American plaice in Division 3M

Recommendation for 2021 - 2023

The stock has recovered to the levels of the mid 1990s, when the fishery was closed. SC considers that there is not sufficient evidence that the stock would be able to sustain a fishery at this time and recommends that there be no directed fishing in 2021, 2022 and 2023. Bycatch should be kept at the lowest possible level.

Management objectives

No explicit management plan or management objectives defined by the Commission. Convention general principles are applied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention objectives</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comment/consideration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restore to or maintain at $B_{msy}$</td>
<td>$B_{msy}$ unknown, stock at a low level</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate overfishing</td>
<td>No directed fishing, Fishing mortality thought to be low</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply Precautionary Approach</td>
<td>Reference points not defined. No HCRs</td>
<td>Not accomplished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise harmful impacts on living marine resources and ecosystems</td>
<td>VME closures in effect, no specific measures.</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserve marine biodiversity</td>
<td>Cannot be evaluated</td>
<td></td>
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Management unit

The American plaice stock in Flemish Cap (Div. 3M) is considered to be a distinct population.

Stock status

The stock has increased in recent years due to improved recruitment (at age 3) since 2009, and recovered to the levels of the mid 1990s, when the fishery was closed. Both catches and F remain low, although slightly higher catches are observed since 2013.
Reference points
Scientific Council is not in a position to provide proxies for biomass or fishing mortality reference points at this time.

Projections
Quantitative assessment of risk at various catch options is not possible at this time.

Assessment
This assessment is based upon a qualitative evaluation of research vessel survey series and bycatch data from commercial fisheries.

The next full assessment is planned for 2023.

Human impact
Mainly fishery related mortality. Other sources (e.g. pollution, shipping, oil-industry) are undocumented.

Biological and environmental interactions
The stock occurs mainly at depths shallower than 600 m on Flemish Cap. Main stomach contents are echinoderms, shrimp and hyperiids.

Fishery
American plaice is caught as bycatch in otter trawl fisheries, mainly the cod and redfish fisheries. From 1979 to 1993 a TAC of 2 000 tonnes was in effect for this stock. A reduction to 1 000 tonnes was agreed for 1994 and 1995 and a moratorium was agreed to thereafter.
Recent catch estimates and TACs ('000 tonnes) are as follows:

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STATLANT 21</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>STACFIS</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ndf - no directed fishing.

**Effects of the fishery on the ecosystem**

No directed fishery. General impacts of fishing gear on the ecosystem should be considered.

**Special comments**

No special comments

**Sources of information**

SCR Doc. 05/29; 20/11, 39; SCS Doc. 18/8, 13; 19/9; 20/7, 9, 13