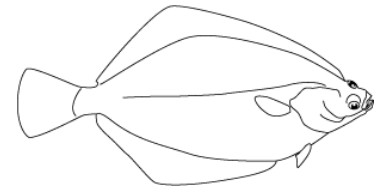


Explanations on the ICES Advice for 2024



Flatfish Baltic Sea

Five flatfish species are commercially exploited in the Baltic Sea: plaice, flounder, dab, brill and turbot. Only plaice is limited by a quota. In the past, flatfish were mainly by-catch in the cod fishery; there were only small directed fisheries, e.g. for turbot. Since the closure of the two cod fisheries, flatfish have become one of the few exploitable target species in the western Baltic Sea.

The two plaice stocks seem to be doing well, benefiting mainly from the much lower predation pressure due to the poor condition of the cod. Recruitment is strong, ICES could therefore recommend an increase in catches for many years - catches of 17,947 tons are possible for 2024 in the Baltic Sea (SD22-32). However, the catches include discards, the vast majority of which have been illegal since 2017 and still account for over 20% of the catches from the area. The allowed plaice catch is not nearly fished out, due to a very uneven distribution of national quotas: Denmark is entitled to three quarters of the catch, the other nations share the rest. So for these fisheries, including Germany's, the quotas are very limiting, but not for Denmark.

There were first indications in 2022 that the plaice caught are becoming thinner, i.e. their corpulence factor is deteriorating. Whether this is a density effect or a consequence of changing environmental conditions, as is the case with cod, is unclear at this point.

The other flatfish stocks in the western Baltic Sea are also in good condition. However, the income achievable from flatfish fishing cannot come close to compensating for the catch losses of herring and cod.

Contact:

Dr. Sven Stötera

Thünen Institute of Baltic Sea Fisheries, 18069 Rostock

Phone: +49 (0)381 66099-123, Mail: sven.stoetera@thuenen.de

<https://www.thuenen.de/en/thuenen-topics/fisheries/understanding-fish-stock-developments-scientific-basis-for-sustainable-use/ices-advice-on-fishing-opportunities-whats-behind-it>