

Blue ling (*Molva dypterygia*) in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a (Northeast Atlantic)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, there should be zero catches in each of the years from 2020 to 2023. Closed areas to protect spawning should be maintained.

Stock development over time

Trends in landings suggest depletion in Subarea 2. Landings have also declined strongly in Subarea 12 from 2002 onwards. Landings from other areas are minor, but there is some evidence of a persistent decline in Subarea 4.

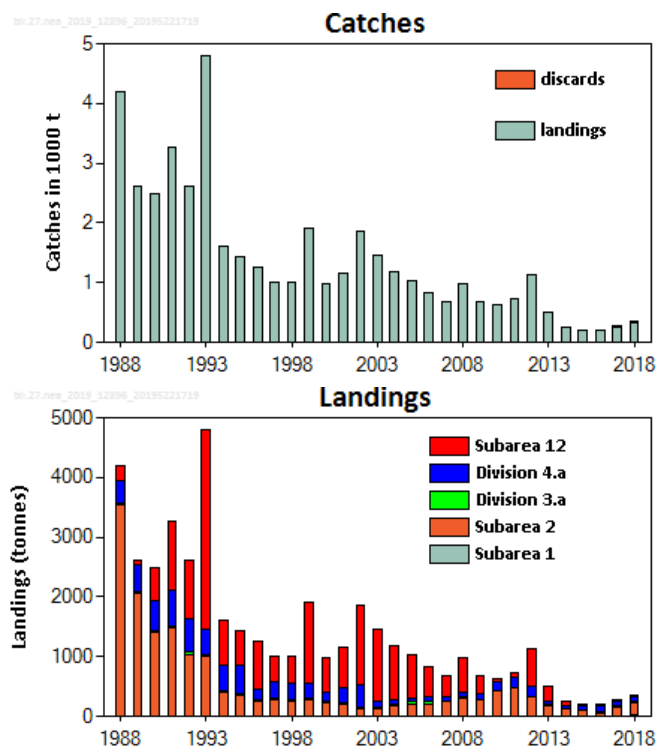


Figure 1 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. Catches and landings by area.

Stock and exploitation status

ICES assesses that the spawning stock size is below possible MSY $B_{trigger}$, B_{pa} , and B_{lim} reference points. No reference points for fishing pressure have been defined for this stock.

Table 1 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure			Stock size					
		2016	2017	2018	2017	2018	2019			
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	?	?	?	Unknown	$MSY B_{trigger}$	⊗	⊗	⊗	Below possible reference points
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	?	?	?	Unknown	B_{pa}, B_{lim}	⊗	⊗	⊗	Below possible reference points
Management plan	F_{MGT}	—	—	—	Not applicable	B_{MGT}	—	—	—	Not applicable

Catch scenarios

The ICES framework for category 5 stocks was applied (ICES, 2012). New data do not change the perception of this stock.

Table 2 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. The basis for the catch scenarios.

Advised catch (2018–2019) *		0 tonnes
Discard rate		Negligible
Precautionary buffer	Not applied	-
Catch advice		0 tonnes
% Advice change **		-

* Previous advice (2018–2019) was for zero catch.

** Advice value for 2020–2021 relative to advice value for 2018–2019.

There is no change in the advice. Because of the considered depleted status of the stock and a lack of scientific information to assess the stock development, the advice is given for four years.

Basis of the advice

Table 3 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach.
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for blue ling in these areas.

Quality of the assessment

The landings data are considered to reflect the abundance of the species in subareas 1 and 2 and divisions 3.a and 4.a. From this and the lack of catches in surveys it is inferred that the stock in subareas 1 and 2 is depleted. Recent trends in landings may also be influenced by a decline in effort.

Issues relevant for the advice [†]

This stock is classified as Category 2 in the [NEAFC categorization of deep-sea species/stocks](#) which implies that NEAFC requires measures stipulating that directed fisheries are not authorised and that bycatches should be minimised.

While the stock area includes subareas 8 and 9, there is no record of catches of blue ling in all available survey time-series in these areas. Landings reported in the past from subareas 8 and 9 as blue ling (*Molva dypterygia*) were considered to be Spanish ling (*Molva macrophalma*), and have not been included in the assessment. ICES does not provide advice on the latter species.

The stock is considered depleted. Recent exploitation is unknown but is regarded to be low because of ceased fisheries, management regulations, and closed spawning areas. There are no signs of stock rebuilding, hence the advice is for zero catches.

Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

[†] Version 2: NEAFC categorisation of deep-sea stocks added to section.

Basis of the assessment

Table 4 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	5 (ICES, 2018).
Assessment type	Catch trends-based assessment (ICES, 2019).
Input data	Official landings.
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is considered to be negligible.
Indicators	None.
Other information	None.
Working group	Working Group on the Biology and Assessment of Deep-Sea Fisheries Resources (WGDEEP).

Information from stakeholders

There is no additional available information.

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 5 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. ICES advice and official landings. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	TAC EU in subareas 2 and 4 *	TAC EU in Subarea 3	TAC EU in Subarea 12	ICES catches
2003	No directed fisheries **	-	138	25		1450
2004	Biennial **	-	138	25		1182
2005	No directed fisheries **	-	119	25		1023
2006	Biennial **	-	119	25		839
2007	No directed fisheries	-	950	20		678
2008	Biennial	-	78	15		973
2009	No directed fisheries	-	66	13		687
2010	Biennial	-	56	11		628
2011	No directed fisheries, and a reduction in catches should be considered	-	56	1	815	720
2012	No new advice, same as 2011	-	56	8	815	1137
2013	No directed fisheries, and a reduction in bycatches should be considered	-	53	8	774	500
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	-	53	8	697	261
2015	No directed fisheries, and a reduction in bycatches	-	53	8	558	208
2016	No directed fisheries, and a reduction in bycatches	-	53	8	446	205
2017	Biennial	-	53	8	357	280
2018	Precautionary approach	0	53	8	286	348
2019	Precautionary approach	0	53	8	229	
2020	Precautionary approach	0				
2021	Precautionary approach	0				
2022	Precautionary approach	0				
2023	Precautionary approach	0				

* EU waters of Subarea 5 were included until 2010.

** Prior to 2007 the advice for blue ling was for the entire Northeast Atlantic, not split in several assessment units.

History of the catch and landings

Table 6 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. Catch distribution by fleet in 2018 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2018)	Landings			Discards
	Longline 10%	Bottom trawl 55%	Other 35%	
348.3 tonnes	348 tonnes			0.3 tonnes

Table 7 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. History of the official landings by area. Discard estimates are available since 2017. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	Areas					Discards	Total
	1	2	3.a	4.a	12		
1988	10	3537	22	363	263	-	4195
1989	8	2058	23	457	70	-	2616
1990	4	1412	21	495	552	-	2484
1991	3	1479	21	620	1147	-	3270
1992	5	1039	38	553	971	-	2606
1993	1	1020	23	412	3336	-	4792
1994	3	419	18	421	752	-	1613
1995	5	359	20	477	573	-	1434
1996	2	267	12	179	788	-	1248
1997	1	291	21	269	417	-	999
1998	1	278	6	280	438	-	1003
1999	1	291	6	264	1353	-	1915
2000	3	249	14	129	594	-	989
2001	1	208	24	252	675	-	1160
2002	1	149	9	376	1318	-	1853
2003	0	147	19	92	1192	-	1450
2004	1	174	19	83	905	-	1182
2005	1	197	49	66	710	-	1023
2006	0	202	42	94	501	-	839
2007	0	262	0	62	354	-	678
2008	0	333	2	74	564	-	973
2009	1	285	0	89	312	-	687
2010	1	422	0	155	50	-	628
2011	3	486	0	176	55	-	720
2012	1	338	0	166	632	-	1137
2013	0	202	1	43	254	-	500
2014	4	127	0	50	80	-	261
2015	0	113	0	83	12	-	208
2016	1	87	1	87	29	-	205
2017	0	177	1	74	28	0.925	280
2018	22	241	1	60	24	0.302	348

Table 8 Blue ling in subareas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12, and in divisions 3.a and 4.a. Landings inside and outside the NEAFC Regulatory Area (RA) as estimated by ICES. Weights are in tonnes. Note that ICES cannot quantify the catches.

Year	Inside the NEAFC RA	Outside the NEAFC RA	Catches
2014	80	181	261
2015	12	196	208
2016	29	205	205
2017	28	251	280
2018	24	324	348

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for blue ling in this area.

Sources and references

ICES. 2012. ICES Implementation of Advice for Data-limited Stocks in 2012 in its 2012 Advice. ICES CM 2012/ACOM:68. 42 pp.

ICES. 2018. Advice basis. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2018. ICES Advice 2018, Book 1, Section 1.2. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.4503>.

ICES. 2019. Working Group on the Biology and Assessment of Deep-sea Fisheries Resources (WGDEEP). ICES Scientific Reports. 1:21. 988 pp. <http://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5262>

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