



ICES

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

CIEM

Conseil International pour
l'Exploration de la Mer

PRESS RELEASE

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Exploitation of fish stocks has declined significantly during the last decade

Scientists from the **International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)** have concluded that exploitation of fish stocks in the Northeast Atlantic has declined significantly during the last decade. Many fish stocks – such as cod around Iceland, in the Baltic Sea and the Barents Sea, plaice in the North Sea, herring in the Norwegian Sea, the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, and sprat in the Baltic Sea – have been harvested sustainably according to the targets set by policy-makers, and fish populations have started to improve.

“Reduction in exploitation towards the long-term targets is the first step in rebuilding sustainable and stable fish populations and achieving a healthy ecosystem status”, explained ICES Head of Advisory Services Poul Degnbol.

Improvements have not been the same for all species and regions. For instance, exploitation of cod and haddock in the Faroe Islands region has remained high over the past several decades compared to a marked decrease in fishing pressure for the same species in other regions. Additionally, several populations, such as cod in the Irish Sea, the Kattegat and west of Scotland, remain low, with ICES advising that there should be no directed fisheries and minimal bycatch for these species. In contrast, populations such as Northeast Arctic cod and the widely distributed blue whiting continue to increase.

The significant reductions in fishing pressure and the accompanying stock improvements are likely the result of several factors including reductions in Total Allowable Catches (TACs), changing market conditions, and increases in fuel prices.

The conclusions are a result of the annual meeting of the ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM), held last week in Copenhagen, Denmark, where scientists examined historical trends in exploitation of 85 major fish stocks across the Northeast Atlantic. ACOM is the body in ICES providing scientific advice to support the management of marine resources and ecosystems.

For more information about the ICES advisory process, visit the [ICES website](#).

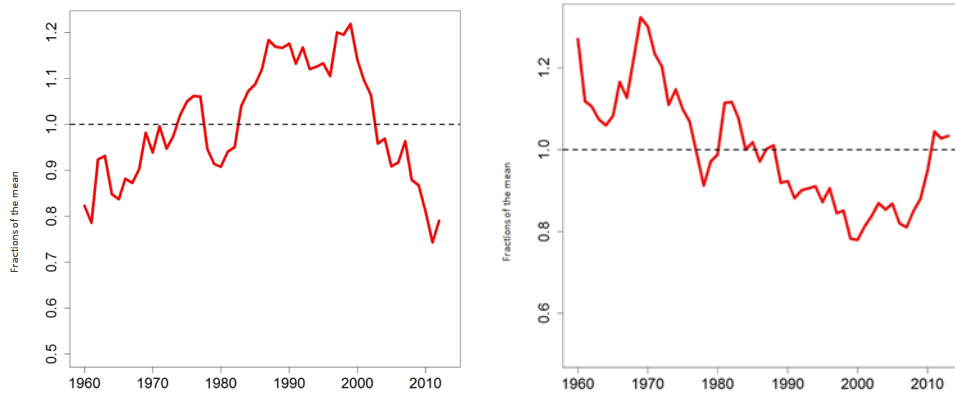


Figure: Average fishing pressure (measured as fishing mortality) (left) and average stock biomass (right) for 85 major fish stocks in the Northeast Atlantic, both scaled to the mean over the time period (1960-2013), ie. if the y-axis value is 1 in a given year then this year's value is equal to the mean over the time series; if it is 0.5 it is half the mean value; etc.

For further information, please contact:

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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 Ocean, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea. ICES advises competent authorities (international commissions and governments) 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. ICES is working towards integrated ecosystem assessments and integrated advice, delivered at the regional seas level.

The ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) has one representative from each of the 20 member countries. ACOM delivers the scientific advice upon request by competent authorities, following an established process that ensures the legitimacy and integrity of the work undertaken and the advice delivered.

For more information, visit [the ICES website](#).

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