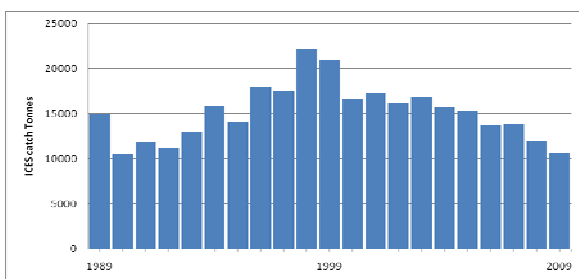


Dab



Limanda limanda

The common dab, *Limanda limanda*, (1) is an edible flatfish of the family Pleuronectidae. According to landings statistics the annual catch of dab in the North East Atlantic has been well above 11,000 tonnes since the 1950's (2). Landings peaked at 22,000 tonnes in 1998 but have since declined to just over 10,000 tonnes in 2009. Dab is landed by UK, German, Danish and Dutch vessels.



Reported catches of dab 1989-2009 (2).

Biology

Dab is a demersal (seabed dwelling) fish native to the shallow seas around Northern Europe, in particular the North Sea, where it lives on sandy bottoms down to depths of about 100 metres. It can reach 40 cms in length and can weigh up to 1 kilogram (2.2lb), though most specimens grow no longer than 30 cms. It feeds mainly on crustaceans and

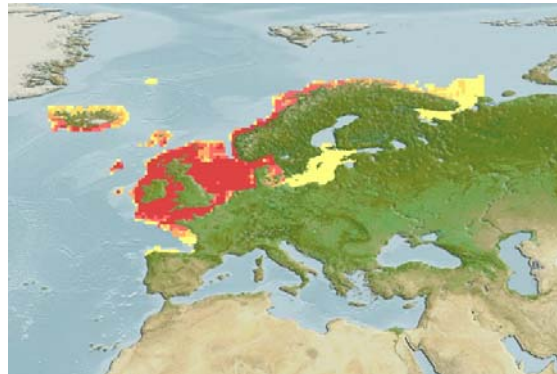
small fishes and has a maximum life span of 12 years, It spawns between January and August.

Fisheries and gears

Dab is caught in the fisheries directed at plaice and sole. Generally it is caught as a bycatch in mixed demersal beam trawl fisheries and is often discarded.

Distribution

Dab is found in the North East Atlantic from the Bay of Biscay to Iceland and Norway, including the Barents, White and Baltic Seas.



Stock assessment and catches

There are no conventional stock assessments for dab. However, there are a number of sources of information on the species and its role in the ecosystem predominantly in the North Sea (3,4,5). After sandeel it has been estimated to be the most abundant species in the North Sea and has a key role in the food web as both consumer and prey, mainly because of its great abundance (3). North Sea abundance indices (5) indicate population size has increased and has been at a high level in recent years. Age 1 and age 2 dab are most abundant with female dab more abundant than male.

Responsible Sourcing Services

This guide is one of a series of Seafish Responsible Sourcing Guides. See:
<http://www.tinyurl.com/seafishrsg>

These indicators suggest that the North Sea dab populations are currently stable or increasing, suggesting that there is a low risk that current exploitation is not sustainable. However in the Baltic there appears to be a severe decline in dab stocks possibly related to environmental conditions (4).

Management considerations

There is no minimum landing size restriction on this species. There is a Total Allowable Catch set for the combined catch of dab and flounder in the North Sea (see Table). The total reported catches for these species in 2008 was 9374 t. Thus landings are not limited by this Total Allowable Catch. However, surveys of discarding practices indicate that a very high proportion of dabs caught were discarded (5). Discarding was predominantly size related, with the majority of fish below 25 cm in length being discarded. A variety of factors contributed to discarding, including market conditions, crews' attitude, availability of the main target species; if the target species are abundant they are prioritised by the crew. There is limited information on survival post capture from shrimp trawls; survival ranged from 77% to 88% dependent on processing (4).

Dab and flounder	Total Allowable Catch 2011 (TAC) (t) (6)
EU waters of ICES IIa and IV	18,434

Product Characteristics

The common dab has a similar appearance to both plaice and flounder and similarly has both its eyes on the right hand side of its body. The upper surface is usually pale brown in colour with scattered darker blotches. Its pectoral fins may be orange. It is mainly marketed as fillets. It may be steamed, fried, broiled, boiled, microwaved or baked.

Supply chain standards

Seafish has developed supply chain standards from capture to retailer:

- **Responsible Fishing Scheme.** Sets best practice standards for fishing vessels: (BSi: PAS 72:2006).
- **British Retail Consortium (BRC) Global Standard/Safe and Local Supplier Approval (SALSA)** certification. Designed to raise standards in the seafood processing and wholesaling sectors.

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*EU legislation see: <http://europa.eu>

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