

Working Paper submitted by EU

Chub mackerel CMM: proposed tasking for TWG CMSA and SC

The TWG CMSA09 recognized that the chub mackerel stock has been in a low-productivity phase since 2016, with full maturation occurring at age 4. However, dominant age classes in the catch are ages 1-3, and strong recruitment years (2013 and 2018) also included age-0 fish. Because these immature fish have limited opportunities to spawn before being caught, F40%SPR alone is insufficient to prevent recruitment overfishing. Additional management measures might be needed alongside TAC reductions to effectively address recruitment overfishing, such as minimum size retention, mesh size limitations or seasonal closures to protect juveniles.

Furthermore, despite a drastic decline in catches in the purse seine fleet from 309,968 t in 2021 to 95,907 t in 2023, the purse seine fleet's average effort by vessel (fishing days) and number of vessels fishing for chub mackerel have remained relatively stable in the annual summary footprint. This is pointing at issues such as change in target species or effort creep that would need to be further investigated by the TWG CMSA.

Based on the above,

The Commission tasks the TWG CMSA to undertake the following:

- Provision and analysis of gear specific data to explore whether there is a need to protect the immature portion of the stock and advice on options for achieving that, as appropriate. This includes also accessory devices used for fishing purposes, such as FADs, light devices, etc.
- Clarification of the correspondence of fishing days and the level of catch in relevant fleets, such as the purse seine fleet.
- Based on the next stock assessment, provide projections and associated probabilities, based on constant catch scenarios (e.g. increments of 5.000 mt) or constant F scenarios, aiming at reaching an appropriate MSY proxy (SSB and F) within 5 to 10 years with a probability higher than 50%.