Southern blue whiting

**Bounty platform**

Fishery: NZ Bounty Platform (SBW 6B) | New Zealand | Semipelagic trawls

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### IDENTIFICATION

**Scientific Name**

*Micromesistius australis*

**Species Name(s)**

Southern blue whiting, New Zealand southern blue whiting

**Stock Identification**

Besides being found around the southern tip of South America, Southern blue whiting (*Micromesistius australis*) is found on the southern shelf of New Zealand, but is occasionally considered to be a distinct subspecies – *Micromesistius australis pallidus*, as opposed to *Micromesistius australis australis*. Harchet (1999) found significant differences in growth rates as well as on morphometric characteristics suggesting that the 4 stocks, which present distinct spawning grounds, should be assessed and managed separately: Auckland Islands (SBW 6A), Bounty Platform (SBW 6B), Campbell Island Rise (SBW 6C), and Pukaki Rise stock (SBW 6R). These 4 biological stocks are used by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) for assessment and management purposes (Fisheries New Zealand 2019).

### ASSESSMENT

**Strengths**

- Vessels are required to use VMS (Vessel Monitoring System).
- Observer coverage is near 100%.
- TACCs have been reduced repeatedly in recent years in response to indications of declining abundance.
- Since 2015, TACCs have not been exceeded.
- An Operational Plan for Deepwater Fisheries helps to manage the fishery and related ecosystem impacts. The environment and biodiversity status and fishing impacts are regularly reviewed.
- Mitigation measures are used to reduce the interaction with protected species, which are rarely impacted. The most vulnerable seabird species are identified.
- A network of marine protected areas continues to be established, and comprises basin restriction areas. The effect of the network of marine protected areas is being monitored.
- Benthic Protection Areas restrict the interaction of the fishery with protected seabed ecosystems.
- Discarding rate and bycatches are very low.
- The fishery is certified by the Marine Stewardship Council.

**Weaknesses**

- Stock is below its 5 year and long-term average abundance as measure by the industry-based local aggregation acoustic survey.
- There is no analytical assessment so stock status relative to biomass reference points cannot be determined.
- Projections are not possible for this stock at this time.
- There is considerable uncertainty surrounding the industry-based local aggregation acoustic survey and its catchability.
- Survey issues have prevented an update in stock status for the most recent year.
- Stock is highly recruitment driven with wide swings in population sizes as a result. This can make management challenging.
- A new method for classifying New Zealand’s marine habitat is being undertaken, and meanwhile, there is uncertainty as to how this will affect the classification of habitats identified as “high risk” under the previously used classification scheme (BOMEC), and whether the current BPA network sufficiently protects such areas.

**Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Quality</th>
<th>Management Strategy</th>
<th>Managers Compliance</th>
<th>Fishers Compliance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥ 6</td>
<td>10</td>
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**Stock Health**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Health</th>
<th>Future Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; 6</td>
<td>≥ 6</td>
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**MSC**

- New Zealand EEZ southern blue whiting semipelagic trawl fishery: MSC Certified
- New Zealand Deepwater Group bluelip, hoki, ling and southern blue whiting: MSC Certified

**Recommendations**

- Remonitor the fishery and management system for any changes that could jeopardize MSC certification; especially management responses to continuing recruitment-driven poor stock status.