

MSC Fishery Fact Sheet: South Africa hake trawl fishery



Latin name	<i>Merluccius paradoxus</i> and <i>Merluccius capensis</i>
Deutsch	Kap-Hecht
English	Deep-water Cape hake, Shallow-water Cape hake
Español	Merluza sudafricana con red de arrastre
Français	Merlu du Cap
Nederlands	Kaapse heek

Basic information

Location	South East Atlantic within the South Africa 200 nautical mile Economic Exclusion Zone
Fishing gear	Bottom trawl
Season	Year-round
Quota / TAC	118,578MT Nominal Weight (2009)
Products	Whole, headed & gutted, fillets, steaks, portions, minced, chilled, coated, frozen block, marinated, loins, pickled, ready meal, smoked
Date certified	Certified in April 2004

Background information

Trawl fisheries targeting hake provide over half of the value of all fisheries in South Africa. The main export markets are Europe, Australia and the US. The offshore trawl fishery mostly targets deepwater *M.paradoxus* on the shelf edge from the Namibian border southwards, whereas shallow water *M.capensis* is the target of the inshore trawl fishery, which operates mostly on the Agulhas Bank off the south coast.

The two species overlap in their depth distribution, and both are found around the entire South African coast. Growth in both species is slow, and fish can reach 115cm. Hake are piscivorous as adults, feeding at night, whereas they aggregate near the bottom during the day, which is when they are targeted by trawlers.

MSC webpage www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/certified/south-atlantic-indian-ocean/south-africa-hake-trawl-fishery



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Sustainability notes

- Stock levels** Historically, hake was assessed as a single species, as separation of catches was not possible, however species-specific assessments are now being conducted. The shallow water *M.capensis* stock is above sustainable levels, and catches below maximum sustainable levels. The deep-water *M.paradoxus* stock is below precautionary levels, and a rebuilding plan is in place.
- Environmental Impact** A Deep-Sea Bycatch Management Plan has been drawn up, and measures, including precautionary catch limits and seasonal closed areas, have been introduced through permit conditions to reduce the bycatch of monk and kingklip. Seabird by-catch (identified for the first time during the certification process) has fallen from 18,000 birds per year to 200 birds per year following the introduction of Tori lines (lines with streamers to discourage birds whilst hauling the trawl).
- Management plan** The South Africa hake fishery has become more inclusive and consultative with the recent political changes. All fishing rights holders have signed Codes of Conduct, committing them to compliance procedures and accepting the concept of sustainable harvesting. An Operational Management Plan is in place to allow the recovery of *M.paradoxus* stocks to sustainable levels within 20 years.
- Further notes** A comprehensive Scientific Observer Programme has collected information on target and non-target species, the results of which have been fed into management and scientific advice. In particular, the programme has assisted in splitting hake catches into the two species, thus allowing species-specific stock assessments.
- Fishery Improvements** As well as bycatch and seabird impact mitigation measures, measures to reduce impacts on benthic habitat have been introduced, including 'ring-fencing' existing trawling grounds to reduce the amount of habitat affected. Surveillance capacity has also increased, with the introduction of additional vessels and the recruitment of 42 trained Fisheries Control Officers. The entire hake fishing fleet is also now covered by a Vessel Monitoring System.

Useful websites

- Suppliers:** www.msc.org/where-to-buy/find-a-supplier
Fishbase (*M. paradoxus*) www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?id=1826
(*M. capensis*) www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?id=1828

Certificate holder

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Fishing using Tori lines © WWF

Last updated: March 2009