IDENTIFICATION

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Merluccius hubbsi

SPECIES NAME(S)
Argentine hake

COMMON NAMES
Merluza común, merluza (Spanish)

STOCK IDENTIFICATION
There are four different Argentine hake (Merluccius hubbsi) stocks in the South Atlantic Ocean, spanning from southern Brazil to southern Argentina (Bezzi et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2002; Vaz-dos-Santos et al., 2009): 1) from 21°S to 29°S, in Southeastern Brazil, 2) from 29°S to 41°S, shared by Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina, 3) from 41°S to 54°S in Southern Argentina (Patagonian stock), and 4) Falkland Islands/Malvinas stock. A North of 41º S to Bonaerense assessment unit exists, within the Argentine hake stock shared by Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina, which extends from 34ºS to 41ºS, including the Argentina-Uruguay Common Fishing Zone (ZCP). The ZCP is managed jointly by those two countries, and Brazilian fleets also operate in this area (Irusta, 2014).

ASSESSMENT

Strengths
Spawning stock biomass has increased 50% through 2012 to 2014, as a result of protective measures set in 2010 aiming reduction on fishing mortalities on adults and juveniles, including a significant reduction of TAC since then. Stock assessment uses well-accepted methods, including commercial fleet standardized CPUE of the Uruguayan and Argentinean fleets operating and joint surveys that provide fishery-independent data. Seasonal closed areas are in place to protect spawning and juvenile hake, determined by results of a research surveys. Bycatch information is now available. There are measures to eliminate or reduce species occurring in the fishing area.

Weaknesses
Spawning biomass remains below Blim and recruitment strength is thus highly unpredictable. There have been several breaks in the adult and juvenile survey series, between 2002 and 2015, increasing uncertainty. Uruguayan catches outside the ZCP are unknown, misreporting and discarding are not accounted for in the stock assessments. Two TACs are established separately, by the CTMFM and CFP, which in sum exceeds recommended catch. The development of a management plan is in progress since 2015 but has not been adopted yet. Compliance and enforcement of bycatch reduction devices is considered low. Impacts on PET species and habitats are not well known.

SCORES

Management Quality:

- Management Strategy
  - < 6
  - ≥ 6
- Managers Compliance
  - 6.5
- Fishers Compliance
  - ≥ 6

Stock Health:

- Current Health
  - 4
- Future Health
  - < 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

RETAILERS & SUPPLY CHAIN
- Develop programmes to improve catch data and information on non-target species, and increase efforts towards reducing uncertainty over stock status by conducting regular assessments.
- Contact Joint Technical Commission of the Maritime Front (CTMFM) and Argentina’s Federal Fisheries Council and ask them to set a unified total allowable catch for the entire stock and in accordance with scientific advice.
- Press regulators to make public and implement the fishery management plan as recommended by the Joint Technical Commission of the Maritime Front.
- Work with industry to increase compliance with bycatch reduction devices.

FIPS
- no related FPs

MSC
- no related MSC fisheries

RELATED LINKS:
- Consejo Federal de Pesca (CFP), Joint Technical Commission of the Maritime Front (CTMFM)
- National Fishery Research and Development Institute (Argentina) (INIDEP)
- Uruguayan Directorate of Aquatic Resources (DINARA)

Fishery Profile
https://www.fishsource.org/fishery_page/2671

Argentine hake North of 41ºS to Rio Grande do Sul

Fishery: Bonaerense/North of 41ºS, Argentina/CTMFM, Argentina

Bottom trawls

Stock Health:

Current
4

Future
< 6

Related Fisheries

https://www.fishsource.org/fishery_page/2671

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop programmes to improve catch data and information on non-target species, and increase efforts towards reducing uncertainty over stock status by conducting regular assessments.
- Contact Joint Technical Commission of the Maritime Front (CTMFM) and Argentina’s Federal Fisheries Council and ask them to set a unified total allowable catch for the entire stock and in accordance with scientific advice.
- Press regulators to make public and implement the fishery management plan as recommended by the Joint Technical Commission of the Maritime Front.
- Work with industry to increase compliance with bycatch reduction devices.