

MSC Fishery Fact Sheet: Ekofish Group North Sea plaice



Latin name	<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>
Deutsch	Scholle
English	Plaice
Español	Platija
Français	Carrelet
Nederlands	Schol

Basic information

Location	Central North Sea between Denmark and Scotland
Fishing gear	Twin-rigged otter trawl with 120-140mm meshes
Season	1 st April to 1 st December
Quota / TAC	2,500MT (2009 figures)
Products	Fresh and frozen filets, whole fresh fish
Date certified	June 2009

Background information

North Sea plaice is an important species for the European flatfish fleet and the Dutch Ekofish Group is the first to receive MSC certification for this species. Small plaice migrate from the south of the North Sea to the north. This means that in the central North Sea, where the Ekofish Group's fishery takes place, predominantly adult plaice are found. This, in combination with the large mesh gear means that they can catch plaice with little undesired by-catch.

The fishery operates under a strict quota management regime, closes during the spawning period for plaice and respects voluntary area closures throughout the year as part of their management plan. Ekofish Group worked closely with WWF Netherlands in achieving their certification.

MSC webpage <http://www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/certified/north-east-atlantic/Ekofish-Group-North-Sea-twin-rigged-otter-trawl-plaice>



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Sustainability notes

- Stock levels** The North Sea plaice stock is assessed on an annual basis using a robust model that is reviewed annually to ensure its appropriateness for the fishery. The most recent stock assessment showed that the stock remains well above the level at which there is a risk of recruitment failure and that the stock is currently at a level consistent with being exploited at sustainable levels. Under the current rate of harvest, the stock is expected to continue its recent growth.
- Environmental Impact** There is a wealth of information available on the importance of plaice within the food web at key life stages. This information enables scientists to explore the ecological impacts of the removal of plaice from the ecosystem, with research demonstrating no unacceptable impacts of the fishery on ecological systems within major fishing areas. The fishing technique employed in the fishery is new and relatively unusual, requiring further research to understand the impacts of the gear on the sea-floor and by-catch.
- Management plan** The Ekofish plaice fishery is permitted within a legally robust management framework that complies with domestic, regional and international law. Free of subsidies, the fishery is carefully monitored and there are procedures in place to promptly reduce fishing activities should changes in the fishery necessitate reductions.
- Further notes** In order to conserve the benthic (ocean floor) habitat in marine areas proposed as Natura 2000 and OSPAR protected areas, the Ekofish Group have agreed with WWF Netherlands and the North Sea foundation to close selected areas to fishing operations for the duration of the fishery's certification.
- Fishery Improvements** The novel fishing technique employed by the Ekofish Group means that additional research is needed to quantify the impact of the fishery on the marine environment. As part of the ongoing certification of this fishery, Ekofish Group has committed to further investigating the impacts of the fishing gear on habitats and benthos within their area of operation, and evaluating the relative contribution of cod by-catch in the fishery to impacts on cod stock recovery in the North Sea.

Useful websites

- Suppliers:** <http://www.msc.org/where-to-buy/find-a-supplier>
Fishbase: www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?id=1342

Certificate holder

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Last updated: November 2011