IDENTIFICATION

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Merluccius capensis

SPECIES NAME(S)
Shallow-water Cape hake

STOCK IDENTIFICATION
The distribution of deep-water Merluccius paradoxus and shallow-water Merluccius capensis Cape hakes overlap along the continental shelf and upper slope of South Africa; both species occupy different depths but coincide between 150 and 300m (DAFF 2012).

The relation between this and the neighboring Namibian population is as yet unclear. The most recently available data on the stock structure was discussed in a workshop on the subject, held in November 2014 (OLRAC SPS 2014).

According to the workshop report, for M. capensis there are currently five hypotheses: “four 2-stock hypotheses (again differing in terms of the areas of overlap between the two stocks),” and the initial 3-stock hypothesis. In South African waters M. capensis is currently treated as a single stock for assessment purposes, but discussions on the stock structure will continue.

ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- Industry has taken a proactive interest in hake conservation, improving catch accounting and tightening effort controls.
- The shallow-water hake spawning stock biomass is on an increasing trend since 2008, and is currently well above both biomass reference points.
- Deep-water and shallow-water stocks are now distinguished in the assessment and on-board observers were placed on the boats to distinguish the two species in catches. Assessments are peer reviewed periodically by a high level panel of international scientists, particularly in the build-up to Operational Management Procedure revisions; a harvest control rule is defined.
- Based on the status of the stocks and analysis of the Catch per Unit Effort estimates, a partial catch limit is advised annually for each of the Cape hake stock species. The aggregated approach for the management of both Cape hake species is considered as appropriate and in accordance with the Precautionary Approach. The two hakes are managed as distinct entities within an aggregated TAC which is limited by the weaker condition of deep-water Cape hake.
- Bycatch species are being monitored from observers’ and landing records; precautionary catch limits for horse mackerel, monk and kingklip are in place. Tori lines have substantially reduced the interaction with seabirds and are mandatory as part of fishing permit conditions.
- The trawl fishing distributions lie within as well as benthic habitats and TNC’s area with biodiversity importance. The foraging behavior has been successfully implemented. The design and implementation of a closed area (Chibi Bank) is being tested in early stages to determine the impacts of trawling on the seabed ecosystem. An ecologically representative offshore MPA network is already being established.

Weaknesses

- The distinction of both species is difficult in operational terms.
- There are still some concerns over the impact of the fishery on some protected species such as pickled dogfish and black-browed albatrosses; seabirds have been a group of concern due to trawl and longline interactions, and information on bycatch mortalities is still considered limited in terms of the inshore fleet. Bycatch represents around 20% of total catches. Observers' coverage improved but still not optimal.
- There is still some uncertainty surrounding how effective are the current measures to manage long-term impacts on sea floor habitats.

SCORES

- Management Quality:
  - Management Strategy: ≥ 8
  - Managers Compliance: 10
  - Fishers Compliance: ≥ 8

- Stock Health:
  - Current Health: 10
  - Future Health: ≥ 8

FIPS

No related FIPs

MSC

- South Africa hake trawl: MSC Recertified

RELATED LINKS:
- South African Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF)
- Fisheries Research and Development, South Africa Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries, Marine Resource Assessment and Management Group, University of Cape Town

Stock Page: https://www.fishsource.org/stock_page/1019

Assessment Unit Profile: https://www.fishsource.org/assessments/1019
Fisheries

Within FishSource, the term "fishery" is used to indicate each unique combination of a flag country with a fishing gear, operating within a particular management unit, upon a resource. That resource may have a known biological stock structure and/or may be assessed at another level for practical or jurisdictional reasons.

A fishery is the finest scale of resolution captured in FishSource profiles, as it is generally the scale at which sustainability can most fairly and practically be evaluated.

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Management Unit

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