

Abstract for SCSA reporting

Authors	Patti B., Bonanno A.,	Year	2008
Species Scientific name	Sardina pilchardus - PIL Source: GFCM Priority Species		
Geographical Sub-Area	16 - South of Sicily		

Fisheries (brief description of the fishery)*

In Sciacca port, the most important base port for the landings of small pelagic fish species along the southern Sicilian coast (GSA16), explaining for about 2/3 of total landings in GSA 16, two operational units are presently active, purse seiners and pelagic pair trawlers. Average sardine landings over the last decade (1997-2007) were about 1,400 metric tons, with a decreasing trend from year 2000 onwards. Sardine biomass, estimated by acoustic methods, ranged from a minimum of 6,000 tons in 2002 to a maximum of 39,000 tons in 2005.

Source of management advice***(brief description of material -data- and methods used for the assessment)**

Census data for catch and effort information (on deck interviews) in Sciacca port. Biological samples for fish biology information. Acoustic data for fish biomass evaluations.

Stock Status*

Exploitation rate	Stock abundance
Moderate fishing mortality	Low abundance
Comments	
xxx	

Management advice and recommendations*

Biomass evaluations from echo-surveys carried out from June 1998 to July 2007 in the Strait of Sicily show that sardine population experienced quite large inter-annual fluctuations, from about 39,000 t in 2005 to 6,000 t in 2002.

Taking into account that fishing effort was relatively stable in last decade, results would suggest the importance of environmental factors variability on yearly recruitment success. In addition, acoustic evaluations appear to be consistent with total landings (from purse seiners and midwater pair trawlers) recorded in Sciacca (the most important base port in the G.S.A. 16 for the small pelagic fish landings) during the year following the evaluation campaigns.

However, the stock did not recover from the 2006 "collapse" in sardine (-74% from 2005 to 2006) biomass, and this fact, along with a moderate exploitation rate and the decreasing trend in landings, also suggests questioning about the sustainability of current levels of fishing effort. In addition, possible negative effects on these populations could results from pressure of other fishing gears on larval stages.

Recommendations:
Fishing effort should not be increased.
Fishing ban for larval stages.

Final recommendation for sardine (amended after WG discussion)
Considering the alarming signal linked to the low 2006 biomass level (confirmed by 2007 data), combined to the decreasing trend in landings, fishing effort should not be increased. A warning on the fishing of larval stages (locally named bianchetto) is relevant, taking into account that in the past years derogation of the fishing ban was normally operated in wintertime during the sardine spawning season, even though more data and investigation are needed in order to estimate the possible impact of this fishing activity on the exploited populations.