

# Pacific Hake

BC's Pacific Hake Fishery is Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Certified

## SPECIES

Pacific Hake (*Merluccius productus*)

## OTHER NAMES

Whiting, North Pacific Whiting

## ABOUT

Pacific hake, belonging to the family *Merlucciidae* (cod family), is a small slim metallic silver-grey fish, with black speckling, silver belly, large eyes and a slim "wrist" ahead of the tail. Its range extends from southeast Alaska to California. Typical size for mid-water trawl-caught hake is 50 cm (20 inches) in length and about 1 kg (2.2 lbs) in weight. Hake is a semi-pelagic fish, roaming from ocean floor to mid-water. There are two stocks in British Columbia (BC) - one offshore and the other in the Strait of Georgia.



Pacific hake has to be processed as soon as possible because of an enzymatic reaction that softens the flesh if the fish is not processed and frozen within 30 hours of harvest.

## STOCK STATUS

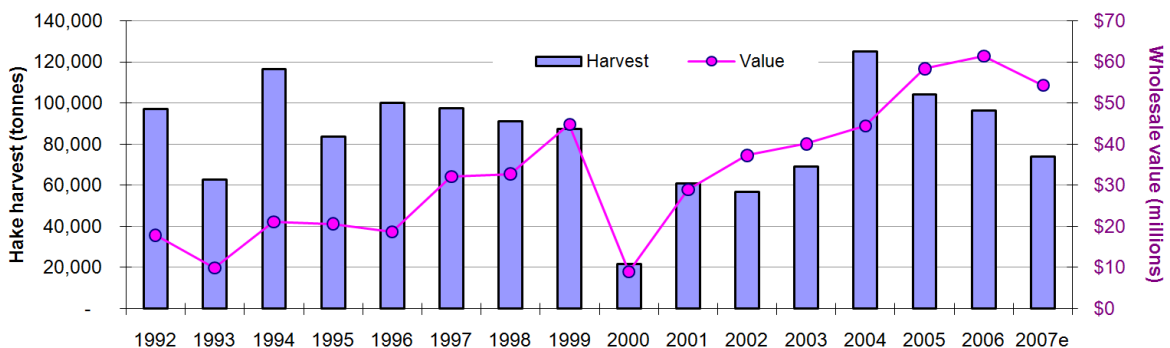
The stock status and recruitment is variable from year to year. Stronger year classes seem to be emerging, which if happens would contribute to greater numbers of fish. Due to variability, however, fishery managers have set precautionary harvest levels based on scientific advice.

## MANAGEMENT

BC's hake fishery is managed federally by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Hail-out and hail-in, dockside monitoring, 10% at-sea observer coverage and logbooks are required. Canada has an agreement with the United States for joint management of Pacific hake. Hake is harvested as a part of the integrated groundfish trawl individual transferable quota (ITQ) fishery (*DFO - Fisheries Management*).

## PRODUCT VALUE

Harvests and wholesale values fluctuate: 21,700 tonnes at \$9.1 million in 2000; 74,100 tonnes at \$54.4 million in 2007 (*BC Seafood Industry Year in Review*).



e: estimate

**LIFE HISTORY**

Pacific hake is semi-pelagic, roaming from ocean floor to mid-water within the coastal region of the California ocean current system. There are two stocks that inhabit the coastal waters off BC: an offshore and a Strait of Georgia stock. The offshore stock is larger and highly migratory and ranges from southern California to Queen Charlotte Sound, while the smaller non-migratory stock is limited to the Strait of Georgia.

Females mature at 3-4 years of age and spawning occurs between January and June. Eggs float in the water column and hatch in about 3 days. The diet of adult hake includes shrimp, plankton and smaller fishes. Predators are varied and include squid, sea lions, small cetaceans, tuna and dogfish sharks.

**PRODUCTS**

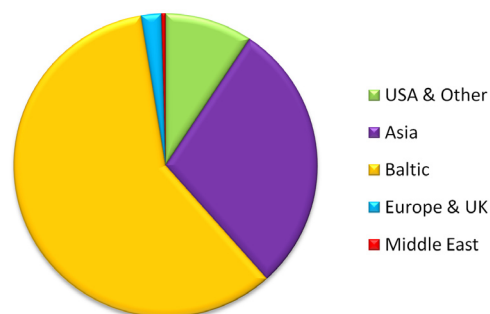
Pacific hake is available frozen-at-sea (headed and gutted, fillets, & blocks) and as surimi.

**PRODUCT MARKET**

Pacific hake is exported to the Baltic countries, European Union, Asia, Russia, Middle East and the United States.

**MARKET TREND**

Hake market value and the number of destination countries has increased dramatically since 2004.

**LINKS**

DFO - Fisheries Management Plans: [www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/fishmgmt\\_e.htm](http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/fishmgmt_e.htm)

BC Seafood Industry Year in Review: [www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/reports/index.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/reports/index.html)

BCSeafood.ca: [www.bcseafood.ca/index.php](http://www.bcseafood.ca/index.php)

Fish and Seafood Online: <http://www.ats-sea.agr.gc.ca/sea-mer/index-eng.htm>

Marine Stewardship Council: <http://www.msc.org/>