



Toothfish Fact Sheet

GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH GEORGIA AND THE SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS

48.3 - South Georgia

• **2023/24 TAC:**
1650 T

• **3 VESSELS**

**2 OPERA-
TORS:**

**ARGOS
FROYANES**

**POLAR
SEAFISH**

***As at 01/2025**



This fishery has been certified as sustainable and well managed by the Marine Stewardship Council since 2004.

Patagonian toothfish were taken as early as the 1970s from around South Georgia as bycatch from a bottom trawl fishery. Demersal longlining was introduced here in the late 1980s, and is now the only commercial fishing method allowed. Although up to 23 vessels have historically participated, only three are currently licensed.

Although Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing for Toothfish was rife in the south-Atlantic during the 1990s, three arrests of IUU vessels between 1994 and 1996 in South Georgia waters caused a rapid decline in these activities in this area. In an isolated event, the vessel, *Elqui*, was sighted and subsequently arrested, prosecuted, and fined in 2005 for unlicensed fishing within the area. In 2019, the MV *Nika* was found to be illegally fishing/transshipping in SGSSI waters, and through a coordinated effort, including the SGSSI licensed fishing fleet, it was eventually apprehended. Since this time, levels of IUU activity at South Georgia has been estimated to be zero.

Established in 2012, the SGSSI MPA is one of the largest in the

world, covering an area of more than 1.2 million km². Further enhancements to the MPA were made in 2013 and 2019. The Government of SGSSI conduct active management with stakeholders, undertaking a five yearly review of the performance of the MPA, and discussing further protections. There are several forms of protection in place throughout the MPA, including No Take Zones which encompass 283,000 km². Trawl fishing has been banned, and strict spatial and temporal restrictions are in place for longline fishing, meaning that fishing on the seafloor is prohibited across 94% of the entire MPA.

To protect sensitive marine environments, fishing in key areas (Reduced Impact Areas [RIAs]) has been banned as a precautionary measure with the specific intention of protecting benthic habitats. These RIAs have been defined taking into account impacts on the fishery, including the potential subsequent relocation of fishing activity.

Although seabird mortality as a result of fishing was relatively high before 2000, strong management measures including a restriction on daytime setting, the discarding of any offal with hooks, and elimination of IUU fishing have reduced these numbers

significantly.

Fisheries management in South Georgia waters is based on the annual scientific advice and recommended management measures from CCAMLR. The Government of SGSSI implements the CCAMLR conservation measures and enforces these measures with patrol vessels, operating consistent with CCAMLR standards and procedures. It has also moved into a 2-year licensing regime with quota allocation confirmed annually on the basis of scientific advice.

The management strategy for the South Georgia toothfish stock is even more precautionary than that agreed by CCAMLR, with an average long-term target of 55% of B₀. This represents a buffer that allows application of less severe management actions in response to changes in the assessment, providing stability for the industry. It also allows time for management actions to take effect, consequently reducing the risk of over-exploitation in conditions of environmental uncertainty. The GSGSSI decision to use a higher spawning stock biomass target consequently results in catches being lower than those set by CCAMLR.

