



Orange Roughy Fact Sheet



Illustration from www.oceansatlas.org

Basic Biology

Latin name: *Hoplostethus atlanticus*

Range: The waters of Australia and New Zealand, the Indo-Pacific, Africa, western South America, the northern Atlantic.

Habitat: 400-900 m deep; deep cold waters over steep continental slopes, ocean ridges and seamounts.

Diet: Prawns, fish, squid, crustaceans.

Age and Growth: Max length 30 inches, max weight 15 lbs, max age 150 years, reproductive maturity at 20-30 years.

Sustainability

- Orange roughy are long lived and slow to mature, making them very vulnerable to fishing pressure. They also form dense spawning aggregations on hills and seamounts, making them vulnerable to harvest. They also have a low reproductive potential (40,000-60,000 eggs/female/year).
- In 2007 the Australian government prohibited targeted fishing of orange roughy in ten of the eleven orange roughy management zones. Targeted fishing is permitted only in the Cascade Plateau Zone (a small area southeast of Tasmania) where orange roughy are not overfished. Fishing in this zone is managed with an annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC), or quota.
- The orange roughy fishery in New Zealand is actively managed under a strict individual quota system, but the government does not have adequate data on which to base the harvest quotas and they have not taken a precautionary approach as would be necessary for a species as long-lived and late to mature as orange roughy.
- Orange roughy are caught with trawl nets, an indiscriminate gear that can damage seafloor habitats. The Australian government acknowledges that this gear type is problematic but does not currently have enough data to properly address the problems. The New Zealand government has closed a number of seamounts to deepwater trawling.

Info for Chefs

- Because of widespread sustainability concerns, Sustainable Seafood Initiative Partner chefs are asked to not serve orange roughy at this time.

Info for Servers

- Originally named "slimehead" but renamed orange roughy to increase marketability.
- Orange roughy cannot reproduce until they are 20-30 years old and can live 150 years.
- Until the harvest is reduced and better managed orange roughy is not sustainable.

Sources:

Orange Roughy profile on www.fishbase.org

Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery - www.afma.gov.au/fisheries/sess/sess/default.htm

New Zealand Ministry of Fisheries - www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Environmental/default.htm