



FACT SHEET

SHALLOW-WATER HAKE

Merluccius capensis

Family: Merlucciidae

Other common names: Shallow-water Cape hake, Vlakwater-stokvis

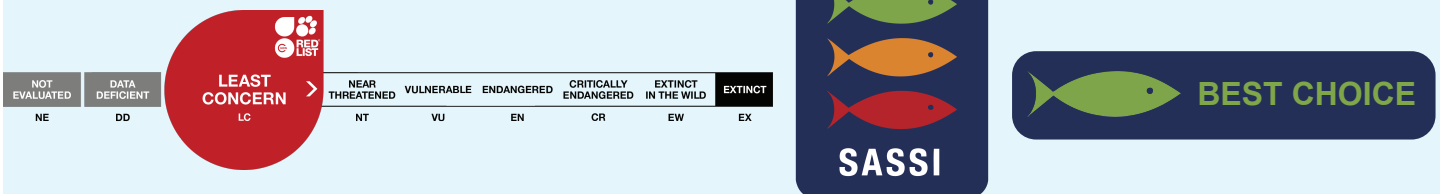
Description	An elongate fish with a somewhat depressed head. The colour of living specimens is silvery-grey but this fades to dull grey after death. The dorsal and anal fins are spineless and extend along more than half the length of the body.
Distribution	Southeastern Atlantic and Western Indian Oceans on the continental shelf from southern Angola on the west coast to KwaZulu-Natal on the east coast.
Habitat	Found in a wide range of habitats from rough, rocky bottom to sandy substrates. Most inhabit waters from 50-400 m but they have been recorded as deep as 508 m. Young fish less than one-year old are often found in oxygen-deficient inshore waters e.g. off the Orange River. This could indicate a high tolerance to low oxygen conditions providing protection from predators.
Feeding	They mainly feed on other small fish, but may also eat squid and crustaceans. Their most common prey is small deep-water hake. Early juveniles prey on small crustaceans such as krill and amphipods, but become more piscivorous (fish-eating) with increasing size.
Movement	Resident but individuals move to deeper water with age so that the mean size increases with increasing water depth. They undertake vertical migrations in the water column at night to feed.
Age and growth	They can reach a maximum size of 115 cm total length and a weight of 12 kg. They have been aged up to a maximum of 13 years.

Reproduction

Males reach maturity at 30 cm total length and an age of 2 years, while females reach maturity at 47 cm total length and an age of 4 years. Spawning occurs throughout the year with a peak between September-October. Spawning is widespread on the continental shelf, but with some localised seasonal aggregations.

Current status

The hake stocks in South African waters are carefully managed and shallow-water hake is considered to be optimally exploited. They have been evaluated as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List (2012). South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Green.



Capture

The two hake species (shallow and deep-water hake) are the main target species of the offshore demersal trawl fishery, but about 70-80% of the hake catch is deep-water hake. Although shallow-water hake is less important to this sector, it nonetheless takes more shallow-water hake than any other fishing sector. About 8% of the global hake Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is allocated to the inshore hake trawl sector. Shallow-water hake is the main target species of this fishery and is the dominant species in the catch, however the total catch is less than that taken by the offshore trawl sector. Ten percent of the global hake TAC is allocated to the hake longline and the hake handline sectors. The majority of the hake catch taken by the hake longline and hake handline sectors is shallow-water hake. Some shallow-water hake is taken as unavoidable bycatch in the midwater trawl fishery for horse mackerel. Shallow-water hake is also occasionally caught by recreational ski-boat fishermen.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: 5 per person per day

Minimum size limit: None

Closed Season: None

Other regulations: The hake handline sector is managed by a Total Allowable Effort (TAE) with a maximum catch limit for the sector. Demersal trawl and longline fisheries are managed by a TAC with individual allocations to Right Holders.

Marine protected areas (MPAs): Shallow-water hake may receive protection in large no-take MPAs off the south-eastern seaboard of South Africa which include suitable habitat for this species.

Reference

Information from the ORI Fish App. www.saambr.org.za



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