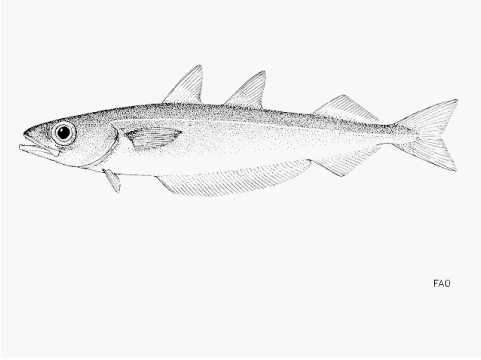


Blue whiting NE Atlantic

Fishery:  NE Atlantic  EU/Faroe Islands/Iceland/Norway/NEAFC  Ireland  Midwater trawls

IDENTIFICATION



SCIENTIFIC NAME

Micromesistius poutassou

SPECIES NAME(S)

Blue whiting, Poutassou

COMMON NAMES

Blue whiting, poutassou

STOCK IDENTIFICATION

ICES considers blue whiting in ICES Subareas I–IX, XII, and XIV as a single stock for assessment purposes (ICES 2012). However, there is scientific evidence to support the hypothesis of two components (Keating et al. 2014, Pointin and Payne 2014) with some degree of mixing in the central overlap area (Mahe et al. 2016). The ICES Stock Identification Methods Working Group (SIMWG) reviewed this evidence in 2014 and recommended that blue whiting be considered as two stock units (ICES 2014). A recent report by ICES notes that there have been changes in the distribution of the species, likely linked to environmental conditions but that such changes did not affect proportions between TAC management areas (ICES 2017). Until a formal definition of the two distinct stocks, this profile refers to the NE Atlantic assessment unit.

This fishery entered full assessment by the Marine Stewardship Council system in August 2014. Click [here](#) to link to the MSC fishery page and to learn more about the MSC fishery certification unit.



RELATED LINKS:

- [European Commission \(EC\)](#) , [Faroese Ministry of Fisheries](#) , [Icelandic Ministry of Industries and Innovation \(MII\)](#) , [North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission \(NEAFC\)](#) , [Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries \(DoF\)](#)
- [International Council for the Exploration of the Sea \(ICES\)](#)

ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- A new long-term and precautionary management plan has been agreed by all coastal states and is in force since October 2016.
- The agreed global catch limit for 2019 was in line with ICES advice per the agreed long-term management strategy (and the MSY approach).
- Stock biomass remains at healthy levels, well above the target reference point.
- Impacts on protected species and on vulnerable benthic habitats are also deemed low in the directed blue whiting fisheries.
- Bycatch and discards are low, but data on bycatch and on overall fishery impacts is limited.

Weaknesses

- Fishing mortality has been decreasing but remains above the target fishing mortality reference point.
- Stock biomass is above reference points but biomass estimates decreased 20% since last year.
- The assessment reflects mainly the northern component of the stock; there is still lack of information on the southern component of the stock.
- Since 2015, ICES estimated catches have been above the TAC. Preliminary catches for 2018 are 23% above the total TAC for blue whiting.
- Uncertainty in the terminal year estimates of spawning biomass, fishing mortality and recruitment is moderate to high.
- Research on bycatch and on overall fishery impacts is limited.

SCORES

Management Quality:

Management Strategy	Managers Compliance	Fishers Compliance
9.4	10	6.3

Stock Health:

Current Health	Future Health
10	6.4

FIPS

No related FIPs

MSC

- PFA, DPPO, KFO, SPSG & Compagnie des Pêches St Malo Northeast Atlantic blue whiting Pelagic Trawl:

MSC Certified

RECOMMENDATIONS

RETAILERS & SUPPLY CHAIN

- Ensure that the total allowable catch (TAC) for the entire northeast Atlantic blue whiting stock is set in accordance with scientific advice and that fishing mortality is reduced to no more than the fishing mortality reference point.
- Conduct research to fully define the stock structure and develop stock specific assessments, reference points and harvest strategies.
- Encourage the adoption of ecosystem-based fisheries management, namely consider the importance of blue whiting as forage species when setting reference points and catch limits.
- Collect comprehensive information on bycatch (species, quantities, areas, seasonality).
- Monitor the progress in closing out conditions placed upon the certification of the fishery and if agreed timelines are met. Offer assistance in closing conditions where possible.