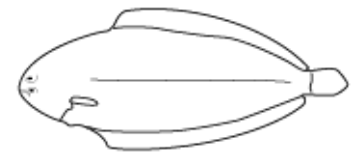


Explanations on the ICES advice for 2024



Sole North Sea

The spawning stock biomass of sole in the North Sea showed a generally decreasing trend until 2007 after a high in the early 1990s. After this low, the stock recovered slightly, but remained below the critical reference level B_{lim} for a long time. Due to a strong 2018 year class, the spawning stock biomass increased somewhat in recent years and the stock was estimated to be just above B_{lim} in 2023. Fishing mortality (F) has declined overall since 1997, but was always well above the reference value of F_{MSY} . Only since 2020 there has been a noticeable drop towards F_{MSY} and for 2022 the fishing mortality rate is estimated to be below F_{MSY} (but major problems with the estimation for the last years in the assessment, see below!). The calculated recruitment has mostly been below the long-term mean since the early 1990s with no discernible trend. However, the 2018 cohort is slightly larger, as mentioned above. Currently, the fishery mainly relies on this larger year class.

ICES recommends a total allowable of 3,588 tonnes for 2024, which is 61% lower than the previous year's recommended catch. The reason for the lower catch recommendation is problems in the assessment, which with each new data point estimates the spawning stock biomass significantly lower and the fishing mortality significantly higher than a year earlier. To compensate for this bias, it is assumed that this pattern also occurs in the latest assessment. Therefore, the forecasts are carried out with downward "corrected" values for the numbers per age class at the beginning of the forecast. A benchmark is planned for 2024 to improve the quality of the assessment.

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<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>