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Opinion 87: revision of reference points regarding Bay of Biscay sole stock exploitation at Maximum Sustainable Yield.

The SWW AC has been working on the development of Bay of Biscay sole exploitation rules for several years with a view to meeting the management objectives set out in the Common Fisheries Policy and maintaining the socio-economic balance of the coastal fishing industry which depends on this fishery.

Exploitation rules based on the proposal for a fixed TAC and including safeguards were put forward in 2013 and submitted to the ICES and the CSTEP for their approval.

These rules were evaluated with regard to data on stock trends and the reference points established by the ICES, which serve as management objectives. In the WGHMM report, however,¹ and in the 2013 Bay of Biscay sole stock Opinion,² the ICES indicates that the MSY objective could be re-evaluated.

" F_{MSY} is based on F_{max} but this value is ill-defined. The current F_{max} is higher than was calculated using the 2010 data. The basis for F_{MSY} may need to be re-evaluated"

The F_{max} , which serves as a reference to determine the F_{MSY} is calculated by the ICES at 0.39 while the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) objective is 0.26 and the current fishing mortality is 0.40.

Moreover, CSTEP³ and ICES⁴ analyses of the revised management plan show that stock biomass levels and fishing possibilities are not greatly affected by variations in the target fishing mortality reference point between 0.15 and 0.35 (see figure below).

¹ ICES, 2013. Report of the Working Group on the Assessment of Southern Shelf Stocks of Hake, Monk and Megrim (WGHMM), 10 - 16 May 2013, ICES Headquarters, Copenhagen. [ICES CM 2013/ACOM:11A](#).

² ICES, 2013. Opinion for sole in division VIIIab (bay of Biscay), [ACOM CM 2013](#).

³ CSTEP, 2011. Impact Assessment of Bay of Biscay sole. [STECF-11-01](#).

⁴ ICES, 2011. Report of the Workshop on Implementing the ICES Fmsy Framework (WKFRAME-2), 10-14 January 2011, ICES, Denmark. [ICES CM 2011/ACOM:33](#). 110 pp.



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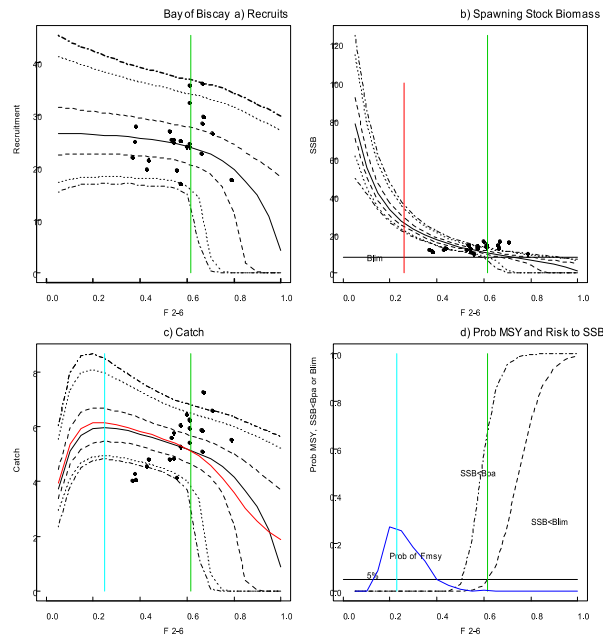


Figure 2: Levels for recruits, biomass and catches at different fishing mortality rates (source ICES/WKFRAME, 2011).

In this context, the SWW AC wishes to recommend the European Commission:

- Address a request to the ICES to evaluate the pertinence of the reference points currently used and, if necessary, to get the ICES to proceed to a re-evaluation.
- Update, if required, the management scenario simulations established by the ICES and CSTEP in 2013, regarding the fixed TAC rules.
- Update the management scenario simulations established by the ICES and CSTEP in 2013, regarding the fixed TAC rules, taking the latest ICES Opinion on the state of stocks into account as well as, if required, any new reference points.