



Joint PICES/ICES Working Group on Sustainable Pelagic Forage Communities

Improving knowledge and management on the role and importance of small pelagic forage communities through global collaboration across ecosystems.

KEYWORDS

Ecosystem management

Climate variability

Predator/Prey

Recruitment processes

Socio-economic impacts

MORE INFORMATION



WG-53 page on PICES website:
<https://meetings.pices.int/members/working-groups/wg53>



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Participants at the WGSPF meeting at PICES-2024 (October 2024, Honolulu, USA, photo credit: Margaret Siple)

Introduction

This Working Group will investigate and synthesize research and methods that can be used to better understand and manage forage species. These include innovative technologies, such as genetics, acoustics, underwater imagery and isotopes, as well as emerging analysis techniques such as artificial intelligence, management strategy evaluation, and social network modeling. International collaboration on the development and application of these methods will be useful to develop strategies that lead to robust and sustainable management of forage species.

Current Work

- Foster collaboration among scientists within PICES, ICES, and with other multinational and national organizations and programs to advance forage species research and management
- Improve our ability to predict the outcomes (short and long term) for ecosystems of variability in forage species. This includes biological interactions (e.g., changes to species that are predators), physical interactions (e.g., how will climate change impact forage communities) and socio-economic interactions (e.g., how are food systems likely to change that rely on forage communities)
- Convene a joint PICES/ICES/FAO symposium on forage species in May 2026 in La Paz, Mexico, that builds upon the 2017 and 2022 Small Pelagic Fish Symposia

The Issues

Forage species occupy a key position in all ecosystems and make up a sizable portion of capture fisheries. Climate change and variability has large impacts on pelagic forage communities that can be echoed through food webs to top predators and lower trophic levels. These changes need to be addressed by responsive fisheries management and socio-economic systems. The Working Group focuses on worldwide advances using an interdisciplinary approach to the biology, sustainability and socio-economics of small pelagic fish and invertebrate populations.