

13.11 SWO-AT-Atlantic swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*)

Introduction

The status of the North and South Atlantic swordfish stocks was assessed in 2022, by means of applying statistical modelling to the available data up to 2020. Complete information on the data availability and assessment can be found in the Report of the 2022 ICCAT Atlantic Swordfish Data Preparatory Session (Anon., 2022d) and Report of the 2022 ICCAT Atlantic Swordfish Stock Assessment Meeting (Anon., 2022e). A summary of both stock status is provided below (Tables 1a and 1b). Table 2 provides estimated catches and discards by gear, for the period 2000-2024. The Kobe Phase Plots and uncertainty of current status estimates are summarized in Figure 1. Table 3 provides estimated probabilities (%) that both the fishing mortality will be below F_{MSY} and spawning stock biomass will be above SSB_{MSY} in future years under different constant catch scenarios.

Table 1a. North Atlantic swordfish summary table.

<i>Indicator</i>		<i>Stock Status</i>
Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)	12,819 t (10,864 t - 15,289 t) ¹	2020
TAC (2024)	13,200 t	
Current (2024) Yield	11,001 t ²	
Relative Biomass (B_{2020}/B_{MSY})	1.08 (0.71-1.33) ³	
Relative Fishing Mortality (F_{2020}/F_{MSY})	0.80 (0.64-1.24) ³	
Stock Status	Overfished: NO (37.1% probability of being overfished) ⁴ Overfishing: NO (14.7% probability of overfishing) ⁴	
Management measure in effect	Rec. 24-10 TAC (2025): 14,769 t	
Managed according to a Management Procedure: Recommended TAC for the period 2025-2027 of 14,769 t		

¹ Median from base case JABBA and Stock Synthesis models; range corresponding to the lowest and highest 95% CIs from the two models.

² Provisional as of 27 September 2025 and subject to revision.

³ Median and 95% quantiles from base case Stock Synthesis and JABBA models.

⁴ As estimated from the Kobe plot probability in each quadrant.

Table 1b. South Atlantic swordfish summary table.

<i>Indicator</i>		<i>Stock Status</i>
Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)	11,481 t (9,793 t-13,265 t) ¹	2020
TAC (2024)	10,000 t	
Current (2024) Yield	9,264 t ²	
Relative Biomass (B_{2020}/B_{MSY})	0.77 (0.53-1.11) ³	
Relative Fishing Mortality (F_{2020}/F_{MSY})	1.03 (0.67-1.51)	
Stock Status	Overfished: YES (91.5% probability of being overfished) ⁴ Overfishing: YES (55.6% probability of overfishing) ⁴	
Management measures in effect	Country-specific TACs, Rec. 22-04	

¹ Median and 95% CIs from base case JABBA model.

² Provisional as of 27 September 2025 and subject to revision.

³ Median and 95% quantiles from base case JABBA model.

⁴ As estimated from the Kobe plot probability in each quadrant.

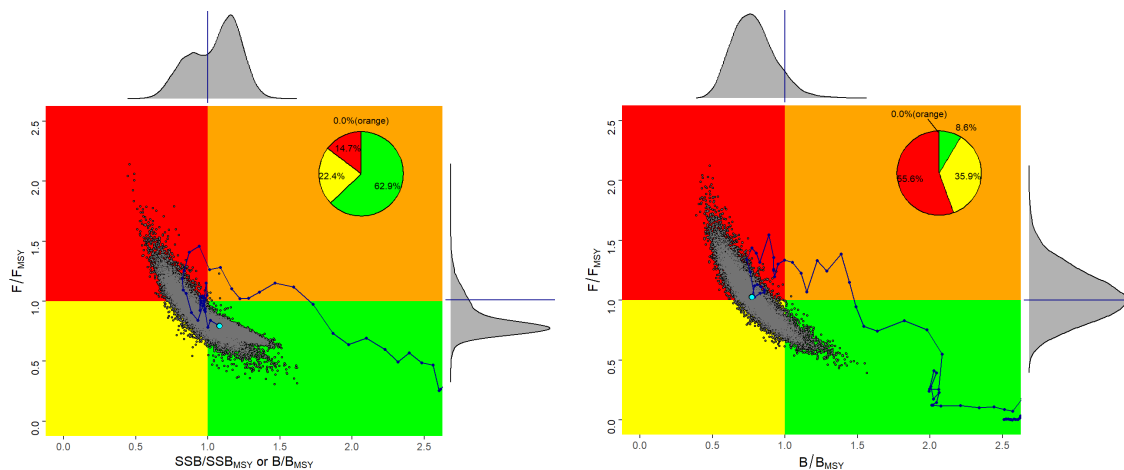


Figure 1. Kobe plots for the North (left) and South (right) Atlantic swordfish stock status in 2020, estimated during the 2022 stock assessment. The inserted pie charts indicate the probability of the stock being within each Kobe colour quadrant. The probability distributions shown in each axis represent uncertainty around current B/B_{MSY} and F/F_{MSY} . The black line indicates the stock status trajectory starting in 1950.

Outlook

North Atlantic

The stock is managed using a management procedure tested under MSE. Based on the MSE analysis, the adopted MP is expected to maintain the stock in the green quadrant of the Kobe matrix with 60% probability over the next 30 years.

Since its use in the 2022 stock assessment model, the Combined Index values for recent years have increased. This coincides with many consecutive years of catches below the TAC.

South Atlantic

The 2022 assessment stock status results were similar to the 2017 assessment, but updated information used in the 2022 assessment resulted in estimates of a less productive stock ($MSY_{2020} = 11,481$ t; $MSY_{2015} = 14,570$ t).

Results of projections from the 2017 assessment indicated that if catches remained below 11,000 t, there was a 60% chance of the stock falling within the green quadrant by 2020. The average catch for the period 2016-2020 was 10,125 t, yet the 2022 assessment indicated a 56% probability that the stock was within the red quadrant in 2020 (**Figure 1**). The Committee noted that this apparent inconsistency can be explained by the lower productivity (see above) of the stock determined in the 2022 assessment.

Projections were conducted for the base case JABBA model under constant TAC scenarios of 6 to 15 thousand tons, as well as a zero-catch scenario. Projections were implemented in 2023 and catches for 2021 and 2022 were assumed to remain constant (9,826 t) at the average from the previous three years. Under 2021-2022 catch levels (9,826 t), the South Atlantic swordfish stock had a 55% probability of being in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot by 2033 (**Table 3**).

Management recommendation

North Atlantic

Catch advice for 2025-2027 was generated by a management procedure (MP) adopted in 2024. The index used to inform the MP uses catch and effort data from 7 major fishing fleets. While the North Atlantic swordfish Exceptional Circumstances Protocol is still being developed the index was updated in 2025 (with data to 2023) to support the interim evaluation of exceptional circumstances (see response 19.15).

South Atlantic

The current TAC of 10,000 t (Rec. 22-04) will result in a 52% probability of being in the green quadrant in 2033 (Table 3). Catch levels less than 10,000 t will accelerate rebuilding. The Committee also recognized that the above advice did not fully account for removals associated with the mortality of unreported dead and post release mortality of live discards, quota carryovers (30% at the time of the assessment, reduced to 10% in Rec. 22-04) nor quota transfers across the North and South stock management boundaries. The Committee emphasized the importance of these uncertainties and recommended that the stock be closely monitored in the upcoming years to confirm rebuilding.

Table 3. Kobe II matrices for South Atlantic swordfish stock giving the probabilities that: a) $F < F_{MSY}$ (overfishing not occurring); b) $B > B_{MSY}$ (stock not overfished) and c) joint probability that $B > B_{MSY}$ and $F < F_{MSY}$ (the “green zone”).

a) Probability that $F < F_{MSY}$

TAC (t)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
0	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
6000	95%	97%	98%	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%	100%	100%	100%
6500	92%	94%	96%	97%	98%	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%
7000	88%	91%	93%	95%	96%	97%	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%
7500	82%	86%	89%	91%	93%	94%	95%	96%	96%	97%	97%
8000	75%	80%	83%	86%	88%	90%	91%	92%	93%	94%	95%
8500	68%	72%	76%	79%	82%	84%	85%	87%	88%	89%	90%
9000	59%	64%	68%	71%	74%	76%	78%	80%	81%	83%	84%
9500	51%	55%	59%	62%	65%	67%	69%	71%	72%	74%	75%
9826	46%	50%	53%	56%	58%	60%	62%	64%	65%	67%	68%
10000	43%	47%	49%	52%	54%	57%	59%	60%	62%	64%	65%
10500	35%	38%	40%	42%	44%	46%	48%	49%	50%	52%	53%
11000	29%	31%	32%	33%	35%	36%	37%	38%	39%	40%	40%
11500	23%	24%	25%	25%	26%	27%	27%	28%	28%	29%	29%
12000	18%	18%	19%	19%	19%	19%	19%	20%	20%	20%	20%
12500	13%	14%	14%	14%	14%	14%	14%	13%	13%	13%	13%
13000	11%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%
13500	8%	8%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%
14000	6%	6%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%
14500	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
15000	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%

b) Probability that $B > B_{MSY}$

TAC (t)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
0	21%	48%	74%	90%	96%	99%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%
6000	21%	33%	46%	59%	70%	77%	83%	88%	92%	94%	95%
6500	21%	32%	44%	56%	66%	74%	80%	85%	88%	91%	93%
7000	21%	31%	41%	52%	62%	70%	75%	80%	85%	88%	90%
7500	21%	30%	39%	48%	57%	65%	70%	76%	80%	83%	86%
8000	21%	29%	37%	45%	53%	60%	65%	70%	74%	78%	81%
8500	21%	28%	34%	41%	48%	54%	59%	64%	68%	72%	75%
9000	21%	27%	32%	38%	44%	49%	53%	58%	61%	65%	68%
9500	21%	26%	31%	35%	39%	44%	48%	51%	55%	58%	60%
9826	21%	25%	29%	33%	36%	40%	43%	47%	50%	52%	55%
10000	21%	25%	29%	32%	35%	39%	41%	45%	47%	49%	52%
10500	21%	24%	27%	29%	31%	34%	36%	38%	40%	41%	43%
11000	21%	23%	25%	26%	28%	29%	30%	32%	33%	34%	35%
11500	21%	22%	23%	24%	24%	25%	25%	26%	26%	27%	27%
12000	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%
12500	21%	20%	19%	19%	18%	18%	17%	17%	16%	16%	16%
13000	21%	19%	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%	13%	13%	12%	12%
13500	21%	18%	17%	15%	14%	12%	11%	10%	10%	9%	9%
14000	21%	18%	15%	13%	12%	10%	9%	8%	7%	7%	6%
14500	21%	17%	14%	12%	10%	8%	7%	6%	6%	5%	4%
15000	21%	16%	13%	10%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%	3%	3%

c) Probability that $F < F_{MSY}$ and $B > B_{MSY}$

TAC (t)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
0	21%	48%	74%	90%	96%	99%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%
6000	21%	33%	46%	59%	70%	77%	83%	88%	92%	94%	95%
6500	21%	32%	44%	56%	66%	74%	80%	85%	88%	91%	93%
7000	21%	31%	41%	52%	62%	70%	75%	80%	85%	88%	90%
7500	21%	30%	39%	48%	57%	65%	70%	76%	80%	83%	86%
8000	21%	29%	37%	45%	53%	60%	65%	70%	74%	78%	81%
8500	21%	28%	34%	41%	48%	54%	59%	64%	68%	72%	75%
9000	21%	27%	32%	38%	44%	49%	53%	58%	61%	65%	68%
9500	21%	26%	31%	35%	39%	44%	48%	51%	55%	58%	60%
9826	21%	25%	29%	33%	36%	40%	43%	47%	50%	52%	55%
10000	20%	25%	28%	32%	35%	39%	41%	45%	47%	49%	52%
10500	20%	23%	26%	29%	31%	33%	35%	38%	40%	41%	43%
11000	20%	22%	24%	25%	27%	28%	30%	31%	32%	33%	35%
11500	18%	19%	21%	22%	23%	24%	24%	25%	26%	26%	26%
12000	16%	16%	17%	18%	18%	18%	18%	19%	19%	19%	19%
12500	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%
13000	10%	10%	10%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%
13500	8%	8%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%
14000	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%
14500	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
15000	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%

Additional supporting information

The Committee recognized that environmental variability and Climate Change are important factors affecting many aspects of swordfish population dynamics and the data used to assess stock status such as the indices of relative abundance. The Committee is working to address these themes through projects described in more detail in the workplan. Given the potential influence of observed environmental changes on the variability of abundance indices, the SCRS will attempt to integrate these variables into the construction of such indices.

The Committee noted the expanded use of trapline gear in the Mediterranean and Atlantic. Initial evidence suggests that catchability, selectivity, and bycatch differ for this gear, relative to typical longline gears. The Committee noted the importance of further research on this gear type and to track its use in ICCAT fisheries and encouraged CPCs to provide relevant data voluntarily in accordance with the recommendation from the Subcommittee on Statistics.