



ICES

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

CIEM

Conseil International pour
l'Exploration de la Mer

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New ICES approach to data limited fish stocks aims to aid sustainable management of fisheries

The **International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)** has released annual advice on the status of fish stocks and options for sustainable fisheries in 2013. For the first time, ICES has succeeded in providing quantitative advice on 68 data-limited stocks in addition to the almost 80 stocks ICES has annually provided catch advice in the last years. This is a great step forward in the management and conservation of stocks for which little quantitative information is available. The advice released in May and June covers most stocks in the Northeast Atlantic, including the North Sea and the Baltic Sea.

In 2010, ICES provided advice for 78 individual fish stocks, such as cod, plaice and sole. This year ICES has, for the first time, expanded its scope to include quantitative advice on so-called "data-limited" fish stocks, such as flounder, brill and pollack. The process to define a method for providing this kind of advice began in 2011, and of the 84 data-limited stocks ICES considered this spring, there is now quantitative advice for 68 of these stocks. This represents a six-fold increase in quantitative advice provided for data-limited stocks compared to 2010, where such advice was only provided for 10 data-limited stocks. This new approach intends to aid policy-makers move towards sustainable exploitation of fisheries.

This new method developed by ICES, for providing operational advice on data-limited stocks, should help to ensure that fisheries on these stocks can be conducted sustainably. ICES Head of Advisory Programme, Poul Degnbol, states: "In many situations it is possible to judge the status of a fish stock and to quantify the upper limits of sustainable fishing quotas on the basis of biological information regarding the sensitivity of these species to fisheries and trends in their abundance as observed from research vessels. ICES considers that providing upper limits to fishing based on this newly developed method will be the best basis for responsible decisions on fishing opportunities". The advice includes an increasing precautionary margin with decreasing knowledge about the stock status. As Poul Degnbol explains, "the less data is available, the more precaution should be taken when establishing limits for fishing quotas".

ICES strives towards providing advice that includes a greater range of information on fisheries and the marine ecosystem. This is the first year when ICES presents options for mixed fisheries in the North Sea. This advice is based on single-stock assessments combined with knowledge on the species composition of catches in North Sea fisheries. Furthermore, ICES has provided multispecies considerations for Baltic Sea fish stocks, which incorporate knowledge on the impacts fish stocks have on each other. These considerations serve as a starting point for a dialogue between ICES and policy makers to foster the development of a multispecies approach to fisheries management in the Baltic.

ICES advice is published on the ICES website: <http://www.ices.dk/advice/icesadvice.asp>. During August and September selected advice will be published in a "popular version", a digest of the official advice.

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Note to editors

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) coordinates and promotes marine research in the North Atlantic, the Baltic and North seas. ICES advises competent authorities (international commissions and governments in charge of marine policy) on marine policy and management issues related to the impacts of human activities on marine ecosystems and the management of the exploitation of living marine resources. For more information, visit www.ices.dk.

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