

Explanations on the ICES advice for 2024



North East Atlantic Mackerel

The spawning stock biomass of Northeast Atlantic mackerel has increased substantially since the 2000s to a maximum in 2014, and has been declining since then, but is still estimated to be within safe biological limits. Fishing mortality has declined since 2003 and has been below FMSY since 2016. Some large year classes have developed since the early 2000s. As a result of increased biomass and climatic changes, the stock has substantive expanded its area of distribution to the northwest (Iceland, Greenland) since the late 2000s, especially during the long summer feeding migrations. However, this process does not seem to be continuing at present.

An age-based model is used to assess the stock. This model uses - in addition to commercial data - the triennial mackerel egg survey, which targets the annual egg production, and for several years also a Nordic survey, which focusses on the stock during the feeding migration. In addition, the International Bottom Trawl Survey (IBTS) is used in Q4 and Q1 to provide estimates of juvenile abundance. Norwegian tagging data, using recapture rates to estimate stock size, have also been integrated into the assessment in recent years.

The latest scientific advice from 2023 sets a total allowable catch for 2024 of 739386 tons, which is five percent lower than the previous year's advice of 782066 tons. In recent years, however, coastal states (e.g. EU states, Norway, Faroes, Iceland, Greenland, Russia) have been unable to agree on a common total allowable catch and the sum of established unilateral quotas exceeds the scientific advice by far. Mackerel is also caught in international waters, which further complicates management.

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