



**Scientific, Technical and Economic
Committee for Fisheries (STECF)**

**REVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE FOR 2010
Part I**

CORRIGENDUM

Advice on Stocks of plaice in ICES Divisions VIIId and VIIe

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SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF)

REVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE FOR 2010 Part I

CORRIGENDUM

The text below should replace the corresponding sections in the Part 1 of the STECF Review of advice for 2010 for stocks of Community interest (STECF 2009. Review of scientific advice for 2010 – part I. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, EUR 23981 EN, JRC 53318).

1.18 Plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*) in Division VIIId (Eastern English Channel)

FISHERIES: The stock is exploited predominantly in a mixed flatfish fishery by otter and beam trawlers. French offshore otter trawlers have a directed fishery in winter. Countries involved in this fishery are Belgium, France and the UK. Landings fluctuated between 2,000 and 10,000 t (1976-2007). Landings fluctuated hardly in the last decennia but declined slightly in the last 6 years from 5,800 t to 3,500 t in 2008.

SOURCE OF MANAGEMENT ADVICE: The main management advisory body is ICES. The advice is based on an age-based assessment using commercial and survey data.

PRECAUTIONARY REFERENCE POINTS: The proposed precautionary reference points for fishing mortality and biomass are $F_{pa} = 0.45$, $B_{pa} = 8,000t$.

STOCK STATUS: The assessment is indicative of trends only. The SSB trends suggest that the spawning-stock biomass has declined through the last 15 years to a stable historical low level. The current level of SSB is low. F varies without trend around the long-term average. Recruitment in 2006 and 2007 have been above average.

RECENT MANAGEMENT ADVICE: In the absence of a short-term forecast, ICES advises on the basis of exploitation boundaries in relation to precautionary considerations that landings in 2010 should not increase above the average of landings from the last three years (2006–2008), corresponding to landings less than 3 500 t.

STECF COMMENTS: STECF agrees with the ICES advice for VIIId plaice.

STECF notes that plaice in VIIId and VIIe are managed by a joint TAC, and that the advice from ICES is radically different for the two stock components. “*No increase above the average of landings from the last three years (2006–2008), corresponding to landings less than 3 500 t*” for plaice in VIIId and “*a substantial reduction in catches*” for plaice in VIIe.

STECF notes that following the EU Commission consultation paper on TACs for 2010 (COM (2009) 224, 12 May 2009) this stock would be categorised based on the average of SSB in the last 2 years compared to the average of the 3 preceding years. For this stock only relative measures of stock biomass are available but these show a reduction of 3%, resulting in an unchanged TAC.

STECF reiterates its previous comments:

- i) Due to the minimum mesh size (80 mm) in the mixed beam trawl fishery, a large number of undersized plaice are discarded. Discard estimates are not included in the assessment. The 80-mm mesh size is not matched to the minimum landing size of plaice (27 cm). Measures taken specifically directed at sole fisheries will also impact the plaice fisheries.
- ii) There is some uncertainty about the stock structure. Historical tagging information indicates that there may be significant migration of plaice between ICES divisions VIIId, e and IVc.

iii) Finally, the lack of discard information also adds to the overall uncertainty of the status of the stock since discards are not included in the assessment.

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2010 ACCORDING TO ANNEX II OF COM (2009) 224

With the background of the latest scientific assessments and advice and with reference to the Communication from the Commission (COM (2009) 224) on a consultation on fishing opportunities for 2010, STECF notes that plaice in subarea VIIId can be classified under Category 6.

Accordingly STECF notes that the rules for the above category imply the following option for TACs in 2010.

2010 VIIId TAC component	Basis
Category 6 $\leq 3,500$ t appropriate catch level	State of stock not known precisely and STECF advices on an appropriate catch level

STECF further notes that the result of applying the rules of Annex II of COM (2009) 224 to both separate components result in a joint TAC for plaice in VIIId,e of no greater than $3,500$ t + 828 t = $4,328$ t. (See also section 3.14)

3.14 Plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*) in Divisions VIIe (Western English Channel)

FISHERIES: The fisheries taking plaice in the Western Channel mainly involve vessels from the bordering countries: the total landings (2008) are split among UK vessels (80%), France (12%), and Belgium (8%). Landings of plaice in the Western Channel were low and stable between 1950 and the mid-1970s, and increased rapidly during 1976 to 1988 as beam trawls began to replace otter trawls, although plaice are taken mainly as a by-catch in beam-trawling directed at sole and anglerfish. Estimated landings have been fairly stable since 1994. Landings decreased in 2008 (974 t.) to a similar low level as in the late-1970s. The main fishery is south and west of Start Point. Although plaice are taken throughout the year, the larger landings are made during February, March, October, and November

The TAC for plaice in the English Channel is set for Divisions VIIId,e combined.

SOURCE OF MANAGEMENT ADVICE: The main management advisory body is ICES. The advice is based on an age-based assessment using commercial and survey data.

PRECAUTIONARY REFERENCE POINTS: The proposed precautionary reference points for fishing mortality and biomass are $F_{pa} = 0.45$, $B_{pa} = 2,500$ t.

STOCK STATUS: Based on the most recent estimate of SSB (in 2009) ICES classifies this stock as being at risk of reduced reproductive capacity. SSB has been declining since 2000 and is now close to Blim. Based on the most recent estimate of F (in 2008) ICES classifies this stock as being at risk of being harvested unsustainably. Fishing mortality has shown an increase in recent years but this may be due to the retrospective bias. Fishing mortality remained above F_{pa} since the late 1980s

RECENT MANAGEMENT ADVICE:

ICES advises on the basis of exploitation boundaries in relation to precautionary limits. This corresponds to a substantial reduction in catch until SSB is above B_{pa} or other strong evidence of rebuilding is observed.

Other considerations:

Exploitation boundaries in relation to high long-term yield, low risk of depletion of production potential and considering ecosystem effects: Fishing mortalities in the range of $F_{0.1} = 0.12$ to $F_{MAX} = 0.26$ can be considered as candidate target reference points, which are consistent with taking high long-term yields and achieving a low risk of depleting the productive potential. The recent fishing mortality is well above these potential fishing mortality targets.

Exploitation boundaries in relation to precautionary limits: Given the low stock size, recent poor recruitment, high fishing mortality, the uncertainty in the assessment, and the inability to reliably forecast catch, ICES

recommends a substantial reduction in catch until the estimate of SSB is above B_{pa} or other strong evidence of rebuilding is observed.

STECF COMMENTS: STECF agrees with the advice from ICES.

STECF notes that plaice in VIId and VIIe are managed by a joint TAC and that the advice from ICES is radically different for the two stock components; “No increase above the average of landings from the last three years (2006–2008), corresponding to landings less than 3 500 t” for plaice in VIId and “a substantial reduction in catches” for plaice in VIIe.

STECF also notes that the advice, based on exploitation boundaries in relation to precautionary limits requires a substantial reduction in catches whereas application of the appropriate rule in the Communication from the Commission (COM (2009) 224) does require a reduction in TAC of 15% according to category 9 rule 2.

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2010 ACCORDING TO ANNEX II OF COM (2009) 224

With the background of the latest scientific assessments and advice and with reference to the Communication from the Commission (COM (2009) 224) on a consultation on fishing opportunities for 2010, STECF notes that plaice in subarea VIIe can be classified under Category 9 rule 2.

Accordingly STECF notes that the rules for the above category imply the following option for TACs in 2010.

	2010 VIIe TAC component	Basis
Category 9	828 t	State of stock not known precisely and STECF advises the stock is decreasing, hence 15% reduction.

STECF further notes that the result of applying the rules of Annex II of COM (2009) 224 to both separate components result in a joint TAC for plaice in VIId,e of no greater than $3,500 \text{ t} + 828 \text{ t} = 4,328 \text{ t}$ (See also section 1.18).

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Abstract

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