

New Zealand Hoki

New Zealand hoki is a fast-growing fish that can grow up to 1.5 metres long. Hoki are found in waters around New Zealand at depths of 200 to 800 metres and can live for up to 25 years. Young hoki reach adulthood in around four years.

Hoki fishing takes place at several fishing grounds around New Zealand including the Stewart-Snares shelf south of Stewart Island, the subantarctic, the west coast of the South Island, Cook Strait, and the Chatham Rise east of the South Island (see map on next page).

The hoki fishery consists of an eastern stock and a western stock. Scientific research is carried out on each stock and separate catch limits apply as part of the overall species catch limit set annually by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

How do we manage our hoki fish stocks?

New Zealand's hoki fisheries are managed using the best available scientific research. This research is carefully reviewed by expert scientists, with active participation by fisheries managers and representatives of environmental and commercial fishing interests, to ensure it is as reliable as possible.

Each year scientists estimate the number of hoki in each stock.

Because hoki grow and reproduce quickly, these numbers can change a lot from year to year. How many young hoki survive to adulthood from year to year is one of the factors involved in this variation. Other factors include changes in water temperature as well as the numbers of fish caught in previous years.

Fluctuations in the number of hoki are taken into account when decisions are made on setting catch limits, to make sure the fishery is sustainable over the long term. Reducing or increasing catch limits in response to changes in the numbers of fish is a sign that a fishery is being well managed.

Between 2001 and 2007 hoki catch limits were cut from 250,000 tonnes to 90,000 tonnes because there was a significant reduction in the number of young fish surviving long enough to reach adulthood. This is believed to have been largely caused by environmental conditions.

Four large areas of New Zealand waters have now been voluntarily closed to hoki fishing. These hoki management areas (HMAs) are important nursery



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grounds for young fish and protecting them ensures more young fish will survive to adulthood and be able to breed.

Recent scientific research showed that both hoki stocks are fully rebuilt to target levels, and could sustainably support increased catches. Based on this information, in 2009 the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture increased the hoki catch limit to 110,000 tonnes, with further increases of 10,000 tonnes in 2010 and again in 2011.

How do we know the hoki fisheries are being sustainably managed?

An independent certifying body, the internationally recognised Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), has certified both New Zealand hoki stocks as being sustainably managed. In 2001, hoki was the first fishery in New Zealand – and one of the first in the world – to achieve MSC certification. Certification lasts for five years, and the fishery was re-certified in 2007. In 2011, with the second period of MSC certification coming to an end, the fishery will be assessed for the third time.

How do we ensure that hoki fishing does not damage the marine environment?

Fishing, like any human activity, almost always has an impact on the environment. The Ministry of Fisheries monitors hoki fishing to ensure this impact stays within acceptable levels. If this is not the case, the Ministry works

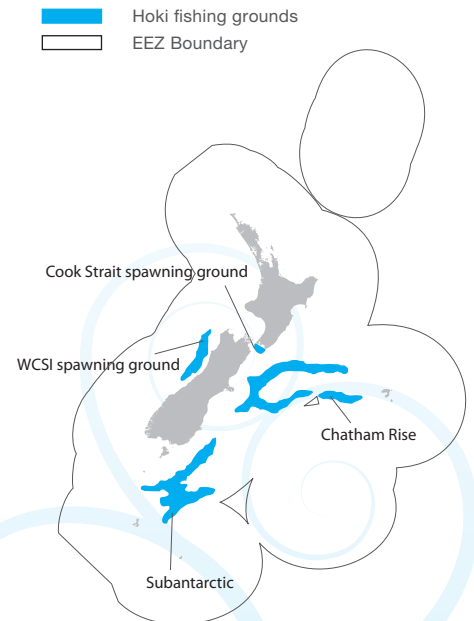
closely with the fishing industry to alter fishing practices so that impacts are reduced.

Hoki fishing boats are known to accidentally catch protected New Zealand seabirds such as albatrosses and petrels. Fishers are legally required to take measures to avoid harming seabirds, such as using bird-scaring devices to keep birds away from the fishing gear where they can get caught. Fishers must also be careful about both the amount and type of fish waste from onboard processing that is returned to the water, because this can attract seabirds to the boat. In 2011, the Ministry of Fisheries assessed the risk to seabirds from commercial fisheries and found that the hoki fishery did not present a significant risk to any seabird populations.

New Zealand fur seals are also accidentally caught in fishing gear when they try to eat fish caught in the nets. The fishing industry, with government support, has developed guidelines for larger hoki fishing vessels to reduce the risk of accidentally catching fur seals.

Some fishing boats use bottom trawling nets to catch hoki. However, the Ministry monitors bottom trawling carefully and, with support from the fishing industry, has closed large areas of New Zealand waters to bottom trawling. More about these closures can be found in the information sheet *“Protecting New Zealand’s Seabed from the Impacts of Bottom Trawling”*.

Main hoki fishing grounds



Did you know:

- Hoki is New Zealand’s largest fishery, with around 47,000 tonnes of processed fish exported in 2010.
- In 2010 hoki exports contributed more than \$170 million to the New Zealand economy.
- Hoki is exported all over the world – to China, Europe and the United States.

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This information provides a high-level overview of an aspect of the New Zealand fisheries management regime. To find out more about how New Zealand’s fisheries are managed to enable sustainable seafood for future generations go to: www.fish.govt.nz