

## 9 Red gurnard in the Northeast Atlantic

### 9.1 General biology

The main biological features known for red gurnard (*Aspitrigla (Chelidonichthys) cuculus*) are described in the stock annex. This species is widely distributed in the North-east Atlantic from South Norway and North of the British Isles to Mauritania on grounds between 20 and 250 m. This benthic species is abundant in the Channel (7de) and on the shelf West of Brittany (7h, 8a), living on gravel or coarse sand. In the Channel, the size at first maturity is ~25cm at 3 years old (Dorel, 1986).

### 9.2 Stock identity and possible assessments areas

A compilation of datasets from bottom-trawl surveys undertaken within the project 'Atlas of the marine fishes of the northern European shelf' has produced a distribution map of red gurnard. Higher occurrences of red gurnard with patchy distribution have been observed along the Western approaches from the Shetlands Islands to the Celtic Seas and the Channel.

A continuous distribution of fish crossing the Channel and the area West of Brittany does not suggest a separation of the Divisions 7d from 7e and 7h. Therefore a split of the population between the Ecoregions does not seem appropriate. Similar temporal signals observed in NS-IBTS and SCO-WCIBTS surveys, which are not seen in other survey series, may suggest a linkage between subareas 4 and 6. Further investigations are needed to progress on stocks boundaries such as morphometric studies, tagging and genetic population studies.

### 9.3 Management regulations

There is currently no technical measure specifically applied to red gurnard or other gurnard species. The exploitation of red gurnard is submitted to the general regulation in the areas where they are caught. There is no minimum landing size set.

### 9.4 Fisheries data

Red gurnard is mainly landed as bycatch by demersal trawlers in mixed fisheries, predominantly in Divisions 7d, 7e and 7h (Figure 9.1). High discard rates and lack of resolution at a species level make interpretation of spatial trends in catches in other areas problematic.

#### 9.4.1 Historical landings

Official landings reported at ICES are available in Table 9.1 and Table 9.2. Before 1977, red gurnard was not specifically reported. Landings of gurnards are still not always reported at a species level, but rather as mixed gurnards. For those countries who do report landings at a species level, only Portugal has presented information on how this is achieved. This makes interpretations of the records of official landings difficult.

International landings have fluctuated between 3452 5171 tonnes since 2006. France is the main contributor of 'red gurnard' landings, with around 80% of landings coming from ICES Subarea 7d-h (Celtic Sea/English Channel). In the North Sea red gurnard landings are variable, but

roughly evenly distributed between Divisions 4a,b and c. Landings from the west of Scotland and Ireland, and the Irish Sea (ICES Subarea 6a-b, 7a-c, 7j) and Bay of Biscay (ICES Division 8) have been consistently low.

### 9.4.2 Discards

Discard data for red gurnard has been provided for 2015 - 2018 through Intercatch (Table 9.3). For those countries which provided data, discard rates ranged between from 48% and 91% of catch in 2017, and 21% and 95% in 2018 (Table 9.4).

## 9.5 Survey data

Information on gurnard abundance are available in DATRAS for the IBTS-Q1 survey in the North Sea, Scottish West Coast Groundfish Survey (WCGFS), Irish Groundfish Survey (IGFS) and the French EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 survey in the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay and CGFS-Q4 in Division 7d. Each of these surveys covers a specific area of red gurnard distribution. Lengths at age are available from CGFS-Q4 in and IGFS-Q4

- NS- IBTS-Q1 series. Before 1990, red gurnard was scarce in North Sea and the abundance index was close to 0. The abundance index of red gurnard has trended generally upwards between 1994 – 2013, before declining somewhat, although it remains well above long-term average values. This change reflects an increase of the abundance in the northern and central North Sea (4a-b). It is interesting to contrast these trends with the apparent very low abundances in the NS-IBTS-Q3 series.
- SCO-WCGFS series. Before 1996, red gurnard was also scarce on the west of Scotland. The abundance index trended strongly upwards after 1997, reaching a peak in 2013, before declining to around the series average in recent years.
- IGFS series. The abundance index of red gurnard in the IGFS series has varied around the series mean without trend between 2002 and 2018.
- CGFS-Q4 series. Over the time-series 1988–2011, the abundance index has fluctuated, peaked in 1994, reached a low in 2011, but is above long term mean in 2016.
- EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 series. Over the period 1997–2011, the abundance index in Nb or kg/hr has increased over time. Age reading of red gurnards caught during EVHOE survey has been carried out in 2006 and routinely since 2008. They indicate that the individuals caught are mainly of age 1 and 2.
- Survey abundance information was provided via DATRAS for the first time for the Spanish Porcupine and Northern Spanish groundfish surveys (SP-PORC and SP-NSGFS). Both survey indices are variable, but show an overall upwards trend over time in numbers and weight per tow.

## 9.6 Biological sampling

Number at length information was provided by French and Portuguese landings and discards. There remains a lack of regular sampling for red gurnard in commercial landings and discarding to provide series of length or age compositions usable for a preliminary analytical assessment.

## 9.7 Biological parameters and other research

There is no update of growth parameters and available parameters from several authors are summarized in the Stock Annex. They vary widely. Available length–weight relationships are

also shown in Stock Annex. Natural mortality has not been estimated in the areas studied at this Working Group.

## **9.8 Analyses of stock trends**

In the North Sea, the appearance of red gurnard in the index of the IBTS Survey since 1990 is in line with an increase of the abundance in 4a. In Eastern Channel, the abundance index of the CGFS-Q4 survey has widely fluctuated, with a weak decline. The EVHOE-WIBTS-Q4 survey has slightly increased since its beginning in the 1990s.

## **9.9 Data requirements**

Gurnards are still not always reported by species, but rather as mixed gurnards. This makes interpretations of the records of official landings difficult. Extending the studied area by a survey in 7e and collecting length and age data of red gurnard in the main area of production should help in better understanding the biology and dynamics of this species.

## **9.10 References**

Dorel, D. 1986. Poissons de l'Atlantique nord-est relations taille-poids. Institut Francais de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer. Nantes, France. 165 p.

## 9.11 Tables

Table 9.1. Red gurnard in the Northeast Atlantic official landings by country in tonnes.

Year	Bel- gium	Spain	France	Jer- sey	Guern- sey	Ire- land	IM	Nether- lands	Portugal	UK	Total
2006	313	0	4552	0	10	0	0	57	125	115	5172
2007	328	0	4494	1	4	0	0	66	127	156	5176
2008	352	0	4045	0	8	0	0	92	112	166	4775
2009	227	0	3310	0	6	0	1	160	150	263	4117
2010	237	0	3437	0	2	0	0	251	115	362	4404
2011	306	0	3176	1	2	0	1	295	134	257	4172
2012	306	0	2706	3	4	26	0	329	148	257	3779
2013	288	576	3154	3	9	16	2	267	113	329	4757
2014	263	399	3782	3	6	0	5	241	108	283	5090
2015	187	91	2919	2	3	0	0	210	122	341	3875
2016	238	87	2598	3	2	9	1	224	106	381	36469
2017	265	105	2396	0	1	9	4	226	114	335	3455
2018*	313	89	2968	0	0	13	1	305	114	342	4145
2018**	308	65	2952			14	1	301		342	3983

\*Preliminary Data,

\*\*Intercatch Data

**Table 9.2. Red gurnard in the Northeast Atlantic official landings by area in tonnes.**

Year	4a	4b	4c	5b	6a	6b	7a	7b	7c	7d	7e	7f	7g	7h	7j	7nk	8a	8b	8c	8d	9a	9nk	10a	10nk	14a	Total
2006	13	83	64	0	32	1	11	9	12	1101	2803	229	16	446	5	1	153	60	1	5	9	115	0	1	0	5171
2007	12	120	55	2	21	0	7	7	15	1229	2674	246	15	437	4	0	139	59	3	2	125	0	0	2	0	5174
2008	34	64	54	0	28	3	5	7	16	1236	2451	249	9	408	5	0	66	24	3	1	109	0	3	0	0	4775
2009	58	59	92	0	94	2	4	8	6	1293	1557	112	22	510	7	0	98	40	1	3	148	0	1	0	0	4115
2010	79	63	86	0	101	46	13	8	10	1531	1608	132	23	433	9	0	100	33	0	2	114	0	0	1	0	4392
2011	66	29	51	0	69	54	13	5	6	1295	1753	124	20	372	9	0	112	46	1	3	133	0	1	0	1	4163
2012	83	71	78	0	51	7	8	2	5	1244	1441	145	53	294	2	0	83	50	8	1	136	4	1	0	1	3768
2013	88	109	60	0	47	0	10	2	6	1193	1692	170	58	477	2	0	79	72	532	1	155	0	2	0	0	4755
2014	102	52	68	0	47	3	7	1	2	1294	1642	115	19	1069	1	0	82	75	363	3	139	0	3	0	0	5087
2015	133	102	53	0	58	1	4	3	1	790	1553	87	6	703	1	0	95	70	81	2	128	0	2	0	0	3873
2016	112	83	117	0	76	1	11	3	1	906	1268	114	16	608	1	0	87	63	56	1	120	0	1	0	0	3645
2017	53	44	90	0	27	1	14	1	0	874	1424	83	38	473	3	0	78	48	59	1	142	0	1	0	0	3454
2018*	106	39	113	0	41	0	9	0	0	902	1793	164	28	631	4	0	80	42	61	2	125	0	1	0	0	4141

\*Preliminary Data

**Table 9.3. Red gurnard in the Northeast Atlantic, discards (t) by country, 2015 – 2018.**

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018
France	1323	2249	2232	770
Ireland	10	147	93	251
Portugal				0
Spain		286	272	189
UK (ENG)	74	30		207
UK (SCO)	649	411	198	512
Total	2056	3123	2795	1929

**Table 9.4. Discarding of Red gurnard in the Northeast Atlantic, as a percentage of catch, by country, in 2017-18.**

Country	Discard rate (%)	
	2017	2018
France	48	21
Ireland	91	95
Spain	72	68
UK (SCO)	68	92

## 9.12 Figures

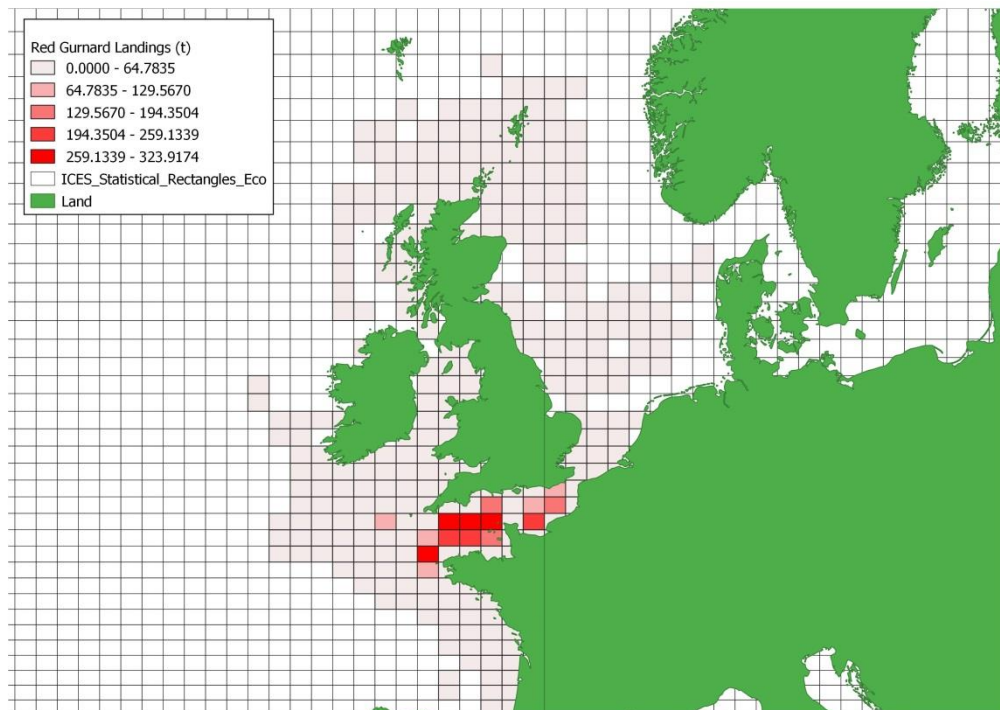


Figure 9.1. Red gurnard in the Northeast Atlantic. Landings in 2018, by statistical rectangle, from BEL, FRA, IRE, UK(E&W), UK(IoM) & UK(SCO).