Estimating uncertainty of data limited stock assessments

Many methods exist to assess the fishing status of data-limited stocks; however, little is known about the accuracy or the uncertainty of such assessments. Here we evaluate a new size-based data-limited stock assessment method by applying it to well-assessed, data-rich fish stocks treated as data-limited. Particular emphasis is put on providing uncertainty estimates of the data-limited assessment. We assess four cod stocks in the North-East Atlantic and compare our estimates of stock status (F/Fmsy) with the official assessments. The estimated stock status of all four cod stocks followed the established stock assessments remarkably well and the official assessments fell well within the uncertainty bounds. The estimation of spawning stock biomass followed the same trends as the official assessment, but not the same levels. We conclude that the data-limited assessment method can be used for stock assessment and that the uncertainty estimates are reliable. Further work is needed to quantify the spawning biomass of the stock.

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