

PRINCIPLES OF STOCK ASSESSMENT

Aims of stock assessment

- The overall aim of fisheries science is to provide information to managers on the state and life history of the stocks
- This information feeds into the decision making process. Fisheries science, economic, social and political considerations all have an impact on the final management decision
- Stock assessment involves using mathematical and statistical models to examine the retrospective development of the stock and to make quantitative predictions to address the following fisheries management questions:

Aims of stock assessment

contd.....

1. What is the current state of the stock?
2. What has happened to the stock in the past?
3. What will happen to the stock in the future under alternative management choices?

➤ **Stock assessment** is the process of collecting and analyzing demographic information about fish populations to describe the conditions or status of a fish stock.

➤ The result of a stock assessment is a report that often includes an estimation of the amount or abundance of the resource,

Aims of stock assessment

contd.....

- An estimation of the rate at which it is being removed due to harvesting and other causes, and one or more reference levels of harvesting rate and/or abundance at which the stock can maintain itself in the long term.
- Stock assessment often contain short-term (1-5 years, typically) projections or prognoses for the stock under a number of different scenarios
- This information on resource status is used by managers to determine what actions are needed to promote the best use of our living marine resources.

Aims of stock assessment

contd.....

- Stock assessment reports describe a range of life history characteristics for a given species, including age, growth, natural mortality, sexual maturity and reproduction, stock boundaries, diet preferences, habitat characteristics, species interactions, and environmental factors that may affect the species
- Assessment reports also include descriptions of the fishery for a species, using information from both scientists and fishermen
- Additionally, stock assessments describe the assessment model, or the collection of mathematical and statistical techniques that were used to perform the stock assessment.

Aims of stock assessment

contd.....

- Stock assessment analyses rely on various sources of information to estimate resource abundance and population trends
- The principal information comes from the commercial and recreational fisheries (**fishery-dependent information**)
- For example, the quantity of fish caught and the individual sizes of the fish, their biological characteristics (e.g. age, maturity, and sex), and the ratio of fish caught to the time spent fishing (catch per unit of effort) are basic data for stock assessments.

Aims of stock assessment

contd.....

- Understanding the natural history of the harvested species and the other species with which they interact is crucial to understanding the population dynamics of living marine resources.

Fish abundance

- **Fish abundance** or population size can be expressed as either the number of fish or the total fish weight (or biomass)
- Increases in the amount of fish are determined by body growth of individual fish in the population, and the addition or **recruitment** of new generations of young fish (i.e. **recruits**; recruits from the same year are said to comprise a **year-class** [or **cohort**]).

Fish abundance

contd

- Those gains must then be balanced against the proportion of the population removed by harvesting (called **fishing mortality, F**) and other losses due, for example, to predation, starvation, or disease (called **natural mortality, M**).
- In stock assessment work, removals of fish from the population are commonly expressed in terms of rates within a time period.
- The **fishing mortality rate** is a function of **fishing effort**, which includes the amount, type, and effectiveness of fishing gear and the time spent fishing.

Fish abundance contd

- **Catch per unit of effort (CPUE)** is an index showing the ratio of a catch of fish, in numbers or in weight, and a standard measure of the fishing effort expended to catch them.
- **Surplus production** (or production) is the total weight of fish that can be removed by fishing without changing the size of the population.
- It is calculated as the sum of the growth in weight of individuals in a population, plus the addition of biomass from new recruits, minus the biomass of animals lost to natural mortality

Fish abundance contd

- The **production rate** is expressed as a proportion of the population size or biomass. The production rate can be highly variable owing to environmental fluctuations, predation, and other biological interactions with other populations
- On average, production decreases at low and high population sizes, and biomass decreases as the amount of fishing effort increases
- This means there is a relationship between average production and fishing effort. This relationship is known as the production function

Fish abundance contd

- **Production functions** are the basis for certain important concepts like: **maximum sustainable yield**.
- In addition, the term **stock level** is employed as a biological reference for determining resource status relative to the biomass that would on average support the sustainable yield.
- Recent average yield also is reported in order to allow comparison of the current situation to the sustainable yield.

Fish abundance contd

- Many other **reference levels** are used as benchmarks for guiding management decisions
- A number of these are expressed as fishing mortality rate levels that would achieve specific results from the average recruit to the fishery if the stock were subjected to fishing at those rates indefinitely
- Some of these **benchmarks** are used to index potential fishery production, and others are used to index potential reproductive output.
- F_{\max} is the fishing mortality rate that maximizes the yield obtained from the average recruit.

Fish abundance contd

- **Growth overfishing** occurs over the range of fishing mortality, at which the losses in weight from total mortality exceed the gain in weight due to growth. This range is defined as beyond F_{\max} .

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)

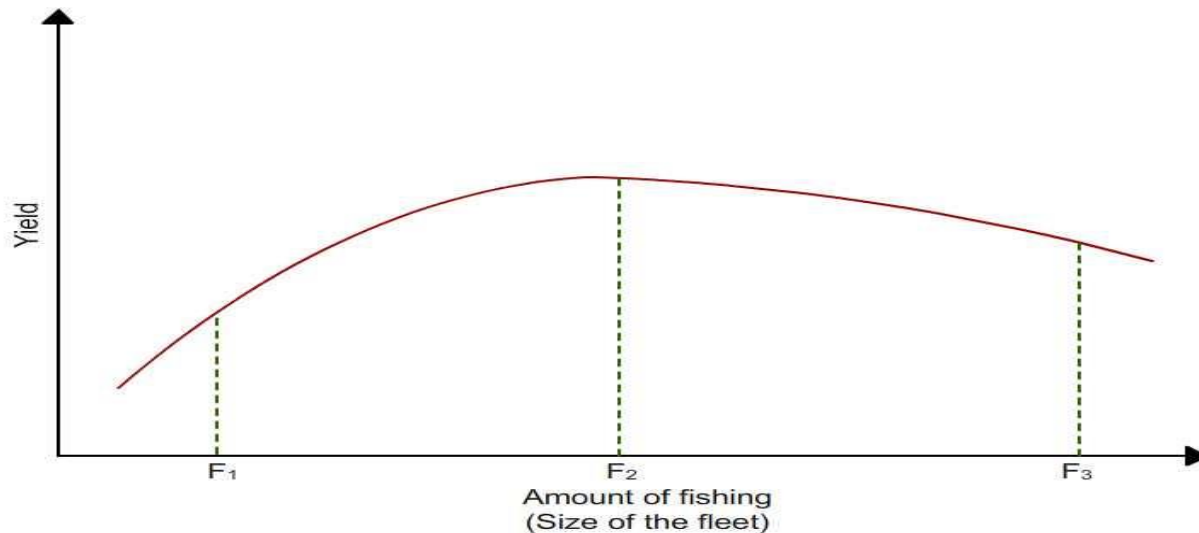
- MSY is the maximum long-term average yield that can be achieved through conscientious stewardship by controlling F through regulating fishing effort or total catch levels. MSY is a reference point for judging the potential of the resource.
- However, it is not necessarily the goal of fishery managers to always set the maximum yield
- Other factors influence the choice of a management objective, such as socioeconomic considerations or conservation and ecosystem concerns for other marine life indirectly affected by fishery harvests.

Maximum Sustainable Yield conted

- The methods of estimating MSY, and MSY itself, may be controversial.
- One of the major objectives of fish stock assessment is regularisation or optimisation of effort.
- Standardization of fishing effort – increasing the effort in the long term gives highest yield.
- The basic principle is smaller a population, when effort is not put at required level, the greater will be production.

Maximum Sustainable Yield conted

- At optimal level of effort, the production will be maximum for a given F_{msy} .



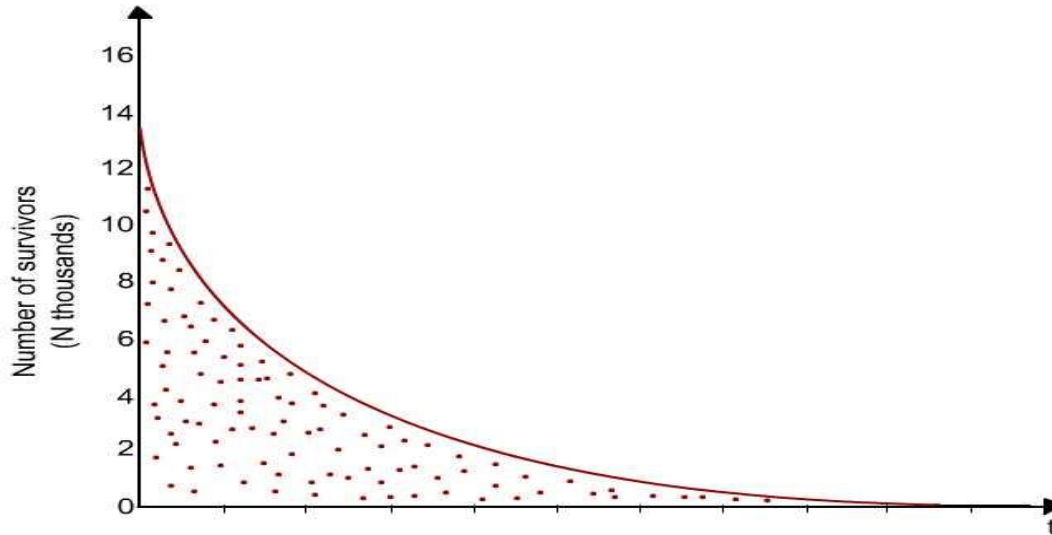
- For all practical purposes, the effort should be monitored at various levels of fishing mortality.

Maximum Sustainable Yield conted

- The basic principle in stock assessment models is to provide estimates of optimum yield.
- The environmental factors, economic factors are to be taken into account for arriving at appropriate management decisions.
- When intensity of fishing is not monitored, the population of a stock show sign of depetion and there will be a decrease in mean length of fish and length at minimum maturity.

Maximum Sustainable Yield conted

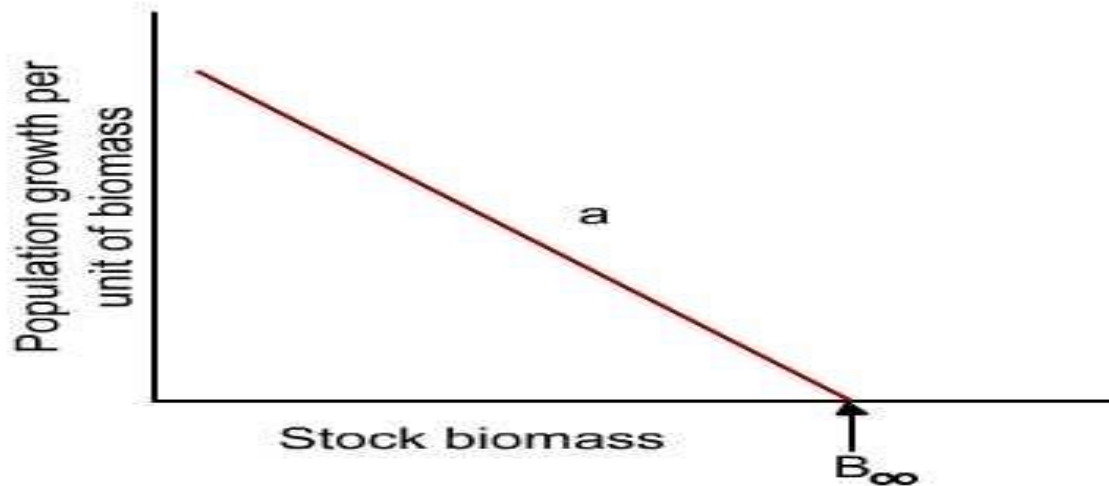
- In principle as age increases the number of survivors will be less.



- In a virgin (unfished) biomass, the population is at equilibrium.

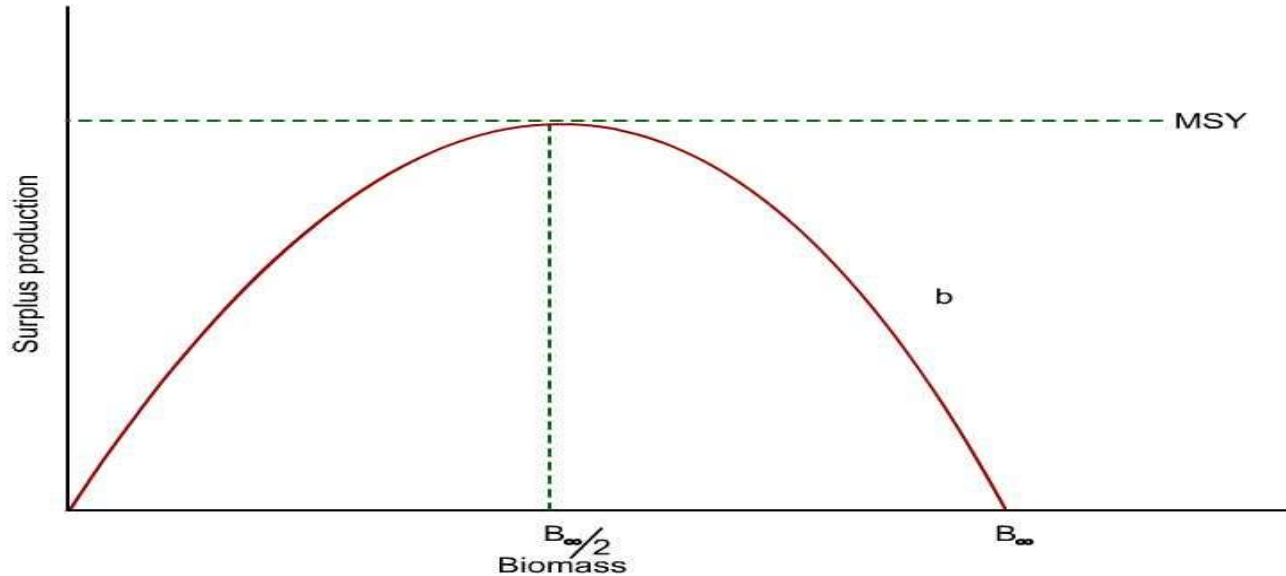
Maximum Sustainable Yield conted

➤ The population neither grows nor declines which means that each year's recruitment is balanced by each year losses due to mortality.



➤ When a stock is brought below b_{∞} level, the population grows. The maximum surplus production is achieved when the stock biomass is reduced to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the level of B_{∞} .

Maximum Sustainable Yield conted



In principle, the highest yield achieved on a long term basis for a particular effort is the F_{msy} and the corresponding yield is MSY or Maximum Sustainable Yield.