

## Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a (Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian waters)

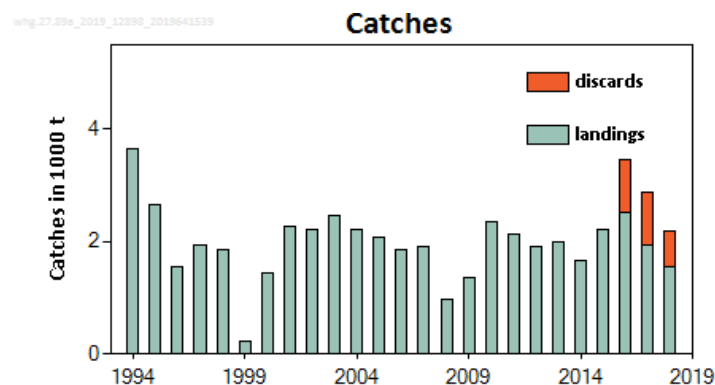
### ICES stock advice

**Please note: The present advice replaces the advice given for 2019 (in June 2017) and also provides the advice for 2020 and 2021<sup>1</sup>.**

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, catches in each of the years 2019, 2020, and 2021 should be no more than 2276 tonnes.

### Stock development over time

Landings have been fluctuating without trend over the time period and have decreased in the last three years. Discard rates have been stable.



**Figure 1** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. ICES estimated landings and discards (in thousand tonnes); the values for 2017 and 2018 are preliminary. Discard data are available only from 2016 to 2018. Landings for Subarea 8 for 1999 are incomplete.

### Stock and exploitation status

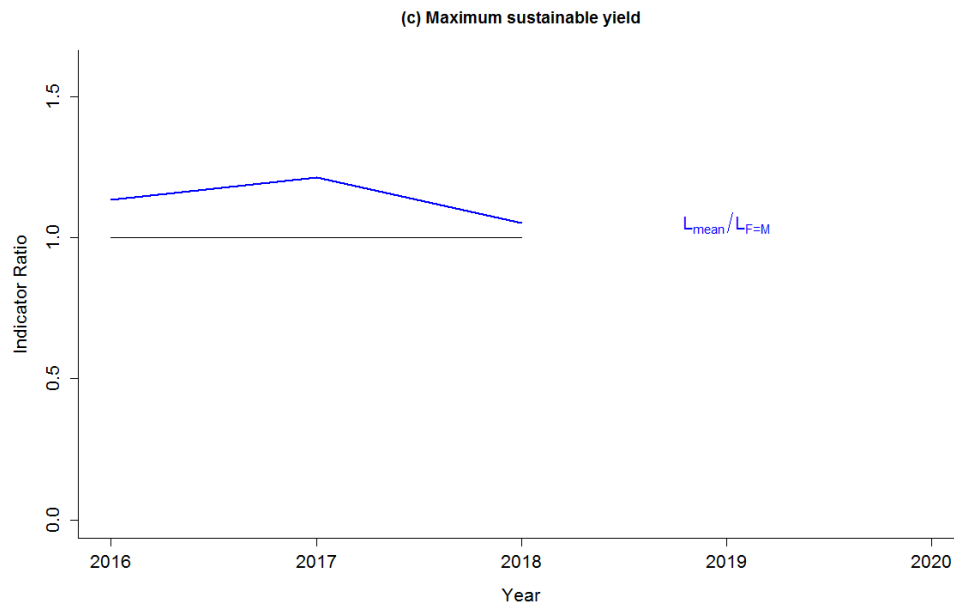
ICES assesses that fishing pressure on the stock is below  $F_{MSY\ proxy}$  (Figure 2); no reference points for stock size have been defined for this stock.

**Table 1** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points. The status evaluation is based on reference point proxies (ICES, 2019a).

		Fishing pressure			Stock size					
		2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018			
Maximum sustainable yield	$F_{MSY\ proxy}$	✓	✓	✓	Below proxy	MSY	?	?	?	Unknown
Precautionary approach	$F_{pa}, F_{lim}$	✓	✓	✓	Below possible reference points	$B_{pa}, B_{lim}$	?	?	?	Unknown
Management plan	$F_{MGT}$	✓	✓	✓	*Below proxy	$B_{MGT}$	?	?	?	Unknown
Qualitative evaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	?	?	Unknown

\* F ranges are not available for this stock.

<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the European Commission requested that ICES provide updated advice for this stock for 2019 in light of new information on discards.



**Figure 2** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Index ratio  $L_{mean}/L_{F=M}$  from the length-based indicator method (LBI; ICES, 2018a, 2019a) used for the evaluation of the exploitation status. The exploitation status is below the  $F_{MSY}$  proxy when the index ratio value is higher than 1.

### Catch scenarios

The ICES framework for category 5 stocks was applied (ICES, 2012). For stocks without information on abundance or exploitation, ICES considers that a precautionary reduction of catches should be implemented unless there is ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate for the stock. The precautionary buffer was applied in 2015 and was applied again this year as the stock size is unknown in relation to reference points.

**Table 2** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. The basis for the catch scenarios.

Average catches (2016–2018)		2845 tonnes
Uncertainty cap	Not applied	-
Discard rate (average of 2016–2018)		0.30
Precautionary buffer	Applied	0.80
Catch advice *		2276 tonnes
Wanted catch advice **		1593 tonnes
% Advice change ***		-1.24%

\* [Average catches] × [precautionary buffer].

\*\* [Average catches] × [precautionary buffer] × [1 – discard rate].

\*\*\* Wanted catch value for 2019–2021 relative to the advised wanted catch value for 2017–2018.

The advised wanted catch is lower than advised for 2017. This is owing to a revision of the reference period for average catches and the application of the precautionary buffer (ICES, 2019b).

### Basis of the advice

**Table 3** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach.
Management plan	The EU multiannual plan (MAP; EU, 2019) for stocks in the Western Waters and adjacent waters applies to this stock. The MAP stipulates that when the $F_{MSY}$ ranges are not available, fishing opportunities should be based on the best available scientific advice.

## Quality of the assessment

The stock definition of whiting in this area is not clear. The bulk of the fishery takes place at the northern boundary of the stock area.

## Issues relevant for the advice

Following a special request to provide updated advice based on newly available discard information (ICES, 2019b), the present advice replaces the catch advice given for 2019 (in June 2017) and also provides catch advice for 2020 and 2021.

## Reference points

**Table 4** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Reference points, values, and their technical basis.

Framework	Reference point	Value	Technical basis	Source
MSY approach	MSY B <sub>trigger proxy</sub>	Not defined		
	F <sub>MSY proxy</sub>	$\frac{L_{mean}}{L_{F=M}} = 1 *$	Relative value from LBI analysis, assuming the natural mortality rate (M) relative to somatic growth rate (M/K) = 1.5. L <sub>F=M</sub> is based on L <sub>c</sub> (length at 50% of modal abundance) which varies each year.	ICES (2019a)
Precautionary approach	B <sub>lim</sub>	Not defined		
	B <sub>pa</sub>	Not defined		
	F <sub>lim</sub>	Not defined		
	F <sub>pa</sub>	Not defined		
Management plan	SSB <sub>mgt</sub>	Not defined		
	F <sub>mgt</sub>	Not defined		

\* No reference points are defined for this stock in terms of absolute values. The LBI-estimated values of the ratio are used to estimate exploitation status relative to the proxy MSY reference point.

## Basis of the assessment

**Table 5** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	5 (ICES, 2018b).
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2019a).
Input data	Landings and discards.
Discards and bycatch	30% (average of 2016–2018).
Indicators	Length-based indicator (LBI; ICES, 2018a).
Other information	None.
Working group	Working Group for the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Waters Ecoregion (WGBIE).

## Information from stakeholders

There is no additional available information.

## History of the advice, catch, and management

**Table 6** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. ICES advice and official landings. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Landings corresponding to advice	TAC in Subarea 8	TAC in Division 9.a *	ICES estimated wanted catch	ICES estimated unwanted catch
2000		-		7000	2640	1448	
2001		-	-	5600	2100	2281	
2002		-	-	5600	1700	2203	
2003		-	-	5600	1360	2451	
2004		-	-	4500	1020	2221	

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Landings corresponding to advice	TAC in Subarea 8	TAC in Division 9.a *	ICES estimated wanted catch	ICES estimated unwanted catch
2005		-	-	3600	816	2081	
2006		-	-	3600	653	1856	
2007		-	-	3600	653	1920	
2008		-	-	3600	653	965	
2009		-	-	3600	653	1362	
2010		-	-	3240	588	2342	
2011		-	-	3175	588	2141	
2012	No increase in catch	-	-	3175	588	1907	
2013	20% reduction in catches	-	-	3175	**	2001	
2014	Same catch value advised for 2013	-	-	3175	**	1651	
2015	Same catch value advised for 2013	-	-	3175	**	2199	
2016	Precautionary approach	-	≤ 1613	2540	**	2525	927
2017	Precautionary approach	-	≤ 1613	2540	**	1925	938
2018	Precautionary approach	-	≤ 1613	2540	**	1565#	656
2019	Precautionary approach	≤ 2276 ^		2540	**		
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 2276					
2021	Precautionary approach	≤ 2276					

\* In subareas 9 and 10; EU waters of CECAF 34.1.1.

\*\* No TAC is set for this area.

# Preliminary.

^ This is the updated advice for 2019. The original advice for 2019 was for landings of 1613 tonnes (ICES, 2017).

### History of the catch and landings

**Table 7** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Catch distribution by fleet in 2018 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2018)	Landings				Discards
	35% trawls	30% lines	18% gillnets	17% others	
2221 tonnes	1565 tonnes				656 tonnes

**Table 8** Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. History of official landings and ICES estimated landings. All weights are in tonnes. Landings for Subarea 8 for 1999 are incomplete.

Year	Belgium	France	Portugal	Spain	Total	Unallocated	ICES estimates
1994		3496	15	136	3647	0	3647
1995		2645	2	1	2648	0	2648
1996		1544	4	13	1561	0	1561
1997		1895	3	47	1945	0	1945
1998		1750	3	105	1858	0	1858
1999			1	211	212	0	212
2000	2	1106	2	338	1448	0	1448
2001	3	1989	1	288	2281	0	2281
2002	3	1970	1	230	2204	0	2204
2003	1	2275	4	171	2451	0	2451

Year	Belgium	France	Portugal	Spain	Total	Unallocated	ICES estimates
2004		1965	77	249	2291	-70	2221
2005	3	1662	2	416	2083	-2	2081
2006	2	1420	7	433	1862	-6	1856
2007	4	1617	107	296	2024	-104	1920
2008	1	772	98	187	1058	-93	965
2009	2	1303	114	54	1473	-111	1362
2010	3	2234	114	101	2452	-110	2342
2011	1	2029	105	108	2243	-102	2141
2012	3	1791	90	110	1994	-87	1907
2013	1	1943	95	55	2094	-93	2001
2014	1	1579	65	55	1700	-49	1651
2015	2	2138	38	56	2234	-35	2199
2016	1	2441	20	40	2502	23	2525
2017*	0	1871	18	20	1909	16	1925
2018*	2	1524	15	26	1565	0	1565

\* Preliminary.

### Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for whiting in this area.

### Sources and references

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