

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

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, catches should be no more than 2276 tonnes in each of the years 2022 and 2023.

Stock development over time

Fishing pressure on the stock is below F_{MSY} ; No reference points for stock size have been defined for this stock.

Catches

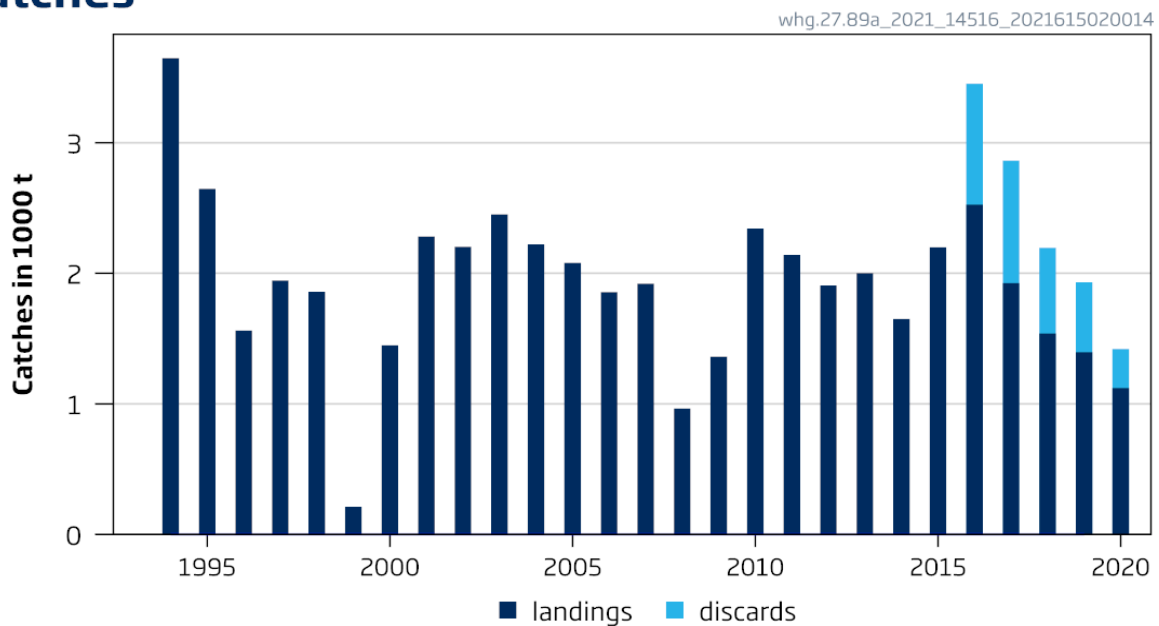


Figure 1 Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. ICES estimated landings and discards (estimates available since 2016).

Catch scenarios

The ICES framework for category 5 stocks (ICES, 2012) was applied. For stocks without information on abundance or exploitation, ICES considers that a precautionary reduction of catches should be implemented where there is no ancillary information clearly indicating that the current level of exploitation is appropriate for the stock. The precautionary buffer was applied in 2019, and its application has therefore not been considered again.

The discarding rate is 28% of total catch.

Table 1 Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. The basis for the catch scenarios.

Average catches (2019–2021)	2276 tonnes
Discard rate (average of 2016–2020)	0.28
Precautionary buffer	Not Applied
Catch advice *	2276 tonnes
Projected landings corresponding to advice	1648 tonnes
% Advice change	-

* Advised catches (2019–2021)

** Advised catches (2019–2021) × [1 – discard rate].

The Length-Based Indicator (LBI; ICES, 2018a, 2018b) analysis suggests that fishing mortality is below the MSY reference point (Figure 2).

F: Length-based Indicator

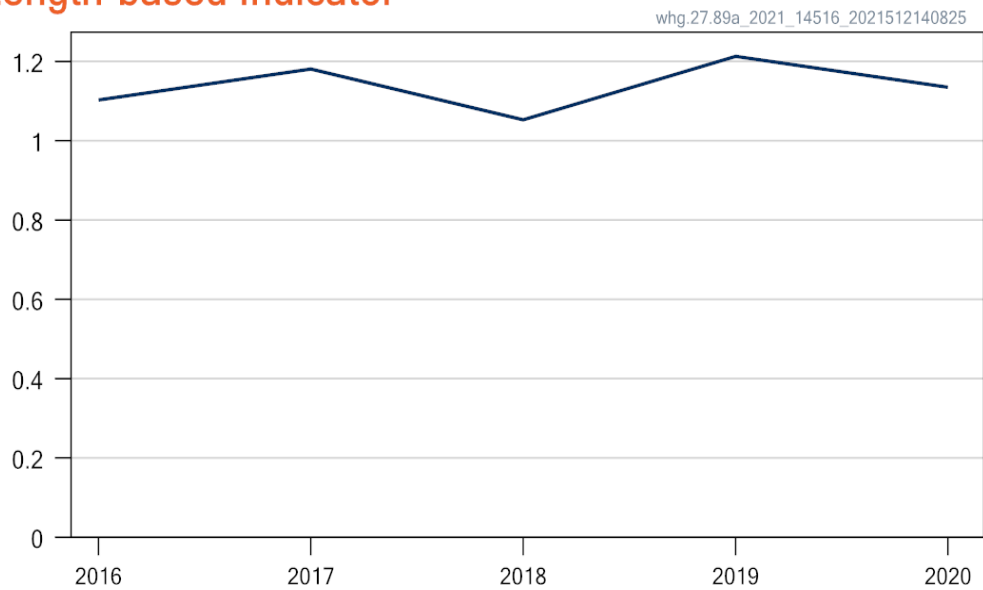


Figure 2 Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Index ratio $L_{\text{mean}} / L_{F=M}$ from the length-based indicator (LBI; ICES, 2018a, 2018b) method is used for the evaluation of the exploitation status. The exploitation status is below the F_{MSY} proxy when the index ratio value is higher than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

Basis of the advice

Table 2 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 COVID-19 pandemic affected onboard sampling and discard estimates. Discard and length structure were raised on a six-month basis in order to mitigate low sampling levels. Low sampling levels and the larger time scale used to raise discards might be the reason for the lowest estimated discard rate of the time series [$DR_{2020} = 0.21$, $\text{average}_{2016-2019} = 0.29$, $\text{max}_{2016-2019} = 0.32$].

Discards estimates were however considered relevant to estimate projected landings and the discard rate in the catch option table was computed over 2016–2020.

Issues relevant for the advice

There is no information to present for this stock.

Reference points

Table 3 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 $B_{trigger}$	Not defined		
	F_{MSY}	$\frac{L_{mean}}{L_{F=M}} = 1 *$	Relative value from LBI analysis, assuming the natural mortality rate (M) relative to somatic growth rate (M / K) = 1.5. $L_{F=M}$ is based on L_c (length at 50% of modal abundance) which varies each year.	ICES (2018a, 2018b)
Precautionary approach	B_{lim}	Not defined		
	B_{pa}	Not defined		
	F_{lim}	Not defined		
	F_{pa}	Not defined		
Management plan	SSB_{mgt}	Not defined		
	F_{mgt}	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 4 Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Basis of the assessment and advice.

ICES stock data category	5 (ICES, 2021a)
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2021b)
Input data	Landings and discards.
Discards and bycatch	27% (average of 2016–2020)
Indicators	Length-based indicator (LBI; ICES, 2018a, 2018b) from commercial catch data (2016–2020)
Other information	None
Working group	Working Group for the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Waters Ecoregion (WGBIE)

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 5 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 landings	ICES estimated discards
2000		-		7000	2640	1448	
2001		-	-	5600	2100	2281	
2002		-	-	5600	1700	2203	
2003		-	-	5600	1360	2451	
2004		-	-	4500	1020	2221	
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	

Year	ICES advice	Catch corresponding to advice	Landings corresponding to advice	TAC in Subarea 8	TAC in Division 9.a *	ICES estimated landings	ICES estimated discards
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	≤ 1593	2540	**	1396	535
2020	Precautionary approach	≤ 2276	≤ 1593	2540	**	1121#	299#
2021	Precautionary approach	≤ 2276	≤ 1593	2276	**		
2022	Precautionary approach	≤ 2276					
2023	Precautionary approach	≤ 2276					

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

** No TAC is set for this area.

Preliminary.

History of catch and landings

Table 6 Whiting in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Catch distribution by fleet in 2020 as estimated by ICES.

Catch (2020)	Landings					Discards
1420 tonnes	38% trawls	27% lines	16% gillnets	15% demersal seine	4% others	299 tonnes
	1121 tonnes					

Table 7 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
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
2019	1	1348		13	1362	34	1396
2020	1	1094		1	1096	26	1121

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for whiting in this area.

Sources and references

- EU. 2019. Regulation (EU) 2019/472 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 establishing a multiannual plan for stocks fished in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulations (EU) 2016/1139 and (EU) 2018/973, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007 and (EC) No 1300/2008. Official Journal of the European Union, L 83: 1–17. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/472/oj>.
- ICES. 2012. ICES Implementation of Advice for Data-limited Stocks in 2012 in its 2012 Advice. ICES CM 2012/ACOM:68. 42 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.5322>.
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- ICES. 2021a. Advice on fishing opportunities. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2021. ICES Advice 2021, section 1.1.1. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.7720>.
- ICES. 2021b. Working Group for the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Waters Ecoregion (WGBIE). ICES Scientific Reports. 3:48. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.8212>.

[Download the stock assessment data and figures.](#)

Recommended citation: ICES. 2021. Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a (Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian waters). In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2021. ICES Advice 2021, whg.27.89a, <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.7889>.