

ICES Advice - Help sheet

This help sheet explains some of the terms used in the ICES advice on fish stocks (see image below).

4.4.1a Cod in Subarea IV (North Sea), Division IIIa (Skagerrak)

State of the stock

1	2	3	
Spawning biomass in relation to precautionary limits	Fishing mortality in relation to precautionary limits	Fishing mortality in relation to highest yield	Comment
Reduced reproductive capacity	Harvested unsustainably	Overfished	

Based on the most recent estimate of SSB and fishing mortality ICES expects SSB to remain at that level in 2004. SSB is well below the B_{lim} of 1990 and is estimated to be well below average.

1- “Spawning biomass in relation to precautionary limits”

What does it mean?

This is a measure of the amount (or biomass) of adult fish in a stock and whether this is above or below the minimum level recommended by ICES scientists.

The three categories are:

- **Acceptable**

The fish stock is in a healthy state and above the minimum level recommended by ICES.

- **Increased risk**

The fish stock is below the minimum level recommended by ICES. The stock is not so low that it could be classed as depleted; but the amount of adult fish has fallen to a level where there is a risk that production - in terms of offspring - is likely to be reduced.

- **Reduced reproductive capacity**

The stock is depleted. This means that the fish stock is unlikely to be as productive in the marine ecosystem as it could be.

This does not mean that the stock will become extinct. But it does mean that current fishing pressure needs to be reduced to more sustainable levels to give the stock a chance to rebuild.

2 - “Fishing mortality in relation to precautionary limits”

What does it mean?

This is a measure of the fishing pressure on a fish stock and whether it is above or below the maximum level recommended by ICES scientists.

The three categories are:

- **Acceptable**

The stock is being fished in a sustainable way. Fishing pressure is under the maximum level recommended by ICES.

- **Increased risk**

Fishing pressure is higher than the maximum level recommended by ICES. If it is not reduced it could lead to depletion of the stock in the future.

- **Harvested unsustainably**

Fishing pressure is much higher than the maximum level recommended by ICES. Continued fishing at this level is likely to deplete the stock - if it hasn't already done so.

3 - “Fishing mortality in relation to highest yield”

What does it mean?

This is a measure of the level of fishing pressure on a stock that will, on average, lead to a high yield for fishers - in the long term.

The three categories are:

- **Below target**

This means that there is scope for more fishing on the stock to get a higher yield in the long term.

- **Appropriate**

Fishing pressure is at the right level to get the most fish from the stock in the long term.

- **Overfished**

Fishing pressure is too high; if fishing pressure was reduced more fish could be taken from the stock in the future.