European pilchard
NW Africa southern

**IDENTIFICATION**

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**
Sardina pilchardus

**SPECIES NAME(S)**
European pilchard, Sardine, European sardine

**STOCK IDENTIFICATION**
Many studies have investigated the structure of the European pilchard stock, commonly known as the "sardine" population, widely distributed in the northeast and Eastern Central Atlantic, and the Mediterranean and Black Sea (e.g., Spanakis et al. 1989; Fink et al. 2002; Kasapidis et al. 2003; Chlaida et al. 2006; Tinti et al. 2002; Chlaida et al. 2006; Kasapidis et al. 2011). Moreover, some uncertainty remains (Kasapidis et al. 2012), and further research into regional stock subunits is needed (ICES 2016a). The West African European pilchard profiles presented on FishSource reflect two assessment units delineated by the FAO Working Group on Small Pelagic Fish in North Africa, (FAO 2017): one in zones “A + B” (Central) and another in zone “C” (Southern). The recent work of Shukgalter (2013) supports the distinction of these two stock units.

The Southern stock unit, considered here, reflects the population occurring in the waters of Morocco and countries south, between Cap Blanc at 32ºN through the southern limit of the species extent, while the Central stock unit reflects an entirely Moroccan population from Cap Blanc north to Cap Boujdour at 32ºN.

In addition to the West African stocks, FishSource considers the following assessment units throughout the species' distribution:

- **Northern Adriatic Sea**
- **Northern Alboran Sea**
- **Southern Adriatic Sea**
- **Mediterranean and Black Sea**
- **Bay of Biscay, Southern Celtic Seas and Southern North Sea**
- **Eastern Central Atlantic**
- **ETP**

**RELATED LINKS**
- [Mauritania Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy (MFME)]
- [Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (ICECAF)]

**ASSESSMENT**

**Strains**
- The stock is regularly surveyed; in 2017, however, only the Russian and Moroccan acoustic surveys were conducted.
- Some uncertainty remains as to the FAO and the INRH: the FAO provides annual scientific advice.
- Scientists, with both the INRH and the FAO, found the stock in 2017 to be in relatively good health with respect to biomass reference points.
- There is a Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (Commission Siro-Atlantique des Pêcheries, CSIP) that includes Mauritania and Senegal, that has conducted efforts to assess and manage the transboundary small pelagic stocks shared with the countries of the region, jointly with Morocco.
- There is a national small pelagic TAC in Morocco, and catch ceilings for foreign fleets operating under legal agreements in Morocco and Mauritania.
- Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems throughout the region have undergone improvements in the recent decade.
- Bycatch limits are defined for each of the Moroccan and Mauritanian fisheries.
- Purse-seining and pelagic trawling are not expected to have significant effects on the seabed ecosystem.
- There is a national fisheries management framework in place.

**Weaknesses**
- There is some mismanagement between the INRH and the FAO regarding the exploitation status of the stocks; some methods by INRH yield conflicting results.
- Some species in the mixed stock fishery are overexploited - including Atlantic and Chinese horse mackerel, and round and Madeiran sardinella.
- Stock assessment advice by the FAO is not released in a timely manner; and the connection between stock assessments, advice, and harvest limits is unclear.
- The stock is highly dependent on environmental dynamics, and the degree to which management adapts to these factors with respect to catch limits is unclear.
- Quantification of discarding is limited, particularly in Mauritania.
- ETP interaction is poorly documented, and indicated to be a possible concern based on past studies (sharks, mammals, and turtles).
- A variety of fishery activities are conducted - but are poorly documented in the region, complex foreign fishing arrangements add ambiguity.
- The stock structure remains somewhat uncertain.
- There is no fishery management plan; no national TAC, and no harvest control rule for sardine or small pelagics in Mauritania.
- Annual acoustic surveys by Mauritania were conducted.
- The non-industrial (e.g. coastal purse seine) fleet in Mauritania is open to which management adapts to these factors with respect to catch limits.
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**SCORES**

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**FIPS**

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Support the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission and Morocco in their...
efforts to develop a strategic plan for management of the small pelagic fisheries in the region. The management plan should include species specific TACs, joint setting of TACs, and consideration of how environmental variability may affect stocks.

- Work with scientists to understand the uncertainties in the stock assessment and improve the different assessment models and input data (catches, discards, biological data) to reduce the level of uncertainty in the assessment and to work towards resolving the differences between the models.
- Encourage management authorities to release stock assessment results sooner and improve transparency of subsequent management actions, including the setting of catch or effort limits.
- Ask the government/regional authorities to continue to improve catch and discard reporting and to publish fishery compliance information, especially for Mauritania.
- Work with scientists to conduct studies to clarify the stock structure of northwest African pilchard/sardine.
- Press managers to implement a recovery strategy for other target species in this multi-species fishery to ensure that all such species are at least above biologically-based limit reference points or proxies for the point of recruitment impairment, especially for Cunene and Atlantic horse mackerels, and round and Madeiran sardinellas.
- Work with scientists and managers to expand the at-sea observer programme to provide representational coverage of all components of the fishery to better understand catches and discards, as well as interactions with habitats and all types of bycatch.

Fishery Profile
https://www.fishsource.org/fishery_page/5947
This profile last updated on 18 July 2019