



PRESS RELEASE

International Council for the
Exploration of the Sea

8 June 2004

ICES ADVISES ZERO CATCH ON MORE COD STOCKS

This Friday, scientists from ICES will release a report giving more strong advice to the European Commission and governments to reduce fishing pressure. In particular, cod stocks in the Kattegat, eastern Baltic and Norwegian coastal cod are all depleted and being overfished and ICES will advise zero catch of cod in these areas for 2005. (*The report does not include cod stocks in the North Sea, Irish Sea and West of Scotland which will be assessed in the autumn.*)

| Area | Minimum recommended stock size | Estimated stock size in 2004 | ICES Advice |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Cod - Kattegat | 6,400 t | 2,800 t | No fishing on this stock in 2005 |
| Cod – Eastern Baltic | 240,000 t | Less than 100,000 t* | No fishing on this stock in 2005 |
| Cod – Norwegian coast | 100,000 t | 31,200 t | No fishing on this stock in 2005 |

* Actual stock size is highly uncertain due to several years misreporting of catches

ICES will also recommend reduced catches of Northeast Arctic cod, Icelandic cod and Faroes cod which are also being overfished. The Faroes cod stock has already fallen below the minimum recommended stock size and Northeast Arctic and Icelandic cod are also at risk of doing so if they continue to be fished so heavily.

Herring

In contrast to the poor state of many cod stocks, ICES will advise that the general position with herring stocks continues to be good. As an example, herring in the North Sea and eastern Channel are classed as being harvested sustainably and the stock is expected to increase in 2004 from 1.74 million to up to 2 million t. Further north, the Norwegian spring spawning herring stock is also being harvested sustainably with a spawning stock of 7 million t.

David Griffith, General Secretary of ICES said today:

“The fisheries for North Sea herring and Norwegian spring spawning herring are now controlled by effective, international management. With the added benefit of successful recruitment of young fish, these stocks are now in a strong position.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for cod stocks in the Northeast Atlantic, most of which are now classed as overfished. We are hoping that our advice will lead to a reduction in fishing pressure on cod stocks so that these fisheries can become sustainable again."

Icelandic capelin

A surprising finding in Icelandic waters has been the apparent disappearance of the next generation of the capelin stock from their normal areas. Surveys around the Icelandic coast in autumn 2003 and early 2004 failed to find any juvenile capelin.

Icelandic waters are characterised by very variable water conditions, with temperatures depending on the strength of the flow of Atlantic water from the south and polar water from the north. In the summer of 2002 there was a strong inflow of warm Atlantic water and this has again been recorded in February 2004. Scientists think that the warmer waters may have displaced the juvenile capelin away from their normal areas; or alternatively the capelin may have suffered poor reproductive success and as a result there are very few juveniles around.

Whatever the reason, because the capelin stock is so dependent on a new influx of young fish, scientists have advised that the fishery should be stopped until new information on stock size becomes available and that this new information shows a predicted spawning stock biomass of at least 400 000 t in March 2005.

Norway lobster

The advice also covers Norway lobster stocks in the Bay of Biscay and along the Iberian coast. Landings of Norway lobster in these areas have been decreasing for a number of years and stocks continue to be overfished.

What does it mean when a fish stock is below the minimum recommended stock size?

When a stock is below the minimum recommended stock size it is being fished too hard, the fish are not being given enough chance to reproduce and the stock may not be as productive in the ecosystem as it should be. This does not necessarily mean that the stock will become extinct but it does mean that the current fishery needs to be reduced to more sustainable levels.

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The full report on fish stocks in the northeast Atlantic will be available on the ICES website as a series of pdf files on 11 June 2004

(<http://www.ices.dk/committe/acfm/comwork/report/asp/acfmrep.asp>)

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Advisory Committee on Fishery Management (ACFM)

The Advisory Committee on Fishery Management (ACFM) provides scientific information and advice on living resources and their harvesting. In formulating its advice on the management of ca. 135 stocks of fish and shellfish, ACFM uses information prepared by numerous ICES stock assessment Working Groups. ACFM consists of one scientist from each of the 19 ICES member countries along with chairs of relevant ICES science committees and observers from the European Commission, Faroe Islands/Greenland and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO).

ACFM meets twice a year (summer and late autumn) to prepare its advice, which is published annually in the ICES Cooperative Research Report series. The advice is also available in pdf format on the ICES Website at www.ices.dk

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea

ICES is the organisation that coordinates and promotes marine research in the North Atlantic. This includes adjacent seas such as the Baltic Sea and North Sea. ICES acts as a meeting point for a community of more than 1600 marine scientists from 19 countries around the North Atlantic.

Scientists working through ICES gather information about the marine ecosystem. As well as filling gaps in existing knowledge, this information is also developed into unbiased, non-political advice. The advice is then used by the 19 member countries, which fund and support ICES, to help them manage the North Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas. The annual budget is 25 million dkk/3.3 million euro.

ICES plans and coordinates marine research through a system of committees, more than 100 working groups, symposia, and an Annual Science Conference. Most meetings take place either at the ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark, or in the member countries.

ICES has been based in Copenhagen, Denmark, since 1902. Today, we have a Secretariat of 38 staff who provide scientific, administrative and secretarial support to the ICES Community of over 1600 marine scientists. <http://www.ices.dk>