

Small-eyed ray (*Raja microocellata*) in divisions 7.d and 7.e (English Channel)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, landings should be no more than 40 tonnes in each of the years 2019 and 2020. ICES cannot quantify the corresponding catches.

Stock development over time

The reduction in landings between 2015 and 2016-2017 corresponds to the EU non-retention policy for this species affecting Division 7.e since 2016.

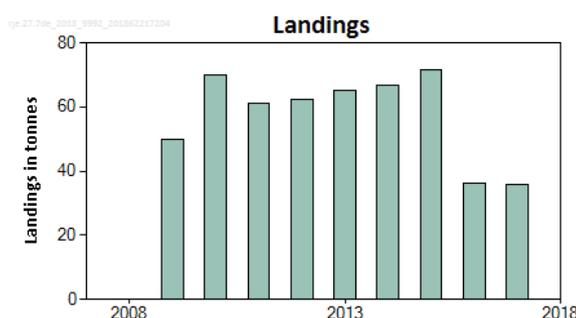


Figure 1 Small-eyed ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e. ICES estimated landings for 2009–2017 (in tonnes).

Stock and exploitation status

ICES cannot assess the stock and exploitation status relative to the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and precautionary approach (PA) reference points because the reference points are undefined.

Table 1 Small-eyed ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e. State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure			Stock size					
		2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017			
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	?	?	?	Unknown	$MSY B_{trigger}$?	?	?	Unknown
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	?	?	?	Unknown	B_{pa}, B_{lim}	?	?	?	Unknown
Management plan	F_{MGT}	—	—	—	Not applicable	B_{MGT}	—	—	—	Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	?	?	?	Unknown	-	?	?	?	Unknown

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 recent advised landings for 2017 and 2018 were originally derived using landings statistics from 2011-2013. In 2018, landing statistics for this period were revised. As a result, the basis which was used to provide advice in 2016 for 2017 and 2018 has been adjusted to account for the update in the landing statistics in the period 2011-2013.

The precautionary buffer was last applied in 2014. The stock size relative to candidate reference points is unknown and, since the precautionary buffer has not been applied for three years, it has been applied again in 2018.

Discarding is known to take place, but ICES cannot quantify the corresponding dead catch.

Table 2 Small-eyed ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e. The basis for the catch scenarios*.

Advised landings for 2017–2018 issued in 2016		36 t
Adjusted advised landings for 2017-2018**		50 t
Discard rate		Unknown
Precautionary buffer	Applied	0.8
Landings advice ***		40 t
% Advice change ^		+11%

* The figures in the table are rounded. Calculations were done with unrounded inputs and computed values may not match exactly when calculated using the rounded figures in the table.

** Advised landings adjusted for a revision in the statistics.

*** [Adjusted advised landing] × [precautionary buffer].

^ Advice value for 2019 and 2020 relative to advice value for 2018.

The advice is higher than advised for 2017 and 2018 because of an upward revision in the catch statistics used to derive advice for 2017 and 2018.

Basis of the advice

Table 3 Small-eyed ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach.
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for small-eyed ray in this area.

Quality of the assessment

Reported landings of small-eyed ray from Division 4.c have been attributed to this stock. In addition, reported landings of *Leucoraja circularis* are considered to refer to *Raja microocellata* in this stock area, due to confusion over the local name “sandy ray”.

Issues relevant for the advice

This species is an occasional bycatch species in most fisheries operating in the English Channel. It has a patchy distribution, which may relate to its habitat preferences, and is observed infrequently in trawl surveys.

Stock specific landings data are not available before 2009.

Fishing opportunities for this stock are covered by two management areas (divisions 6.a, 6.b, 7.a–c, 7.e–k, and 7.d), with the TAC being set for all skates and rays. Since 2016 small-eyed ray in Division 7.e has been subjected to a non-retention policy, whilst landings of this stock are allowed from Division 7.d (and Division 4.c).

Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

Basis of the assessment

Table 4 Small-eyed ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	5 (ICES, 2016a).
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2018).
Input data	Landings data 2009–2017.
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is known to take place but has not been fully quantified.
Indicators	None.
Other information	None.
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF)

Information from stakeholders

No additional information is available.

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 5 Small-eyed ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e. History of ICES advice and ICES estimates of landings*. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Landings corresp. to advice	ICES species-specific landings: minimum estimate based on reported landings**
2011	No specific advice		61
2012	No specific advice		62
2013	No TAC, species-specific measures needed, catch to decrease by at least 20%	-	65
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	-	67
2015	Decrease at least 20% from last 3 years' average	43	72
2016	No new advice, same as 2015	43	36
2017	Precautionary approach	≤ 36	36
2018	Precautionary approach (same value as advised catches for 2017)	≤ 36	
2019	Precautionary approach	≤ 40	
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 40	

* There is no specific TAC for this stock. Fishing opportunities are managed through an overall TAC by management unit, which includes all species of skates and rays.

** Revised in 2018.

History of the catch and landings

The distribution of this stock does not extend into the NEAFC regulatory area.

Table 6 Small-eyed ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e. Catch distribution by fleet in 2017 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2017)	Landings				Discards
	beam trawl	bottom trawls	nets	other gear	
Unknown	44%	28%	27%	1%	Unquantified
	36 tonnes				

Table 7 Small-eyed ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e. ICES estimates of landings by country (in tonnes). Data revised in 2018 (ICES, 2018) and include landings of small-eyed ray from the southern North Sea (division 4.c) and reported landings of sandy ray in divisions 7.d and 7.e.

Year	Belgium	UK	France	Ireland	Total landings
2009		18	32		50
2010	3	40	28		70
2011	5	28	28		61
2012	5	33	24		62
2013	7	32	26		65
2014	7	36	24		67
2015	9	39	24		72
2016	9	19	8		36
2017	12	15	8	2	36

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for this stock.

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 2016a. Advice basis. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2016. ICES Advice 2016, Book 1, Section 1.2.

ICES. 2016b. Report of the Workshop to compile and refine catch and landings of elasmobranchs (WKSHARK2), 19–22 January 2016, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:40. 69 pp.

ICES. 2018. Report of the Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF), 19–28 June 2018, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:16.