

American plaice in Division 3M











Advice June 2023 for 2024 – 2026

Recommendation for 2024 - 2026

The stock has recovered to the levels of the mid 1990s, however, recruitment has been poor since 2018. SC considers that there is not sufficient supporting evidence that the stock would be able to sustain a fishery at this time and recommends that there be no directed fishing in 2024, 2025 and 2026. 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.

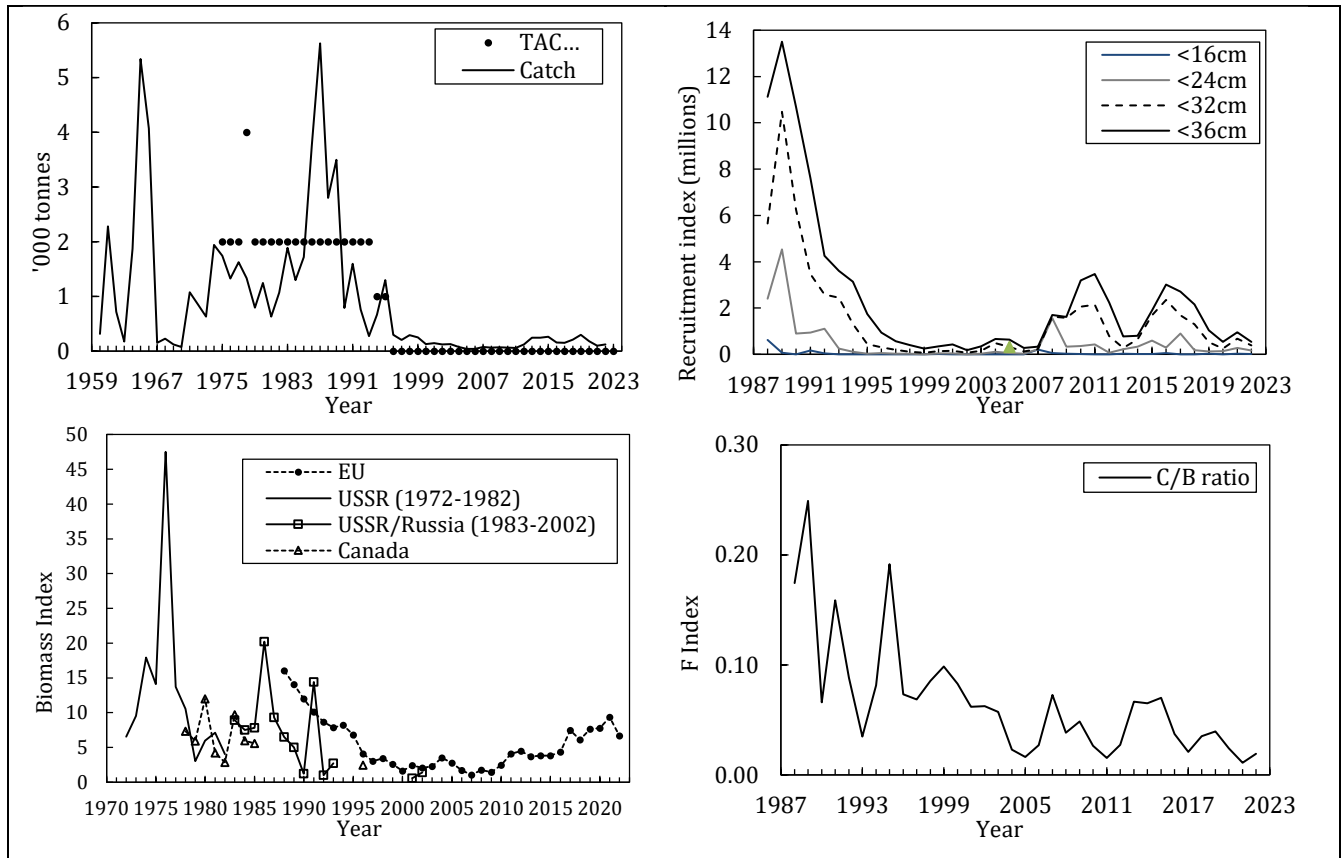
Convention Principle	Status	Comment	
Restore to or maintain at Bmsy		Bmsy and Blim undefined, stock level low/depleted	 OK
Eliminate Overfishing (Stock)		Flim undefined, no directed fishing, F is low	 Intermediate
Eliminate Overfishing (Ecosystem)		Total EPU catches < 2TCI	 Not accomplished
Apply Precautionary Approach		No reference points defined	 Unknown
Minimize harmful impacts on living marine resources and ecosystems		No directed fishing	
Preserve marine biodiversity		Cannot be evaluated	

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 following two recruitment pulses in 2008-2012 and 2015-2018, and recovered to levels similar to the mid-1990s. However, recruitment has been poor since 2018 while relative F remains low.



Reference points

No reference points have been defined.

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 2026.

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 the Flemish Cap. Main stomach contents are echinoderms, shrimp and hyperiids.

The Flemish Cap (3M) Ecosystem Production Unit (EPU) has not experienced sustained reductions in overall productivity observed in other EPUs. With the exception of a short-lived increase in 2005-2009, total EPU biomass has remained fairly stable over time despite the changes in individual stocks.

Ecosystem sustainability of catches

3M American plaice is included in the benthivore guild of the Flemish Cap (3M) Ecosystem Production Unit (EPU). The other NAFO managed stock in this guild and EPU is 3M shrimp. The Catch/TCI is below the 2TCI ecosystem reference point (3M Benthivore Catch₂₀₂₂/TCI=0.01) indicating a low risk of ecosystem overfishing.

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:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
TAC	ndf	ndf	ndf	ndf	ndf	ndf	ndf	ndf	ndf	ndf
STATLANT 21	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	NA*	
STACFIS	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	

ndf No directed fishing.

* STATLANT 21a data for 2022 were not yet available at the time of writing

Special comments

No special comments

Sources of information

SCR Doc. 23/003, 024; 20/39; SCS Doc. 23/13; 22/13; 21/05, 09