Atlantic cod
Baltic sea western

Fishery: EU, Poland | Bottom trawls

IDENTIFICATION

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Gadus morhua

SPECIES NAME(S)
Atlantic cod

STOCK IDENTIFICATION
Two genetic stocks are considered to exist in the Baltic Sea, assessed and managed separately: the western stock (ICES Subdivisions 22-24) is west of the island of Bornholm to the Sound and the Danish Belts and the eastern stock (SD 25-32) is localized east of Bornholm, and adapted to brackish waters. A third one is the Kattegat stock (SD 21) (Bagge et al., 1994; Hüssy, 2011). Mixing of the stocks may be occurring in SD 24 (ICES, 2014a).

RELATED LINKS:
- European Commission (EC)
- International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

ASSESSMENT

Strengths
Scientific advice is based on the MSY approach whereas the new management plan is in development. Management has been improving in some areas in the past few years, e.g. with separate catch limits now set for Baltic western and eastern stocks. Other management measures are in place (effort restrictions, seasonal closures, and technical measures). High grading is not allowed in the Baltic Sea fisheries and the discard ban began in January 2015. The minimum landing size was decreased to 35cm. A new multi-annual and multi-species management plan, consistent with both the MSY and ecosystem approaches, is under development; a proposal for a regulation of a management plan was adopted by the European Commission in October 2014 and is in place since 1st January 2015. The 2012 and 2013 year classes are above the estimates for 2010-2011 year classes.

Weaknesses
The set total catch limit is almost twice the advised limit in 2015. The management plan is no longer considered as precautionary and is not used to base the advice. Fishing mortality (F) has been decreasing but is still well above F_{MSY} and F_{target} defined by the management plan. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) is below the limit biomass reference point and the target biomass. There is no F reference point defined in relation to the precautionary approach. Uncertainty in both F and SSB estimates for older ages. There is still insufficient data on recruitment catches, stock structure and age validation. Disasting increased in 2015 and only 65% of the TAC was utilized. Harbour porpoise is being impacted by bycatch in the gillnet fishery. Main environmental impacts are due to gillnets which represent about 40% of the total catch. Local spawners in Subdivision 22 need protection measures such as avoiding fishing concentration in the area.

SCORES

Management Quality:
- Management Strategy: ≥ 6
- Managers Compliance: 0
- Fishers Compliance: 10

Stock Health:
- Current Health: 6.7
- Future Health: 0

FIPS
No related FIPs

MSC
No related MSC fisheries

RECOMMENDATIONS

CATCHERS & REGULATORS
1. Set the Total Allowable Catch according to scientific advice, including the recreational allowable catch.
2. Ensure the new multi-annual management plan follows the Common Fisheries Policy objectives and includes a harvest control rule with a requirement to lower the total allowable catch (TAC) when biomass is below the target.
3. Explore the use of acoustic pingers to deter harbour porpoise bycatch in the gillnet sector.

RETAILERS & SUPPLY CHAIN
1. Encourage your national fisheries administration to work with the rest of the European Council to set the Total Allowable Catch according to scientific advice.
2. Encourage your national fisheries administration to ensure the new multi-annual management plan follows the Common Fisheries Policy objectives and establishes a harvest control rule including a requirement to lower the total allowable catch (TAC) when biomass is below the target.
3. If you are sourcing from the gillnet fishery encourage the catch sector to minimize bycatch of harbour porpoise.