

MSC Fishery Fact Sheet: Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association North East Atlantic Mackerel



Latin name	<i>Scomber scombrus</i>
Deutsch	Makrele
English	Atlantic mackerel
Español	Caballa
Français	Maquereau commun
Nederlands	Makreel

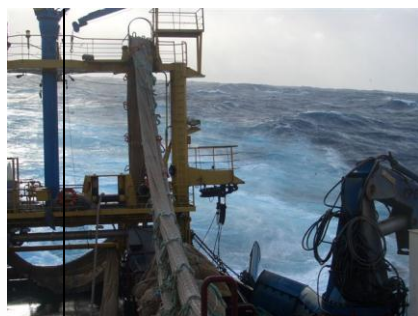
Basic information

Location	ICES Divisions IIa, IVa, Vb, VI, VII, VIIIa, VIIIb, XII and XIV.
Fishing gear	Single and pair pelagic mid-water trawl
Season	From 1 January – 15 February and from 1 October - 31 December
TAC / quota	ca. 82.000 MT - ca. 13% of TAC (2011).
Products	Whole round frozen
Date certified	10th July 2009

Background information

While mackerel has been an important species for the North Sea fisheries, it was not until the 1960s until the North East Atlantic mackerel fishery developed. The skippers of the Pelagic-freezer Trawler Association (PFA) use single and pair pelagic mid-water trawls to catch mackerel. The catch is pumped from the cod-end of the trawl into refrigerated seawater tanks to chill. Subsequently the catch is graded and frozen into blocks and stored in the freezer compartments of the trawler. The PFA fleet comprises 25 freezer-trawlers owned by nine companies from five EU-countries. PFA has successfully introduced management measures to reduce undesired by-catches to low levels. An example is the ban on high grading for all PFA vessels, which has been an internal policy of the PFA since 2000. As part of their ongoing certification, PFA will take further management action with respect to the monitoring and reduction of undesired catches.

MSC webpage <http://www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/certified/north-east-atlantic/pelagic-freezer-trawler-association-ne-atlantic-mackerel>



Credit © PFA



Sustainability notes

Stock levels

The North East Atlantic mackerel stock has been heavily fished over the past 30 years, and in 2007 was considered to be harvested unsustainably as the spawning stock was estimated to be below precautionary levels. Measures were put in place to ensure the stock recovery in the short term, and the 2009 assessment found that the stock had returned to full reproductive capacity, although fishing mortality is still above precautionary levels.

Environmental Impact

The main bycatch in the fishery is of other commercial species (herring, horse mackerel and blue whiting), the catches of which are retained and set against quotas for those species. Bycatch of other species is considered to be extremely low. Measures are in place to protect target and other species, such as temporary closures of areas of high juvenile fish concentrations. Low rates of interactions with protected, endangered or threatened species suggest that the fishery does not pose a risk to such species. Benthic impacts are minimal as the gears used are deployed in the upper or middle water column.

Management plan

The fishery operated within an international agreement between Norway, Faroe Islands and the EU. Following a change in the distribution of the NE Atlantic mackerel stocks into Icelandic waters the number of nations fishing the stock and total catches has increased. While the EU and Norway concluded allocation discussions in January 2010, there is no current agreement controlling the setting of the combined catch of all fishing nations and former allocation arrangements have broken down. The fishery now operates under an agreement between the EU and Norway only and negotiations are ongoing between the four coastal states with the aim to achieve joint management.

Fishery Improvements

The fishery has to record all cases of incidental fishery-related mortality of mackerel (such as discarding, high-grading or slippage) and other species and develop measures to reduce them in both the directed mackerel fishery and other pelagic fisheries. While the NE Atlantic mackerel stock has been assessed as healthy, its long term sustainability is at risk as former decision making arrangements controlling the allocation of quota have been undermined following a change in its distribution. Therefore, the continuing certification of the seven MSC certified NE Atlantic mackerel fisheries is conditional on the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring and managing the combined catch of all the nations fishing on this stock before the end of 2011.

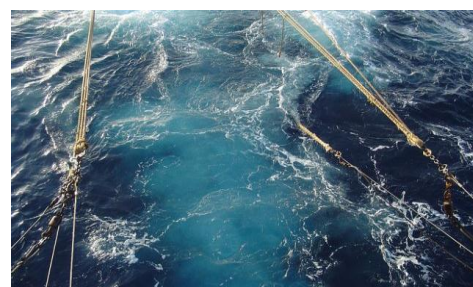
Useful websites

Suppliers: www.msc.org/where-to-buy/find-a-supplier

Fishbase: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/speciesSummary.php?ID=118>

Certificate holder

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