

11.2.1 European Union (European Commission, DG MARE, Unit C2)

11.2.1.2 Opinion on the outcome of an in year revision for northern hake

Background

ICES received this request from the European Commission:

A request for an in year revision of the Northern Hake Stock has been made to the Commission. In the 2013 advice, ICES base their calculation of the 2014 catch options on an estimated landings figure of 69,440t which is in excess of the current TAC(55kt). The resulting catch advice following the MSY approach identifies a substantial increase for 2014.

This estimated landings figure has been identified as the target for an in year increase. It is the Commission's understanding that if total outtake is restrained within the boundaries of the catch forecast table then the advice for 2014 would not need to be revised. A total outtake beyond these levels would require a revision of the advice for 2014.

Request

ICES is asked to consider the potential impact on discards, unaccounted mortality and overall landings that an in year revision would result in.

In particular ICES are asked to use the data available to it regarding landing-to-TAC patterns in previous years to assess the risk that an in-year increase results in a change in fishing behaviour, in the various fleets, which might alter the discarding practices or otherwise effect the overall mortality impacting on this stock.

Additionally ICES are asked to identify what information could be provided from the respective fisheries to improve the information on discards for each fleet /fishery. “

ICES response

ICES provides advice on hake according to the MSY approach. In common with most ICES advice this is given one year ahead and not normally revised in year. ICES considers that the advice for hake given in 2012 for the 2013 TAC still is the appropriate advice if managers wish to follow the MSY approach.

In giving advice for the TAC year (2014) it is necessary to make an assumption about catches in the current year (2013). For some stocks the assumed catch for the current year is equal to the TAC but in some cases it is not. The current assumption for northern hake is based on past experience with this stock where it is estimated that landings have exceeded the TAC.

The assumption made for 2013 in calculating the 2014 advice does not constitute a basis to revise the 2013 advice. Based on the average catch per quarter of the last 4 years, it can be expected that about 75% of the annual catch will be caught by the end of September. Over the same 4 year period, it is estimated that landings have exceeded the TAC by 32%. It is likely that some discarding/unreporting of catch has already occurred during January to September 2013 and will continue for the remainder of 2013. Discarding/unreporting in 2013 could end up being similar to the difference between the 2013 TAC and the landings assumed by ICES. There is some concern that the steep estimated increase in SSB and the decrease in F may not be totally accurate, which calls for caution when considering the assessment results. ICES therefore, does not recommend that the 2013 TAC should be increased.

ICES was also asked to identify what information could be provided from the respective fisheries to improve the information on discards for each fleet /fishery. In the interest of providing a timely reply, ICES did not address this issue, but if this information is required, it could be provided later.