



FACT SHEET

CAPE ANCHOVY

Engraulis encrasicolus

Family: Engraulidae

Other common names: European anchovy, Kaapse ansjovis

Description

A small, slender bodied fish which is slightly flattened from side to side but has a rounded belly without scutes. The blunt snout overhangs the mouth and the anal fin is positioned well behind the dorsal fin. The overall body colour is bright silvery with a bluish upper surface and whitish belly. There is a silvery stripe along the flanks in fish larger than 6 cm.

Distribution

Eastern Atlantic from Norway to South Africa including the Mediterranean. In southern African waters they are found around the coast from Walvis Bay in Namibia to East London and further up the East coast, with occasional records as far as Maputo in Mozambique. The distribution of this species overlaps with that of Natal anchovy (*Stolephorus holodon*) which is differentiated by having belly scutes and the anal fin below the dorsal fin.

Habitat

A pelagic species that inhabits coastal waters from the surface to depths of 200 m. Enormous concentrations are found off the Western and Eastern Cape coast and some fish move up into KwaZulu-Natal waters during winter.

Feeding

Feeds primarily on larger zooplankton (mainly large copepods and krill) which are individually targeted but can also filter-feed on smaller prey including phytoplankton. Anchovies themselves provide an extremely important food source to predatory fish, seabirds and marine mammals.

Movement

Eggs and larvae spawned on the western Agulhas Bank are carried towards the west coast, where dense plankton in upwelling areas supports rapid growth of juveniles, which migrate southwards as they age. Adults also move northwards up the east coast during winter. They undertake diurnal migrations, with shoals moving closer to the bottom at night.

Reproduction

Maturity is reached at 10-12 cm total length and an age of about 1 year. Although spawning occurs off the east coast from Plettenberg Bay to Durban, most spawning occurs on the Agulhas Banks between Cape Point and Algoa Bay from October to January.

Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 17 cm total length and have been aged up to a maximum of 5 years. Because of their rapid growth rate and short life span, they exhibit strong population responses to environmental variability, which results in large fluctuations in abundance over space and time.

Current status

The anchovy stock in South African waters is carefully monitored by conducting annual biomass and recruitment surveys. The stock has been assessed as being optimally exploited but total biomass varies considerably from year to year. They have been evaluated as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List (2015).
South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Green.



Capture

Anchovies comprise a major component of the pelagic purse-seine fishery in South Africa. The fishery has landed an average of 220 000 tons of anchovy annually since 2000, but this amount can fluctuate considerably from year to year depending on recruitment success and the abundance of juvenile sardines (*Sardinops sagax*), catches of which are restricted. Most of the anchovies landed are processed into fish meal and oil for the animal feed industry.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: None
Minimum size limit: None
Closed Season: None
Other regulations: Unlimited baitfish species.
Marine protected areas (MPAs): Due to its pelagic and migratory nature, it is unlikely that this species benefits directly from protection within no-take MPAs. However, the offshore no-take areas on the Agulhas Banks may provide some protection to spawning adults.

Reference

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



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