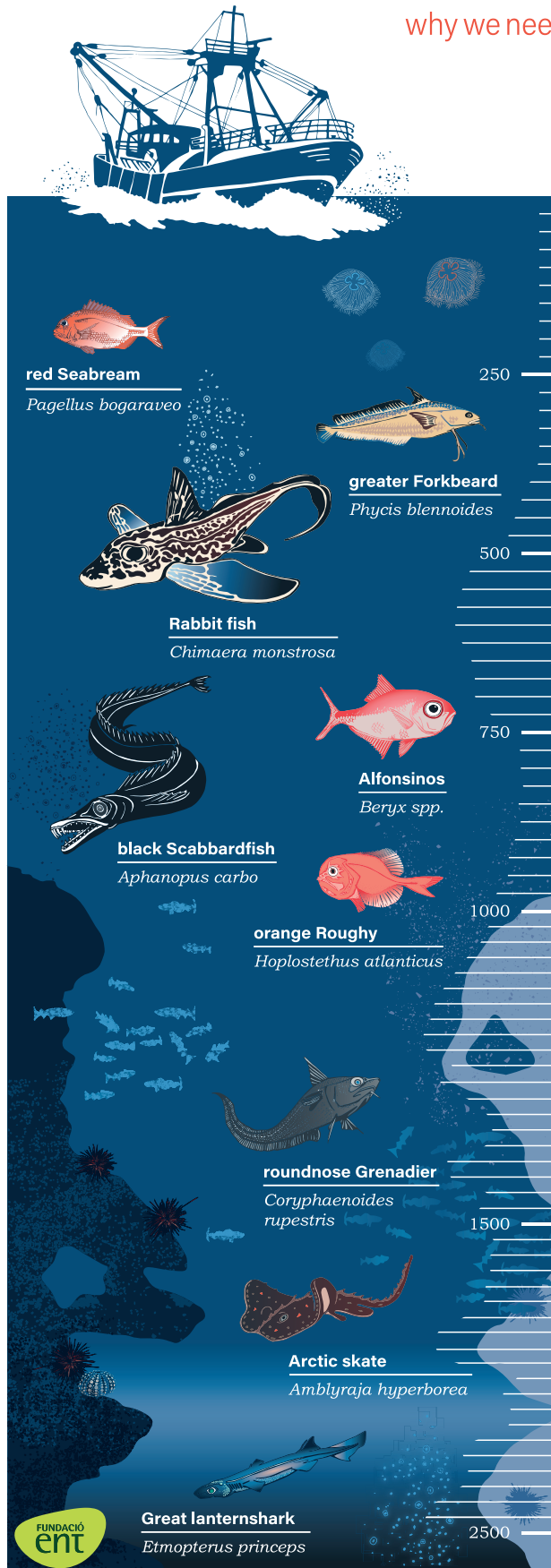


FISH IN DEEP WATER

why we need better management of deep-sea fish



1. The Northeast Atlantic has one of the highest exploitation rates of deep-sea stocks internationally, with the EU responsible for 75% of the total catch in the area. Given its important role in deep-sea fishing, the EU has the opportunity and the responsibility to demonstrate that the fishery can be managed in a sustainable way.
2. The high vulnerability of deep-sea marine ecosystems and deep-sea fish stocks is well documented. Globally, deep-sea fisheries lack proper and sustainable management practices, and landings¹ are declining. The latest scientific advice on deep-sea stocks states that catches of many EU deep-sea species need to be significantly reduced, or avoided altogether.
3. Many deep-sea fishes are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation as they are long-lived species that grow slowly, mature late, and reproduce at lower rates than shallow-water species. For example, the oldest orange roughy observed was estimated to be 149 years old and only reached sexual maturity between 23 and 31 years of age. The maximum age of roundnose grenadier is around 70 years.
4. There is a severe lack of knowledge about the population status of deep-sea fishes, and most of the species have not been evaluated by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). For the ones that have, some fall within the most at risk IUCN categories, classed as Endangered or Critically Endangered. The roundnose grenadier, for example, is considered Critically Endangered globally and Endangered in European waters.
5. Many deep-sea fish stocks are believed to be depleted, at least, regionally, as are the orange roughy, various species of deep-sea sharks, and several species of Grenadiers (*Coryphaenoides* spp.).
6. Landings of deep-sea species only represent 0.3% of overall EU landings in 2016, which corresponds to less than 1% of total EU landings in economic terms. Spain was responsible for 41% of the landings, followed by Portugal (33%), and France (22%). The UK also has relevant catches of deep-sea stocks, followed by Poland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, and some of the Baltic states.
7. For some fishing communities and regions, such as Madeira and the Azores, deep-sea fisheries are economically important. However recent examples have shown that the vulnerability of certain stocks to overexploitation needs to be factored into their management. Sustainable management of these fisheries must respect their biological limits and focus instead on getting better value from the scientifically advised catch, this approach will generate clear economic and social benefits.
8. The majority of Total Allowable Catches² (TAC's) set by EU fisheries Ministers for 2017 and 2018 - 15 out of 20 - exceeded levels advised by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), such as those for roundnose grenadier, red seabream, greater forkbeard, and black scabbardfish. Continuing to overfish these species will drive them "outside safe biological limits". Such a situation should be avoided given the numerous examples of deep-sea stocks which have either been slow to recover or have failed to recover following the collapse of their stocks.
9. This November 2018, EU fisheries Ministers will decide on the fishing limits for six deep-sea fish species for 2019 and 2020, as well as several deep-sea sharks. We call on decision makers to set the TAC's strictly following the scientific advice provided by ICES, and ending overfishing for all these highly vulnerable deep-sea species. EU has the last opportunity to set fishing limits for deep-sea species before 2020, which is the final deadline under the Common Fisheries Policy to end overfishing in EU waters.

References:

¹ Out of the abyss: Transforming EU rules to protect the deep sea. 2012. The Pew Environment Group.

² Council Regulation (EU) 2016/2285 of 12 December 2016 fixing for 2017 and 2018 the fishing opportunities for Union fishing vessels for certain deep-sea fish stocks and amending Council Regulation (EU) 2016/72

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