

MEDIA RELEASE

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Northern Cod decline of concern to Producers' association

(St. John's) Northern Cod is in decline according to the latest DFO science, provoking concerns in the fishing industry that had been hoping to see more growth in the stock, like that seen in recent years.

The stock this year has declined back to the 2015 level. DFO says natural mortality is the main driver of the decline, but either way, it is not the news industry had hoped for.

"Clearly, we are concerned," said Derek Butler, head of the Association of Seafood Producers (ASP).

"There are a lot of variables here, a lot of factors at play. But that does not change the reality, the stock is back to the 2015 level, if not lower. That's not the result we would have preferred."

In the last full DFO assessment for northern cod, projections said the stock had a good chance of being 60% or more of the required amount to open a full commercial fishery. The stock was over 1/3 of that level in 2015, and is now back to the same level, instead of at that 60%+ level.

"We had growth, we saw some increase, but clearly, things have changed. And the projection is for continued decline next year. It's not the story we had hoped for," said Butler.

Butler says the science – and its ramifications - needs some careful consideration over the coming days. Industry stakeholders will be assessing the data in advance of DFO consultations planned for mid-April.

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