

Explanations on the ICES advice for 2026



Cod around Greenland

A benchmark in 2023 used new genetic information to divide the cod stock complex off Greenland into three stocks.

The west Greenland coastal stock lives in the extensive fjord systems and is divided into a northern and southern stock component. In the offshore stocks, a distinction is made between a West Greenlandic and an East Greenlandic-Island offshore stock based on genetic stock assignments. Historically, the heyday of cod fishing off Greenland in the 1950s and 1960s was associated with a very large western high seas stock, while the recovery since 2000 is due to a strengthening of the eastern high seas stock and/or increased exchange with the Icelandic stock. Overall, the stocks in Greenland waters mix during different life stages. It is therefore difficult to attribute catches from the fishery directly to a stock. Only a subsequent genetic analysis can provide more clarity.

After the collapse in the early 1990s, there was a 10-year period of very low population densities. After a moratorium until 2005, fishing was permitted again in 2006.

For the East Greenland stock, a solid stock calculation is currently not possible, as seasonal migrations between East Greenland and Iceland prevent separate calculations. Mixing with the Icelandic stock probably explains why the majority of catches in East Greenland currently come from Dohrnbank, which is located in Greenlandic territorial waters between East Greenland and Iceland. Due to a lack of information, the recommendation of an annual maximum catch of 23,518 tons for the years 2024 to 2026 is only based on a reduction of 20% (precautionary buffer) compared to the observed catch in 2022.

The West Greenlandic offshore stock is at a low level, but above the critical biomass limit. Fishing pressure is too high based on the MSY concept. The catch advice for 2026 based on the ICES MSY approach is 4,708 tonnes, based on the ICES MSY concept. This represents a 45% increase compared to last year's recommendations and is mainly driven by a higher assessment of the strong year class from 2021.

The two components of the West Greenland coastal stock are not targeted by Germany, but there are by-catches. Both components are overfished in relation to the MSY concept, but are within safe biological limits.

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