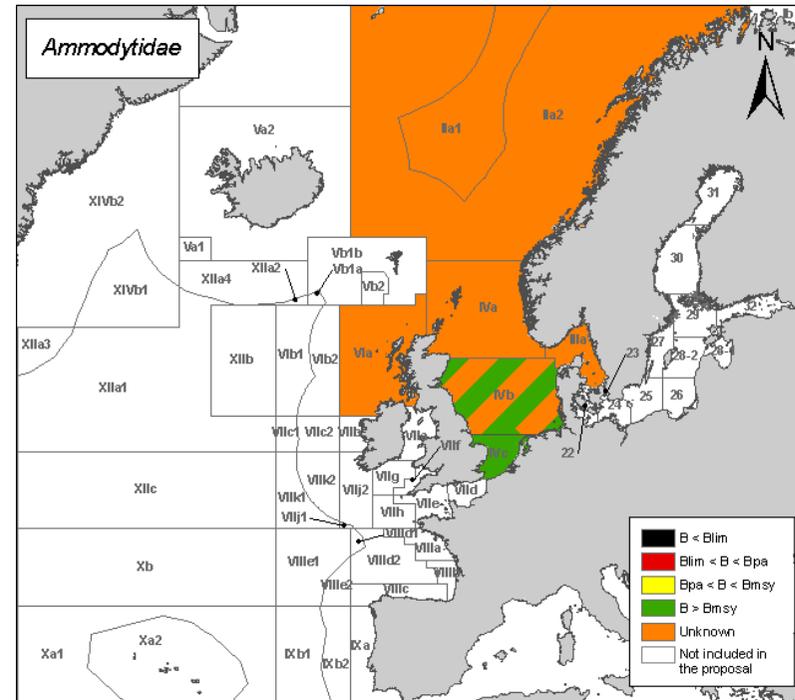


Figure 15. Sandeel stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

In **Central Western** (SA4) there is not sufficient information to conduct a sound assessment. Evaluation is based on trends only. There are no reference points defined for this stock. Biomass seems to have increased during recent years and fishing mortality has decreased since 2003 at low values although CPUE is still decreasing.

In **Viking and Bergen Bank** (SA5) there is no basis to carry out advice as available information is inadequate to evaluate stock status and even trends, so stock status is completely unknown.

In **Kattegat** (SA6) there is no basis to carry out advice as available information is inadequate to evaluate stock status and even trends, so stock status is completely unknown.

In **Shetland** (SA7) there is no basis to carry out advice as available information is inadequate to evaluate stock status and even trends, so stock status is completely unknown.

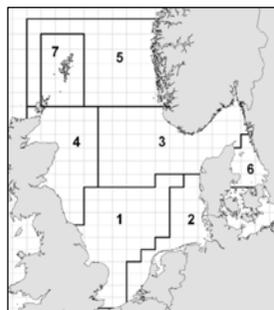


Figure 16. Sandeel sub-stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak-Kattegat Subarea IV. Source: ICES.

In **Norwegian Waters of North Sea** (IV) corresponds with SA5 and SA6 so the same assessment could be applied.

In the rest of the managed stocks **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

Since 2004, the regulation of sandeel catches has been based on the estimated abundance of individuals of age class 1+ at the start of the season. ICES warns about the importance of these stocks in the ecosystem as prey for many other species, and recommends the prevention of the decline of its biomass through the establishment of proper management measures.

For the **North Sea** (IV) and **Skagerrak-Kattegat** (IIIa) ICES recommends that the management should be carried out by dealing with smaller areas, which better reflect the spatial structure of the population, preventing local risk depletion of some sub-stocks. Until this kind of management is implemented, Oceana, according to the

precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, recommends a 25% TAC reduction in catches for 2012, because for almost half of sub-areas there is not enough information about stock status and rate of exploitation. Oceana considers there is no sound justification to increase TAC. This TAC should allow for sufficient stock to remain for successful recruitment.

For **Dogger Bank** (SA1) ICES advises that catch should be no more than 320000t. Oceana considers this TAC to be high as it will reduce biomass by 50%, and implies a fishing mortality not recommendable taking into consideration the historical mortality. Oceana recommends status quo. Landings 180000 also imply a decrease in biomass by 30%.

For **South Eastern** (SA2) ICES advises that catch should be less than 34000t. Oceana considers this TAC to be high as it will reduce biomass by 47%, and implies an increase in fishing mortality to 0.2. Oceana recommends status quo landings 25000t and 0.14 mortality rate to stabilize the current status.

For **Central Eastern** (SA3) ICES advises that no catches should be allowed, and that even a zero TAC will not allow increasing biomass in 2012. Oceana considers that although the stock does not seem to be in bad condition, according to the explicit ICES advice the fishery should be closed in this sub-area.

For **Central Western** (SA4) although there is no sound information ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations founded in trends, that catch should be less than 10000t. This figure is likely to impose a low risk to the stock, so Oceana agrees with this proposal.

For **Viking and Bergen Bank** (SA5) there is no information to manage the stock. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012. Oceana also wants to add that Norway has closed sandeel fisheries on the Viking Bank in 2011 because of very low estimates of abundance.

For **Kattegat** (SA6) there is no sound information to manage the stock. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and

Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012. This proposal is in accordance with ICES advice which recommends no increase the fisheries.

For **Shetland** (SA7) there is no sound information to manage the stock. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012. This proposal is in accordance with ICES advice, which recommends not to increase the fisheries.

For **Norwegian Waters of North Sea** (IV) Oceana gives the same advice as in the SA5 and SA6. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 15% reduction in catches for 2012.

For the **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), for which there is no information Oceana, according to the Commission proposal for stocks with lack of information, proposes a 15% catches reduction.

Table 12. Comparative table of sandeel TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2011	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
Norwegian Waters of IV	Norwegian Waters of North Sea	Not relevant	0	Above MSY (IVb,c) unknown (IVab)	0 (Not relevant)
EU Waters of IIa, IIIa and IV	EU Waters of Norwegian Sea, Skagerrak & Kattegat and North Sea	242250 (+36%)	245000 (+38%)	Above MSY (IVb,c) Completely unknown (IIa) unknown (IIIa, IVab)	181688 (-15%)

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.

State of the stocks

The general situation of sole stocks is clearly improving from last decade's dismal scenario, with several areas exploited in accordance with the MSY framework. However, problems continue for other stocks, which present evidence of overexploitation like in the Irish Sea.

In **Skagerrak, Kattegat (IIIa)**, and **Subdivisions 22-24**, stock assessments are favourable. Although the situation is positive, it is important to add that spawning stock biomass has decreased from 2005 and has fluctuated around the MSY framework since 2008. Fishing mortality, slightly below F_{msy} , seems to have been stable since 2005. Recruitment has been around average since 2003.

In the **Irish Sea (VIIa)** stock is overexploited. Biomass has continuously declined since 2001, and since 2006 is so far below safe biological limits that the stock is in danger of collapse. After more than 40 years with a high fishing mortality above precautionary limits, in 2010 the mortality rate has fallen below this level for the first time, although it is still nearly twice the MSY framework. In addition to this situation, recruitment during the last six years has been the lowest in recent times.

In the **West of Ireland (VIIb)** and **Porcupine Bank (VIIc)** there is not sufficient information to evaluate the status of the stock and rate of exploitation. No reference points are defined for the stock.

In the **Eastern English Channel (VIIId)**, spawning stock biomass has been fluctuating above precautionary levels during most of the time series. Since 2002 it has increased and is estimated to be above the MSY trigger. Fishing mortality has been fluctuating since 2005 between precautionary and safe biological limits. There are indications that the stock is harvested in an unsustainable way. Recruitment has been above average during the last decade.

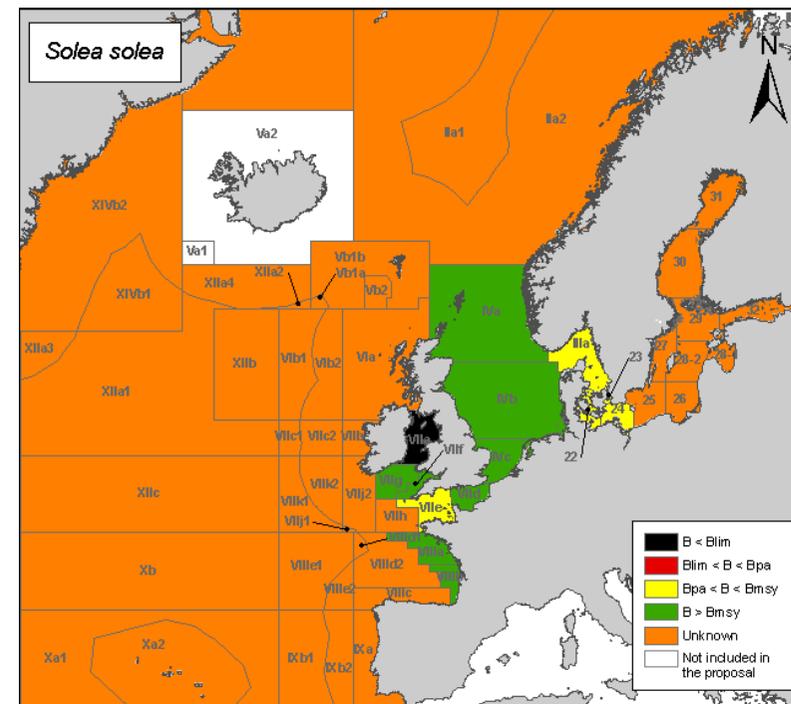


Figure 17. Sole stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹⁶.

¹⁶ Stock status based on trends for IIIa, 22-24, VIIe.

In the **Western English Channel** (VIIe) the stock is close to being well managed. Spawning stock biomass has been fluctuating around the MSY trigger framework but has been decreasing slightly during the past years and currently since 2006 is below MSY with the lowest observed values in the time series. Fishing mortality has been over the MSY framework since 1997 and after a significant reduction over the last two years it is below the MSY framework. Recruitment is fluctuating without a clear trend.

The stock in the **Bristol Channel** (VIIIf) and **Celtic Sea North** (VIIg, North) are in good condition. Biomass levels have been greater than MSY limits since 2001 and fishing mortality has decreased below the MSY framework since 2003. Recruitment has been on average for the last few years, except in 2009 when it was the lowest of the time series.

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 for this stock. However, qualitative evaluation of fishing mortality suggests that it may be close to current proxy for the MSY framework. Landings in recent years have been much higher than the agreed TAC.

In the **North** and **Central Bay of Biscay** (VIIIab) the stock appears to be recovering and the more recent estimates of spawning stock biomass are close to the MSY trigger and above precautionary for the first time in more than twelve years. After years of excessive fishing effort fishing mortality has declined since 2003 and is currently fluctuating around the precautionary reference point, but it is still over the MSY framework. Recruitment has increased since 2004.

In waters of the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIIc) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) the state of the stocks and rate of exploitation are unknown as there is not enough information to assess them. Therefore, no reference points are defined for these stocks. Landings have declined significantly since the late 1980s.

In the rest of the managed stocks **Norway Waters** (IIa), **Baltic Sea** (25-32) **Rockall**, **West of Scotland** (VI) **Faeroes Grounds** (Vb), **Offshore and West of Bay of Biscay South** (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 stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

For **Skagerrak**, **Kattegat** (IIIa) and **EU waters of Sound, Belt Sea** (IIIb,c), ICES advises, based on the MSY approach, that landings in 2012 should be no more than 610t, this implies an 8% TAC reduction. Oceana requests this TAC reduction in order to get back to the MSY framework and stabilise the status of the stock in the area. A higher TAC would lead to a biomass decreasing below MSY.

In the **North Sea** (IV), according to the agreed management plan, landings in 2012 should be no more than 15700t, which implies an 11% increase in TAC with an effort reduction of 10%. ICES has evaluated the plan and concluded that it is precautionary. Oceana wants to highlight that transitional arrangements to the second stage of the plan should be established since both North Sea sole and plaice have now been within safe biological limits for two consecutive years. Otherwise transition towards the MSY framework implies TAC and fishing mortality to be reduced to 15100t and 0.29 respectively. Oceana supports this last advice which implies a 16% TAC reduction.

In the **Irish Sea** (VIIa), ICES advises, based on the transition to the MSY approach, that landings in 2012 should be no more than 200t, which represents a 49% reduction. According to this criteria Commission has proposed a 44% reduction in catches for 2012. Oceana considers this proposal to be unacceptable as it will only increase the biomass by 14% leading the stock in 2013 around 1390t, far from the 2200t safe biological limit. Given the low biomass and low recruitment, Oceana recommends zero catches to guarantee the recovery of the population above safe limits as quickly as possible. Even a zero catch will leave the stock below safe biological limit in 2013.

For the **West of Ireland** (VIIb) and **Porcupine Bank** (VIIc), ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that no increase of

the catch should take place until there is evidence that the exploitation is sustainable. Oceana, according to precautionary considerations, agrees with Commission proposal of reducing by 15% the TAC for next year.

For the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId), ICES advises, based on the transition to the MSY approach, that landings in 2012 should be no more than 5600t, which lead to a 15% TAC increase. This proposal is consistent with transition to MSY, representing a 9% decrease in biomass, and a reduction of fishing mortality below precautionary limits by 0.39. Oceana agrees with the 15% increase in TAC and is confident that this proposal would help to reduce the high mortality rate.

For the **Western English Channel** (VIIE) ICES advises based on the MSY framework that landings in 2012 should be less than 740t. Otherwise, according to the multiannual management plan agreed, not assessed by ICES, TAC should be no more than 777t. Oceana agrees with both proposals.

For the **Bristol Channel** (VIIf) and **Celtic Sea North** (VIIg North) stocks ICES advises, based on the MSY approach, that landings in 2012 should be no more than 1060t. Oceana agrees with this value, that has been proposed by the Commission, which implies a 15% reduction in TAC and an 11% reduction in expected biomass for 2012. Oceana recalls that catches available data during the last two years was 20% lower than the established TAC, so there is no justification to increase it.

For the **Celtic Sea South** (VIIf) **South West of Ireland** (VIIf, VIIfk), ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that catches in 2012 should not increase. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach and stock trends of landings, asks for a 25% reduction in

catches for 2012, higher than the 15% reduction proposed by the Commission.

In the **North** and **Central Bay of Biscay** (VIIfab) ICES advises, based on the transition to the MSY approach, that landings in 2012 should be no more than 4000t which implies a 6% TAC reduction. This proposal also implies a fishing mortality reduction to 0.34. Oceana supports this proposal to stabilise the recovery of the stock. The MSY approach would imply a 27% TAC reduction and a 0.26 fishing mortality rate. It must be added that the multiannual plan for sole in the Bay of Biscay does not provide any basis for TAC advice for 2012.

For waters of the Iberian Peninsula, **South of Bay of Biscay** (VIIfc) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (VIIfa) due to lack of information on managing them, ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that catches should not be increased in 2012. Commission has proposed a 15% TAC reduction. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach and stock trends of landings asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012. It must be added that it is not clear 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 **Norway Waters** (VIIfa), **Baltic Sea** (25-32), **Rockall**, **West of Scotland** (VIIf) **Faeroes Grounds** (VIIfb), **Offshore and West of Bay of Biscay** South (VIIfde), **Portuguese waters West** (VIIfb), **Azores Grounds** (X) **North of Azores** (VIIfc), **East Greenland** (VIIfd), and **CECAF 34.1.1** Oceana, according to the Commission proposal for stocks with lack of information, proposes a 25% catches reduction.

Table 13. Comparative table of sole TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
EU Waters of II and IV	EU Waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	14050 (0%)	13550 (-4%)	Completely unknown (II) MSY (IV)	11943 (-15%)
IIIa, EU waters of IIIb-d (22-32)	Skagerrak, Kattegat, EU waters of Sound, Belt Sea, and Baltic Sea,	840 (+20%)	520 (-38%)	Possibly above PA (IIIabc) Completely unknown (25-32)	773 (-8%)
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	60 (-2%)	51 (-15%)	Completely unknown (VI, Vb, XII, XIV)	45 (-25%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	390 (-3%)	220 (-44%)	Below Blim	0 (-100%)
VIIb VIIc	West of Ireland , Porcupine Bank	44 (-4%)	37 (-15%)	Unknown	37 (-15%)
VIIId	Eastern English Channel	4852 (+15%)	5300 (+9%)	MSY	5600 (+15%)
VIIe	Western English Channel	710 (+15%)	777 (+9%)	Above PA	740 (+4%)
VIIIf VIIg	Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea North	1241 (+25%)	1060 (-15%)	MSY	1060 (-15%)
VIIIf, VIIj and VIIk	Celtic Sea South, Southwest of Ireland East and West	423 (-15%)	360 (-15%)	Unknown	317 (-25%)
VIIIa and VIIIb	Bay of Biscay North and Central	4250 (-12%)	3755 (-12%)	MSY	4000 (-6%)
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 (-5%)	911 (-15%)	Unknown (VIIIc, IX) Completely Unknown (VIIIde, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	804 (-25%)

Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)

Species description

Sprat is short-lived with large annual natural fluctuations in recruitment and stock size. Sprat is distributed throughout the North-East Atlantic, from the North Sea down to Morocco. It also occurs in waters of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The species forms schools that migrate between the feeding grounds in winter and the spawning grounds in summer.

State of the stocks

Information is very limited for the majority of sprat stocks and, therefore, the state of the population is unknown. The management of the species in European Waters is made without sustainability guarantees.

In the areas of **Kattegat and Skagerrak** (IIIa) the available information is not sufficient for evaluating the state of the stock and exploitation rate. No reference points are defined for this stock and assessment is based on trends. Landings have declined drastically in the last three years for which there is information. Scientists have not yet assessed the significance and consequences of this reduction.

In the **North Sea** (IV) the status of the stock is unknown because the available information is inadequate to evaluate stock status so no reliable assessment can be presented for this stock. No reference points are defined for this stock and assessment is based on trends. The catch is dominated by young fish. The stock size is mostly driven by the recruitment year class. Based on catches made in recent years, neither of the TACs established for these stocks are restrictive.

In the rest of the managed stocks **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), there is no scientific assessment basis to provide an evaluation about its stock status and rate of exploitation.

In the **Western and Eastern English Channel** (VIId and VIle), the status of the stocks is unknown. Based on catches made in recent years, neither of the TACs established for these stocks are restrictive.

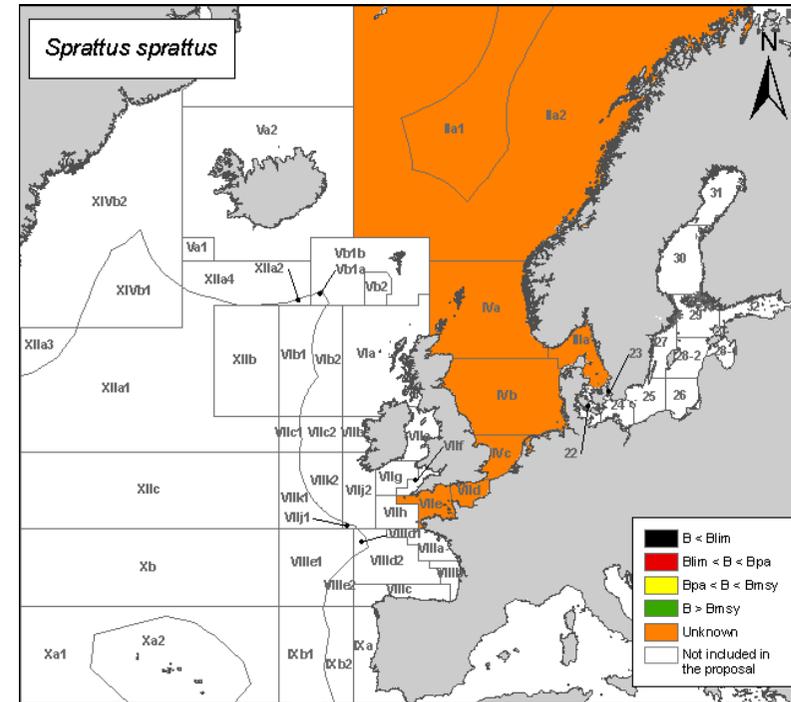


Figure 18. Sprat stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass.

Oceana proposal

Oceana recommends that the evaluation methods for sprat be improved, in order to ensure sustainable exploitation and avoid potential risk. As sprat is fished jointly with other species like Atlantic

horse mackerel or herring, its exploitation is limited by restrictions imposed on catches of juveniles of these species. Sprat constitutes an important food source for other species in the areas adjacent to the North Sea.

In **Kattegat and Skagerrak** (IIIa), ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that catches should be reduced. In any case, the TACs established in previous years have been double that of landings levels, so TAC does not seem to be restrictive. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach, and Commission recommendations for stocks with lack of information, asks for a 25% reduction in catches for 2012.

For the **North Sea** (IV) ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that catches should be reduced. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach and Commission recommendations for

stocks with lack of information, suggests a 25% reduction of TAC until enough information is available to manage the stock or it is demonstrated that the fishery is sustainable.

For the **Norwegian Sea** (IIa), for which there is no information Oceana, according to the Commission proposal for stocks with lack of information, proposes a 25% catches reduction.

For the **Western and Eastern English Channel** (VIIId and VIIe), stocks, ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that catches should be reduced. Oceana agrees with TAC reduction proposed by the Commission, according to the precautionary approach, and suggests a 25% reduction of TAC until enough information is available to manage the stock or it is demonstrated that the fisheries are sustainable.

Table 14. Comparative table of sprat TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa	Skagerrak (West) and Kattegat (East)	48100 (0%)	48100 (0%)	Unknown (IIIa)	36075 (-25%)
EU Waters IIa and IV	EU waters of Norwegian Sea and North Sea	149924 (-1%)	132924 (-12%)	Completely unknown (IIa), unknown (IV)	112443 (-25%)
VIIId and VIIe	Eastern and Western English Channel	5421 (-2%)	4066 (-25%)	Unknown	4066 (-25%)

Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*)

Species description

Whiting occurs in the North-East Atlantic, from the south-western Barents Sea and Iceland down to Portugal. The species lives mainly on muddy and gravel bottoms between 30 and 100 meters depth, although it can also be found on rocky and sandy bottoms. Its diet consists of crustaceans, molluscs, polychaetes and small fish.

State of the stocks

The available information does not make it possible to carry out a reliable assessment of the stocks. Most catches are by-catch in fisheries using fine mesh, with discards representing a high rate of the weight.

In **Skagerrak and Kattegat** (IIIa) there is insufficient information to provide a reliable assessment on stock status and rate of exploitation. No reference points are defined for the stock. For the total catches in 2010 only 15% are landed, 31% are industrial by-catch and 54% discarded. The major part of the catch is taken as by-catch by small-fisheries. Landings have decreased dramatically from 19400t in 1990 to 200t in 2010, warning about the possible overexploitation stock status.

In the **North Sea** (IV) there is no sound knowledge about the status of the stock. Spawning stock biomass has been increasing slightly since 2007 and is currently close to the long-term average fishing mortality has remained stable during the last seven years. Recruitment was very low between 2003 and 2007, and higher in 2008 and 2009. Although true levels are uncertain, it seems that whiting is no longer considered to be in a period of impaired recruitment. Although discards appear to have been reduced since 2003, from around 60% in 2003 to 47% in 2009 and 37% in 2010, they are still high. Because of restrictive TAC higher discards are expected again in 2011 estimates.

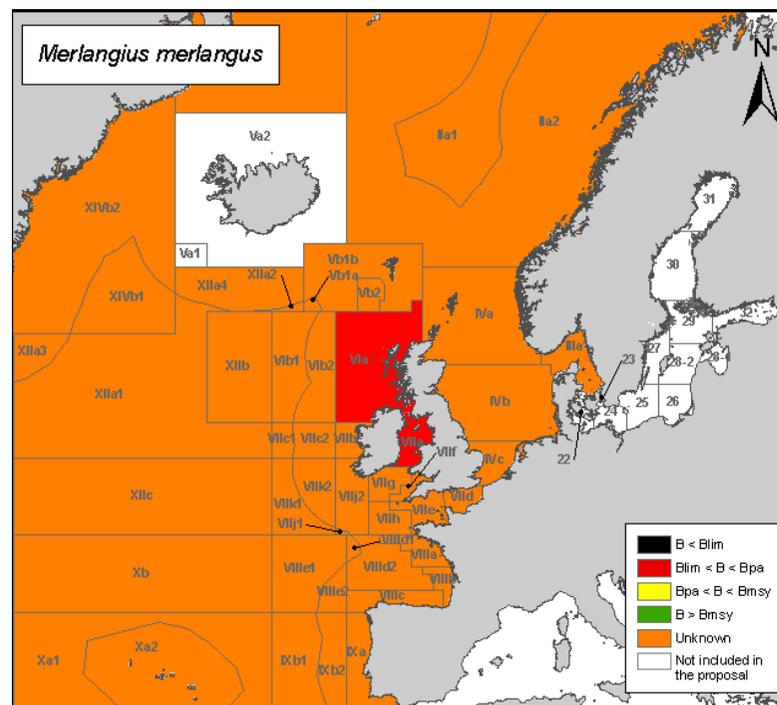


Figure 19. Whiting stock status in ICES areas included in the proposal according to spawning biomass¹⁷.

In the **West of Scotland** (VIa) the state of stock is unknown due to historical uncertainty in the reported landings. Analytical assessment is based on surveys, historical yield and catch composition. Despite a great fall in mortality since 2005, the stock is at historical lows in a worrying situation, although it is expected to increase in abundance if recruitment does not continue to be discarded at the current rate observed. Recent recruitment has been very weak, also at historical lows, although there are several indications that recruitment has probably increased in 2010. The proportion of whiting discarded is very high, more than half of the annual catch weight, and appears to

¹⁷ Stock status based on trends for VIa and VIIa.

have increased in recent years. There are strong indications that management control is not effective in limiting the catch.

In **Rockall** (VIb) there is not enough information to evaluate the status of the stock and rate of exploitation. No reference points are defined for the stock. Landings in Rockall have decreased dramatically from 500t in 1980 to a negligible 18t in 2010, as a sound example of the unsustainable rate exploitation.

In the **Irish Sea** (VIIa) stock status is uncertain. Presented assessment is indicative of trends only. Information on historical yield and catch composition indicate that the present stock size is extremely low and well below the previously defined safe biological limit. Although no reference points are defined for the stock, qualitative evaluation indicates that biomass and fishing mortality are above and below possible reference points respectively, obviously far from possible MSY targets. Landings in 2010 were 120t, when 25 years before they had been 11700t. Discard rates are very high, particularly for smaller sizes. Discards from the main national fleets landing show that over 22 million whiting, greater than 1000t, were discarded in 2010.

In the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId) there is no sound knowledge about the status of the stock. Spawning stock biomass has been increasing slightly since 2007 and is currently close to the long-term average fishing mortality has remained stable during the last seven years. Recruitment was very low between 2003 and 2007, and higher in 2008 and 2009. Although true levels are uncertain, it seems that whiting is no longer considered to be in a period of impaired recruitment. Although discards appear to have been reduced since 2003, from around 60% in 2003 to 47% in 2009 and 37% in 2010, they are still high. Because of restrictive TAC higher discards are expected again in 2011 estimates.

In the **Western English Channel** (VIIe), **Bristol Channel** (VIIIf), **Celtic Sea North and South** (VIIgh), and **Southwest of Ireland - East and West** (VIIjk), stock status is uncertain and presented assessment is indicative of trends only. No reference points are defined for the stock and exploitation status is unknown. It is estimated that the stock declined from the mid 1990s and that during

the last three years it has recovered to average levels for the time series. Fishing mortality is variable and uncertain due to lack of discard data in the assessment. Discards rates are very high (it reached 82% by weight in 2010) particularly for smaller sizes. 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 rate of exploitation. There is no reference points defined for this stock. Assessment is based on trends only. Although landings statistics need to be confirmed and effort needs to be compiled for the harvest rate, abundance index shows an overall stable trend in the last 10 years

In the rest of the managed stocks **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 stock status and rate of exploitation.

Oceana proposal

In **Skagerrak and Kattegat** (IIIa) ICES, advises based on precautionary considerations, that catches should be reduced. In previous years established TACs were higher, up to 15 times higher, than catches. Oceana requests that based on landings trends, unknown stock status, and precautionary considerations TAC for 2012 should be reduced by 25%.

For the **North Sea** (IV) ICES advises, based on the interim management plan, that TAC for the combined area in 2012 should be no more than 24300, which leads to a 15% increase in TAC. Oceana agrees with this proposal as it will slightly decrease by 4% effort maintaining fishing mortality close to its current level and improve the stock biomass by 4%. ICES has stated that TACs fixed according to the management plan would be consistent with long-term stability if recruitment is not poor, as in recent years.

For the **West of Scotland** (VIa), after years of recommending the closure of the fishery, ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that catches in 2012 should be reduced. Oceana requests the reduction of catches to the lowest level possible. A minimum 50% TAC reduction should be implemented. Measures to reduce discards should be implemented urgently, especially take advantage of strong 2009 and possible 2010 recruitment and accelerate stock recovery.

For **Rockall** (VIb) ICES advises based on precautionary considerations, that catches in 2012 should be not allowed to increase. Oceana requests a strong reduction in catches according with the reduction in landings. As this stock is managed together with VIa Division (West of Scotland), Oceana asks to reduce catches by 50% in both areas.

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. Oceana, based on ICES advice, the low biomass below safe limits, and no reliable information of the stock status, requests the Commission to propose a minimum reduction by 50%. Technical measures should be actively implemented to reduce the discard rate.

For the **Eastern English Channel** (VIId) ICES advises, based on the interim management plan, that TAC for the combined area in 2012 should be no more than 24300, which leads to a 15% increase in TAC. Oceana agrees with this proposal as it will slightly decrease by 4% effort maintaining fishing mortality close to its current level and improve the stock biomass by 4%. ICES has stated that TACs fixed

according to the management plan would be consistent with long-term stability if recruitment is not poor, as in recent years.

For the **Western English Channel** (VIIf), **Bristol Channel** (VIIf), **Celtic Sea North and South** (VIIgh), and **Southwest of Ireland - East and West** (VIIjk), scientists have not been able to project fishing opportunities for 2012. ICES advises, based on precautionary considerations, that catches should not be allowed to increase. Oceana agrees with Commission proposal that suggests a 25% TAC reduction for 2012. Scientist recommendations have repeatedly been surpassed and even doubled in this fishery during the last 15 years, in accordance TACs have not been restrictive since mid 1990s. Technical measures should be introduced to reduce discards rate with urgency.

For the **Bay of Biscay** (VIII) and **East of Portuguese Waters** (IXa) because of lack of data, ICES advises that catches should not be allowed to increase in 2012. Oceana, according to the precautionary approach suggests a 25% reduction of TAC until enough information is available to manage the stock or it is demonstrated that the fishery 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 Commission proposal for stocks with lack of information, proposes a 25% catches reduction.

Table 15. Comparative table of whiting TACs (in tonnes) in ICES areas registered in the proposal, Council decision and Commission proposal for 2011, and Stock status and Oceana proposal for 2012. Brackets compare TAC difference from previous year (in %).

Fishing area	Name area	TAC 2011	Commission proposal 2012	Stock Status	Oceana proposal 2012
IIIa	Skagerrak (West) and Kattegat (East)	1031 (+300%)	258 (0%)	Unknown	773 (-25%)
IV EU Waters of IIa	North Sea and EU Waters of Norwegian Sea	13349 (+19%)	12286 (+10%)	Unknown (IV) Completely unknown (IIa)	1012 (-25%)
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	323 (-25%)	242 (-25%)	Possibly below PA (VIa), unknown (VIb) Completely unknown (Vb, XII, XIV)	161 (-50%)
VIIa	Irish Sea	118 (-25%)	89 (-25%)	Possibly below PA (VIIa)	59 (-50%)
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)	16568 (+15%)	12426 (-25%)	Unknown (VIIe-k) Completely unknown (VIIb-d)	12426 (-25%)
VIII	Bay of Biscay	3175 (-2%)	2699 (-15%)	Unknown (VIII)	2381 (-25%)
IX, X,CECAF (EU)	Portuguese Waters , Azores Grounds and EU Waters of CECAF	?	?	IXa (unknown) Completely unknown (IXb, X, CECAF 34.1.1)	? (-25%)

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

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 Peninsula⁵,

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) 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 57/2011. Fixing for 2011 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks, applicable in EU waters and, for EU vessels, in certain non-EU waters.

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Acknowledgements

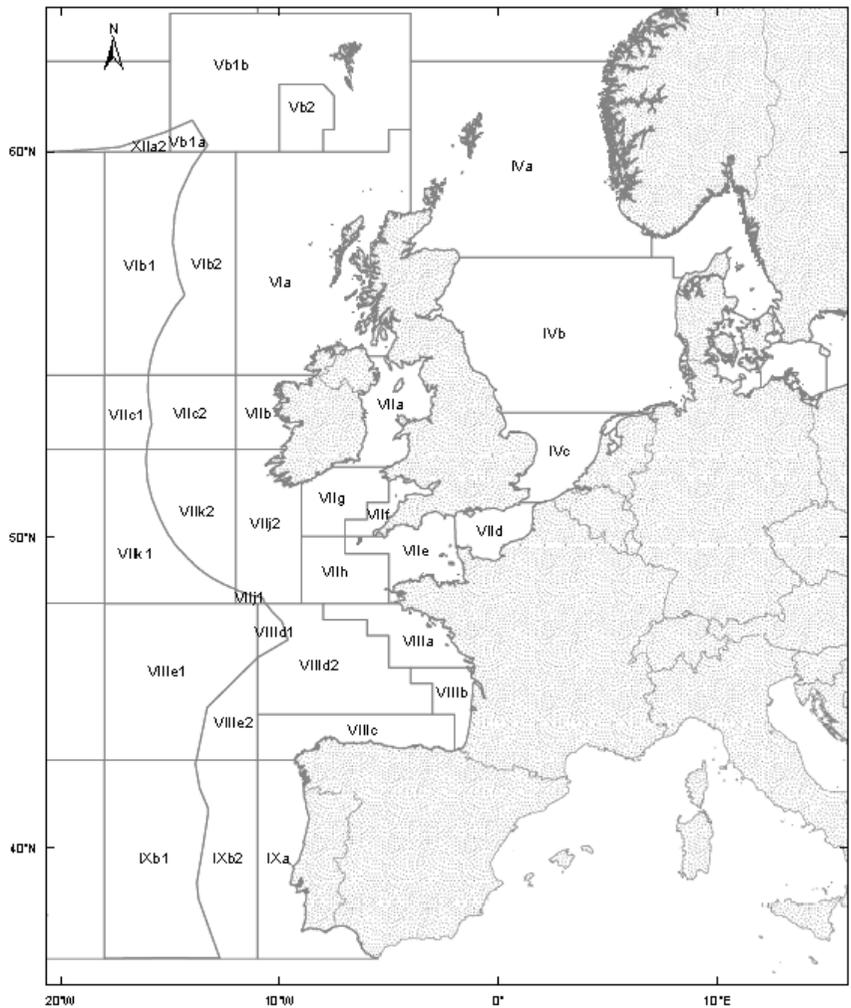
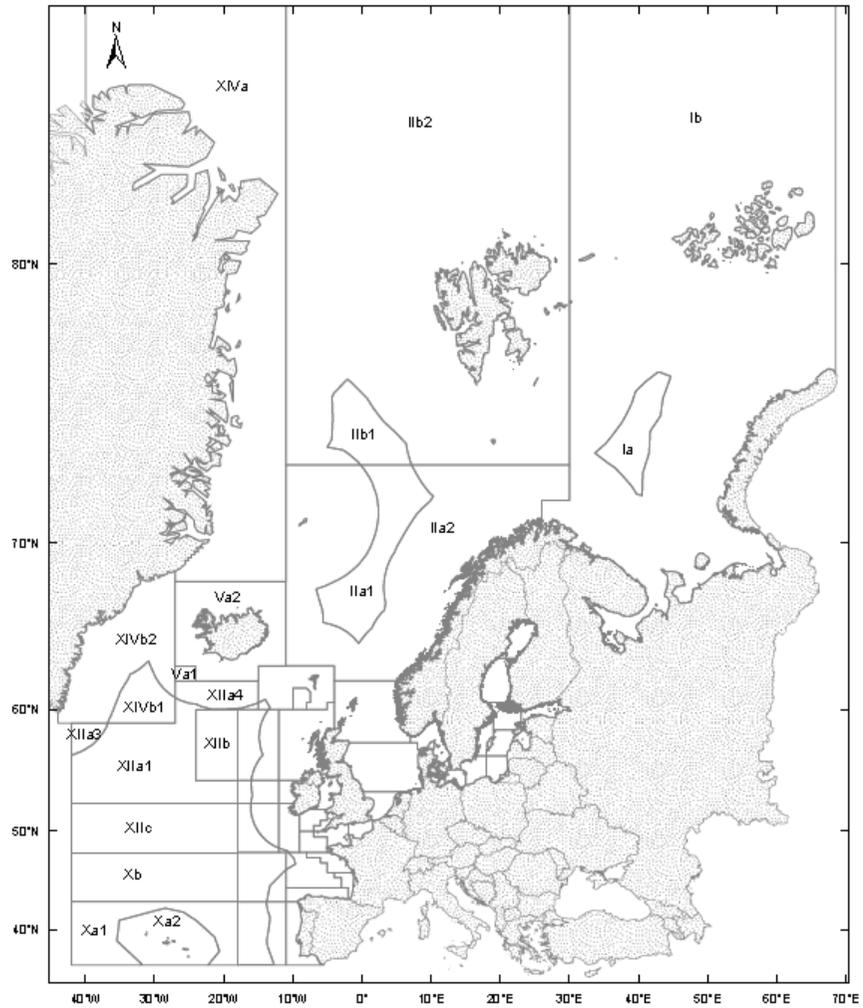
All the maps of this document have been elaborated thanks to the material downloaded from ICES website. Oceana wishes to thank ICES and Technical University of Denmark, National Institute of Aquatic Resources (DTU Aqua) for their free distribution.

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

Subarea	Division	Subdivision	Description
	Division VIIg		Celtic Sea North
	Division VIIh		Celtic Sea South
	Division VIIj		Southwest of Ireland / East
	Division VIIk		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 VIId		Bay of Biscay / Offshore
	Division VIIIe		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





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