Blackbellied angler

**Southern Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay**

**Fishery:** Southern Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay, IC: 7b–k, Bab, Bab Southern Celtic Sea, EC: 7b–k, 8abd, UK

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### IDENTIFICATION

**Scientific Name:** Lophius budegassa

**Species Name(s):** Blackbellied angler, monk, monkfish

**Stock Identification:**

ICES considers several different units of anglerfish for assessment and management purposes:

1. Anglerfish in Division 3a (Kattegat and Skagerrak), Subarea 4 (North Sea), and Subarea 6 (West of Scotland and Rockall) (*Lophius piscatorius* and *L. budegassa*);
2. Angler (*L. piscatorius*) and blackbellied angler (*L. budegassa*; this profile) in Divisions 7b–k and Bab, Bab (Southern Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay);
3. Angler and blackbellied angler in Divisions Br and 3a (Cantabrian Sea and Atlantic Iberian waters).

However, the boundaries between stocks are not based on biological criteria, according to studies carried out in genetic and morphometric analysis (Duarte et al., 2004 and Fariña et al., 2004 in ICES, 2014a). In the unit covered by this profile the two species: angler, or white anglerfish (*L. piscatorius*) and blackbellied angler (*L. budegassa*) are assessed and advised by ICES as a single assessment unit (ICES, 2014c). Angler (*L. piscatorius*) in Divisions 4a, Division 6a and Rockall might in fact extend into 7, 5 or 2a, although there is currently insufficient evidence to support an extension of the stock area (ICES, 2010).

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### ASSESSMENT

**Strengths**

- The average stock biomass indicator in the last two years is higher than the average of the 3 previous years for both species, and the abundance index suggest medium recruitment for *L. piscatorius* and the highest observed for *L. budegassa* (ICES 2014b, 2014c).
- Underreporting of landings is thought to have decreased as a result of improved enforcement (ICES 2012a).
- Effort has decreased steadily and the stock is not expected to be overexploited (ICES 2014d).
- Biological sampling is carried out by the countries contributing most to catches.

**Weaknesses**

- No biological reference points are set.
- Ageing problems and difficulties estimating and quantifying discards of small anglerfish have led to uncertainty in catch estimates and advice and contributed to the lack of an analytical assessment.
- The majority of anglerfish catches (for both species) consists of immature fish.
- There are indications that discarding of small anglerfish has increased in recent years.
- Management of the two anglerfish species under a combined TAC prevents effective control of the single-species exploitation rates and could potentially lead to overexploitation of either species (ICES 2014b, 2014c).
- In the last two years TAC has been set at higher levels than ICES advice.
- There is a mismatch since ICES advice applies to an area (Divisions VIIb–k and VIIIa,b,d) smaller than the management area (Subarea VII and Subdivisions VIIIa,b,d,e) for which the TAC is established (ICES 2014b, 2014d).
- Although ICES considers different anglerfish stocks in different areas for each species, the boundaries are not based on biological criteria (ICES, 2014c).
- The impacts of the fishery on PET species and habitat are not known.
- Trawl activity has considerable overlap with nursery grounds and in the Southwest UK region, a high degree of overlap is known to occur on anglerfish nursery grounds (Koch and Pacitto 2013).

**Scores**

- **Management Quality:**
  - Management Strategy: < 6
  - Managers Compliance: 7.8
  - Fishers Compliance: 10

- **Stock Health:**
  - Current Health: ≥ 6
  - Future Health: ≥ 6

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**FIPS**

- United Kingdom monkfish - gillnet/trawl
  - Stage 3, Progress Rating C, Type Fp, Evaluation Start Date: 1 Jul 2018

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**MSC**

No related MSC fisheries