

Sustainability profile »



Argentine hoki trawling fishery.

Species name:

Macruronus magellanicus.

Certification:

Sustainable fishery certified by MSC standard (May 2012).

Harvest area / season

Hoki is a pelagic-demersal species widely distributed from the Southeastern Pacific, through the Strait of Magellan and Beagle Channel, to the Argentinean coasts in the South Atlantic, even reaching Southern Brazil. Its main densities are following the isobaths of 200 to 800 m and are at the southern range of their distribution. On the Argentinean side they inhabit the pristine cold waters of Malvinas Current where it is the most abundant fish resource over the continental shelf and slope south of 45° S. This is a relatively new fishery that started as a bycatch or retained species in 1977 and became a target species by the 1980's. San Arawa catches Hoki year-round and operates within the Argentine Economic Exclusive Zone.

Quota System

The Argentine Hoki Fishery is managed on the basis of an Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) system introduced in 2010, and that is set as a percentage of the species Total Allowable Catch (TAC). Each of the ships that hold quotas in this fishery receive a percentage share of an annual TAC set annually by the Argentinean Fishing Administration based on results from scientific stock assessments carried out in the fishing grounds. The company's

quota is large enough for its vessels to operate year-round. In 2012, it caught 32% of the fleet's total catch, or about 60,000 tons, which makes it the main manufacturer for this species in South America.

Biomass Assessment

Detailed data from scientific surveys plus fishery dependent data, such as catch rates, and spatial information from satellite tracking are used to determine stock abundance and composition. The Argentine Hoki is assessed annually since 1997 by the National Institute for Fisheries Research and Development (INIDEP). The assessment method used is an improved version of the well known Pope's cohort analysis. These assessments use data on catch at age obtained from age-length key estimated from survey samples and length frequencies of fish from the commercial fisheries adding the data coming from Malvinas.

Participation in Research

San Arawa together with other companies has also started an industry initiative to increase information on the interaction with seabirds, and to develop techniques to mitigate possible effects. This is being developed with the help of Fundación Vida Silvestre (FVS; the Argentinean office of WWF). In addition to the standard annual scientific surveys done by the government, the industry collaborate in conducting surveys to increase basic biological information.

Conservation / Management Measures

In addition to mandatory government

controls such as annual quota levels, dockside monitoring and satellite tracking, we also collaborate with government and NGOs in the development of management and conservation measures. This includes carrying onboard government observers in every fishing trip and working together with FVS in the implementation of devices and best practices to avoid injuring oceanic birds. In this sense we are actively helping to comply with the Agreement for Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) signed on January 2004 by Argentina. Sensitive bottom habitats of hard and soft coral species located in the vicinity of the fishery -the Burdwood Bank- have been identified and closed protection areas are implemented since 2008. Moreover, the Hoki trawl fishery operating in the Argentine Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) and adjacent waters has been certified as sustainable fishery against the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standards, and San Arawa provides hoki with MSC ecolabel.

Catch Monitoring

Electronic monitoring devices, which provide Real Time electronic monitoring, have been installed in every fishing vessel in all Argentinean fisheries. There is an important dockside monitoring and an On Board Observer coverage (all fishing trips) program that provides information to the Argentinean Fishery Administration. The observers on board report to the Argentine Federal Government and are well trained technicians that provide sound basic scientific information for the National Institute for Fisheries Research and

Sustainability profile »

Development (INIDEP), which is the local governmental scientific institution that provides key information for management decisions.

Practices to Minimize Bycatch

The Hoki fishery in Argentina does not bycatch turtles, sea lions, nor any other species or habitat (i.e. coral bottoms) which needs to be protected. All the bycatch is processed on board, mostly in the form of headed and gutted fish. An On Board Observer Program is in place to independently monitor bycatch levels in the fishery.

Fishing Method

Hoki are fished using industrial bottom trawl net and semi-pelagic trawl net. All trawl vessels in Argentina are required to have nets with a minimum mesh size of 120 mm between opposite knots. Our company uses a mesh size of 135 mm. Experimental studies performed by INIDEP showed that the Hoki length with 50% probability of retention is 60.74 cm, which is larger than the length at first maturity (56.26 cm for females and 58.60 cm for males). To operate in this offshore area, fishing companies must employ modern and sophisticated vessels that are capable of deploying mobile fishing gear into depths up to 1,000 meters. San Arawa always seeks to improve the operations and conducts gear research to produce further innovation and technological advancements in fishing gears. From the year 2010, the company has focused in maximum reduction of bottom contact, and has developed a special fishing gear where the doors are always at 3–10 m above the bottom but never in contact

with it. This enormously reducing potential damages of benthic habitats. This technique is being used only by our company, since 2011.

Traceability

San Arawa's factory vessels process fish immediately after harvest. Products can be traced back to the day and fishing area where they were caught. Moreover, we have collaborated with the project named International Barcode of Life (iBOL) in order to have the DNA sequence of the Hoki being caught by us. The iBOL is the largest biodiversity genomics initiative ever undertaken. This information can be used as a reassurance of the traceability of our fish products.