

ICES 2023 Report on oceans and Law of the Sea

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) is a world-leading marine science organization, meeting societal needs for impartial evidence on the state and sustainable use of our seas and oceans. We are a network of 5000 experts from 800 institutes and organizations in 20 Member Countries and beyond. More than 3500 experts participate in our activities annually.

ICES advances marine science to support conservation and sustainable use of our seas and oceans, including in subarctic and Arctic regions. Arctic research has been a priority for ICES over the last decade from the perspective of better understanding how the Arctic ecosystem is changing and its impacts on both natural and human dimensions in this ecosystem.

A number of ICES groups focus on subarctic fish stocks in the Barents Sea, around Iceland and East Greenland, and some widely distributed and straddling stocks. ICES also conducts and develops integrated ecosystem assessments and ecosystem overviews for the Central Arctic Ocean, Barents Sea, Norwegian Sea, Greenland Sea, and the Northern Bering Sea-Chukchi Sea LME, as part of our ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Several other subjects are addressed by our community - ranging from hydrography and warming of the Arctic Ocean to evaluating the environmental risks of shipping, oil and gas exploitation, and the spread of non-native species.

Today, ICES cooperates with other international organizations active in Arctic science, including the Nordic Council of Ministers, the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) and the Arctic Council, to which we are an official observer.

Since 2021, ICES has also been engaged with the nascent Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement (CAOFA). In March 2023, an ICES representative participated as a remote observer to the inaugural meeting of the agreement's Scientific Coordination Group (SCG). ICES has also held observer status at meetings of the Exploratory Fisheries Working Group (EF-WG) and in the agreement's first three Conferences of the Parties, held in Incheon, Korea.

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is underway, and we continue to contribute. The Ocean Decade-endorsed programme SmartNet establishes a global knowledge network for ocean science by strengthening and expanding the collaboration of ICES, the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES and our partner organizations). A survey is underway as part of the initiative to survey the public in several countries around the world about their priorities for our oceans.

An important area of current research and advice in the ICES network is related to Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE). The rapid growth in offshore renewable energy taking place over the coming years will represent the largest-ever change in how humans use the seas. Fuelled by the need for a decarbonized and secure energy supply, marine renewable energy has become a priority policy objective in many ICES Member Countries and beyond.

ICES sees an urgent need for scientifically informed decision-making. ICES recently published the ICES Roadmap for Offshore Renewable Energy which outlines an accelerated approach to understanding and advising on ecosystem-based management of multiple human uses of marine space. With the publication of ICES Roadmap for Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE), ICES is taking a leadership role and fully incorporating ORE considerations into our activities. Many ICES expert groups are addressing how ORE will impact their work.

Our ecosystem, fisheries, and aquaculture overviews are central to our approach to support evidence-based ecosystem-based management, the primary way of managing human activities affecting marine eco-

systems. In 2023, ICES published ecosystem overviews for twelve ecoregions and included for the first time an ecosystem overview for the Faroes ecoregion along with an updated Greenland Sea Ecosystem Overview. Our fisheries overviews portfolio includes all 11 ICES ecoregions providing a complete overview of fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic. In 2023, the Faroes ecoregion also became the third ICES area for which an aquaculture overview was developed. ICES portfolio now covers the Norwegian Sea, the Celtic Seas, and the Faroes.

Our more than 150 groups continue to address a range of marine science topics. More information is available on our [website](#).