

Seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in divisions 8.a–b (northern and central Bay of Biscay)

ICES stock advice

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, commercial catches should be no more than 2440 tonnes in 2018. If discard rates do not change from last year (2016), this implies commercial landings of no more than 2375 tonnes. Recreational catches cannot be quantified; therefore, total catches cannot be calculated.

Stock development over time

The biomass index has fluctuated without overall trend, with some decrease observed since 2014.

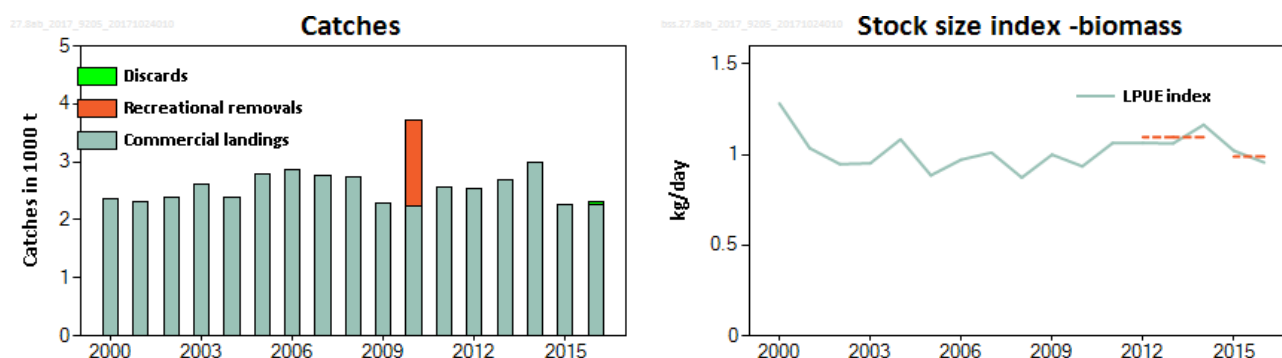


Figure 1 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. Left panel: Commercial catches (with discards only included in 2016), and recreational removals (only available for 2010; including 15% mortality of released fish). Right panel: Biomass index (landings per unit effort, LPUE) derived from French logbook analysis.

Stock and exploitation status

Table 1 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure			Stock size					
		2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016			
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	?	?	?	Undefined	$MSY B_{trigger}$?	?	?	Undefined
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	?	?	?	Undefined	B_{pa}, B_{lim}	?	?	?	Undefined
Management plan	F_{MGT}	—	—	—	Not applicable	B_{MGT}	—	—	—	Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	?	?	?	Unknown	-	↗	↘	↘	Stable

Catch options

The ICES framework for category 3 stocks was applied (ICES, 2012). The French landings per unit effort (LPUE) was applied as the index of stock biomass. The advice is based on a comparison of the two latest index values (index A) with the three preceding values (index B), multiplied by the recent advised catch. The index is estimated to have decreased by less than 20% and thus the uncertainty cap was not applied. The stock status relative to candidate reference points is unknown; however, the precautionary buffer was applied in 2015 and is, therefore, not applied this year.

Commercial discarding is included in the advice, based on the discard rate observed in 2016. Recreational removals are unknown (except for 2010).

Table 2 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. The basis for the catch options.*

Index A (2015–2016)		0.99
Index B (2012–2014)		1.10
Index ratio (A/B)		0.90
Uncertainty cap	Not applied	
Advised commercial catch for 2017		2634 tonnes
Discard rate in commercial fishery (2016)		2.7%
Precautionary buffer	Not applied	
Commercial catch advice [^]		2440 tonnes
Commercial landings corresponding to the advice ^{^^}		2375 tonnes

[^] (advised commercial catch for 2017) × index ratio / (1 – discard rate). Note: commercial catch advice in previous years did not include any quantification of discarding (assumed negligible and not included in the advice), whereas discarding is now quantified and included in the advice.

^{^^} (commercial catch advice) × (1 – discard rate).

*The figures in the table are rounded. Calculations were done with unrounded inputs and computed values may not match exactly when calculated using the rounded figures in the table.

Basis of the advice

Table 3 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for seabass in this area.

Quality of the assessment

Recreational fisheries are likely to contribute substantially to fishery removals in some areas. A single estimate of recreational removals is available, based on a French survey conducted in 2010.

As part of the ongoing development of the stock assessment, the LPUE series used as stock size indicator this year is different from the one used previously. Further development of the series and the stock assessment is expected in the near future, following from the 2017 benchmark currently in progress.

There are no scientific surveys to provide fisheries-independent information on abundance. A pilot recruitment survey has been conducted by France in the Bay of Biscay in 2016 and 2017, but there is uncertainty as to its continuation.

Stock identity remains poorly understood and tagging studies are ongoing.

Issues relevant for the advice

Recreational fisheries are thought to be significant but these are not quantified and, therefore, the advice only applies to the commercial fishery.

A benchmark process was initiated for seabass in 2017 and should be completed before ICES provides advice for this stock in 2018.

Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

Basis of the assessment

Table 5 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. The basis of the assessment.

ICES stock data category	3 (ICES, 2016)
Assessment type	Survey trends-based assessment
Input data	Commercial landings, and recreational removals (estimated available only for 2010), one abundance index (standardized French LPUE).
Discards and bycatch	The 2016 commercial fishery discard rate is used in the advice.
Indicators	None
Other information	Benchmarked in IBPNEW 2012 (ICES, 2012). A benchmark in 2017 is in progress.
Working group report	Working Group for the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Waters Ecoregion (WGBIE)

Information from stakeholders

There is no additional available information for this stock.

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 6 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. History of ICES advice, the agreed TAC, and ICES estimates of commercial landings, commercial discards and recreational removals. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES Advice*	Predicted catch corresponding to advice*	Agreed TAC	Official commercial landings**	ICES commercial landings	ICES commercial discards	ICES recreational removals
2000	-	-	none	2147	2362		
2001	-	-	none	2091	2309		
2002	No increase in effort or F	-	none	2113	2392		
2003	No increase in effort or F	-	none	2931	2616		
2004	No increase in effort or F	-	none	2657	2380		
2005	-	-	none	3258	2796		
2006	-	-	none	3488	2877		
2007	-	-	none	3060	2769		
2008	-	-	none	1653	2745		
2009	-	-	none	2534	2279		
2010	-	-	none	2489	2231		1479
2011	-	-	none	2607	2576		
2012	No increase in catch	-	none	2330	2554		
2013	20% reduction in catches (last 3-year average)	< 6000	none	2685	2685		
2014	20% reduction in catches (last 3-year average)	< 1890	none	2991	2991		
2015	Same advice as last year	< 1890	none	2264	2264		
2016	Precautionary approach	< 2634	none	2253	2253	62	
2017	Precautionary approach	< 2634	none				
2018	Precautionary approach	≤ 2440***					

* ICES advice prior to 2014 was for European seabass in the Northeast Atlantic. Since 2014, the advice is for seabass in divisions 8.a–b.

** Official landings were extracted from the ICES official statistics webpage for BSS and divisions 8.a and 8.b. The difference between official and ICES landings values are mainly due to the French landing data that come from a separate analysis of logbooks, auctions, and VMS data from 2000 onwards. From 2011 onwards, data from this method are reported as official landings.

*** Advice for commercial catch (including landings and discards). In previous years, discarding was not quantified (assumed to be negligible and not included in the catch advice).

History of the catch and landings

Table 7 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. Catch distribution by fleet in 2016 as estimated by ICES.

Total catch	Commercial landings						Commercial discards	Recreational catch	
	Nets	Lines	Bottom trawl	Pelagic trawl	Others	Danish seine			Purse seine
Unknown	37%	32%	15%	8%	4%	1%	1%	62 tonnes	Known to be substantial but cannot be quantified
2 253 tonnes									

Table 8 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. History of the official commercial landings presented for each country participating in the fishery. History of the total ICES estimated commercial landings. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Spain	UK (Eng+Wales+N.Irl+Scotland)	Total official	Total ICES
1985	0	2477	0	0	0	2477	3420
1986	0	2606	0	0	0	2606	3549
1987	0	2474	0	0	5	2479	3417
1988	0	2274	0	0	15	2289	3217
1989	0	2201	0	0	0	2201	3144
1990	0	1678	0	0	0	1678	2621
1991	0	1774	0	17	0	1791	2734
1992	0	1752	0	14	0	1766	2709
1993	0	1595	0	14	0	1609	2552
1994	0	1708	0	17	0	1725	2668
1995	0	1549	0	0	0	1549	2492
1996	0	1459	0	0	0	1459	2402
1997	0	1415	0	0	0	1415	2358
1998	0	1261	0	27	0	1288	2231
1999	0	0	0	11	0	11	2091
2000	0	2080	0	67	0	2147	2362
2001	0	2020	3	68	0	2091	2306
2002	0	1937	0	176	0	2113	2392
2003	0	2812	0	119	0	2931	2616
2004	0	2561	0	96	0	2657	2380
2005	0	3184	0	74	0	3258	2796
2006	0	3318	0	168	2	3488	2875
2007	1	2984	0	74	1	3060	2751
2008	0	1508	0	145	0	1653	2745
2009	1	2339	0	194	0	2534	2278
2010	0	2322	0	165	2	2489	2229
2011	1	2295	0	311	0	2607	2575
2012	0	2325				2325	2549
2013	0	2532	0		0	2532	2685
2014	0	2900	0	91	0	2991	2991
2015	0	2193	0	71	0	2264	2264
2016*	0	2160	0	93	0	2253	2253

*Preliminary.

Summary of the assessment

Table 9 Seabass in divisions 8.a–b. Assessment summary. All weights are in tonnes. Values of commercial landings, commercial discards and recreational removals are ICES estimates (empty cells mean non-available values).

Year	Biomass Index	Commercial landings	Commercial discards	Recreational removals
2000	1.283	2362		
2001	1.036	2306		
2002	0.948	2392		
2003	0.953	2616		
2004	1.084	2380		
2005	0.886	2796		
2006	0.972	2875		
2007	1.012	2767		
2008	0.874	2745		
2009	1	2278		
2010	0.936	2229		1479
2011	1.064	2575		
2012	1.065	2549		
2013	1.063	2685		
2014	1.165	2991		
2015	1.022	2265		
2016	0.957	2253	62	

Sources and references

ICES. 2012. Report of the Inter-Benchmark Protocol on New Species (Turbot and Sea bass; IBPNew 2012), 1–5 October 2012, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2012/ACOM:45. 239 pp.

ICES 2016. Advice basis. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2016. ICES Advice 2016, Book 1, Section 1.2.

ICES. 2017. Report of the Working Group for the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian waters Ecoregion (WGBIE), 4-9 May 2017, Cadiz, Spain. ICES CM 2017/ACOM:12.