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**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP (WG1) ON THE IMPACT OF EC LEGISLATION  
ON FISHERIES ACTIVITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN - DISCARDS**

Athens, Hotel President, 23 April 2013

Participants: see attached list

Coordinator: Gian Ludovico Ceccaroni who stood in for Elena Ghezzi.

Attached documents: Agenda, slides presented by Gian Ludovico Ceccaroni, by the 'Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), by Argyris Kallianiotis.

1. WG1 met in Athens on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2013 in order to dedicate a day-long session to the matter of the requirement to land all unwanted catches, as envisaged in the framework of the reform to the Common Fisheries Policy.

2. The RAC MED Executive Secretary opened the meeting and thanked the participants, DG MARE and the associations, she informed those present that the coordinator, Elena Ghezzi (Lega Pesca) would be replaced by Gian Ludovico Ceccaroni (Federcoopesca). The floor was passed to the interim coordinator Gian Ludovico Ceccaroni who gave a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the issue of discards and to provide an overview of the three-way dialogue that is underway on the reform to the CFP. Lastly he recalled that RACMED had already expressed an opinion in the matter in October 2011 (prot.n.266/AV). After finishing the presentation, the coordinator passed the floor to Mr Mario Ferretti (Federcoopesca) who attempted to define the term discards and the species involved.

3. Before beginning the debate, a representative of HCMR gave a presentation on the main problems surrounding the issue of discards in the Mediterranean, with particular reference to Greece. First of all he expressed his agreement with Mr Ferretti, confirming that there is much confusion over what is meant by "discards". He recalled that in the Mediterranean discards represent 15 % of the commercial species, while in the Atlantic the percentage of discards concerns all species. In Greece, on the basis of the data available, it should be noted that only half of the discards produced are undersized specimens of commercial species. The Mediterranean is an oligotrophic area, with a high level of biodiversity and is typically multi-specific. These characteristics create several problems for the implementation of the CFP, in particular regarding the requirement to land discards, and in the Mediterranean this is a requirement that only concerns a small amount of discards that would not be profitable for industry – leading to



storage problems and the possibility that undersized specimens are sold illegally. Lastly, the HMCR representative highlighted the need to carry out further research before implementing the reform to the CFP in the specific case of the Mediterranean as described herein.

4. The coordinator thanked the HMCR representative for his intervention, that underlined the applicative difficulties in the Mediterranean surrounding the requirement to land discards, he passed the floor to Argyris Kallianotis who illustrated the situation concerning discards in the Aegean Sea, emphasizing that discard rates are highly seasonal and that most of the species that are discarded have no commercial value. In Greece, as is the case in Italy, there are no factories that utilize fish meal in the vicinity of the ports. It can also be difficult to gather together the discards together, because usually there are only 3 crew members on the fishing vessels and there can be over 100 different species in each haul. He concluded by underlining that it would be more appropriate to develop increased selectivity in the fishing gear, rather than increasing costs for the establishment of infrastructure necessary for the storage and transformation of discards due to the landing requirement.

5. The coordinator thanked Mr Kallianotis for his presentation and gave the floor to Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) who explained the letter that Lowri Evans sent to RAC MED on the issue of discards: RAC MED was requested to prepare specific management plans on discards, these plans should be prepared by each Member State in close collaboration with RAC MED. He also informed the Meeting that, in the meantime, DG MARE is preparing the necessary amendments to the regulations in force, in order to make them compatible with the future landing requirement for all undersize specimens. Bearing in mind the presentation made by Mr Kallianotis, Mr Buonfiglio emphasized that there is large-scale resistance among the Mediterranean fleets to the future compliance with this regulation. It is necessary to work on the application of the Mediterranean Regulation giving particular attention to gear selectivity rather than on the management of landings of undersize specimens. Mr Buonfiglio recalled that time is running out, as the Council of Ministers would be held in mid-May. He therefore proposed that a letter be prepared to be sent to the EC before mid-May. In this letter RAC, with its awareness of all the problems, would express its wish to see the Mediterranean declared exempt from the discards ban. RAC MED had already discussed the presentation of a letter of this kind (the Secretariat had sent all RAC MED members a draft proposed by the WWF) which could be the last chance to prevent the implementation of the requirement to land all discards in the Mediterranean. If the Council does not exempt the Mediterranean then it will be necessary to prepare plans for each Member State quite rapidly and RAC MED could attempt to standardise the format used.

6. Susana Sainz-Trapaga (WWF) intervened to state that it would be helpful if RAC MED concentrated on the letter, given the brief time-frame, so as to send a message to the European Parliament.

7. Eusebi Esgleas Pares (FNCCP) took the floor, expressing agreement with the statement made by the WWF. He also remarked that in the last 15 years or more, the fisheries sector has been successfully working to eliminate the capture of juveniles : if it becomes law to land them, then there would be a significant risk that they would be sold to restaurants.

8. Antonio Pucillo (ETF) expressed his concern about the possible increase in unemployment due to the costs involved in storage of discards onboard the vessels. The discards would take up space otherwise occupied by marketable species and, given that crew members are paid a part of earnings, the higher the costs the more unemployment will increase. He agreed with Mr Buonfiglio's proposal to request exemption for the Mediterranean basin.



9. Amélie Malafosse (OCEANA), expressed Oceana's opposition to the letter proposed by the WWF that was distributed by email. She underlined the belief that while it is necessary to also concentrate on the selectivity of fishing gear, the discard ban remains the best approach to follow. Where undersized specimens are concerned, she expressed the opinion that stricter regulations on trade of such specimens should be introduced.

10. Rafael Mas (EMPA) wondered how discards could be managed, given that for years there have been campaigns aiming to educate against the consumption of small-sized fish. He does not understand how it will be possible to move towards the requirement that fishing vessels store these specimens on boards disembark them at the landing ports. He closed by expressing his support for the exemption of the Mediterranean from the requirement to land discards and for the letter proposed.

11. Dimitris Sarikas (Paseges) mentioned that the north European fleets could take advantage of the landing requirement. He agreed with the proposal to send a letter to the PECH and the EC, underlining the multi-specific nature of professional small-scale fisheries in Greece. He also expressed the opinion that it will not be possible to guarantee that the quality and quantity of the discards would be constant, and for this reason at least some segments of the Mediterranean fleet should be exempt; moreover it will be necessary to allow extra time for the creation of the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the discards once they have been landed.

12. Genaro Amigo (FNCP) upheld the position expressed by the FNCCP, given that for years now the sector has been struggling to guarantee that undersized specimens are not landed. He also agreed with the proposal to send a letter.

13. Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) read out a draft letter taking all the positions stated into account. Mr Pucillo, (ETF), suggested the addition of the issue of socio-economic effects. Snezana Levstik (KGZS) proposed the inclusion of the environmental impact of the landing of discards. Eusebi Pares (FNCCP) wished to see the addition of the requirement for everything that is taken out of the sea to be landed at the ports, and that the port authorities should be responsible for all this waste matter.

14. Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) took the floor and read the text of the draft letter with the addition of these last few amendments. He recalled that, as there are different regulations in the various Member States where the landing of discards is concerned, separate action should be taken to elicit an EC regulation that requires all waste to be landed, because currently fishers are not authorized to gather waste.

15. Fabrizio Donatella (DG MARE) intervened on this last issue, suggesting that the future EMFF could provide a solution where regulations that do not apply exclusively to fisheries are concerned: in the EC proposal it will also be possible to finance actions that would cover such expenses. He underlined that these matters are still under discussion in the three-way dialogue.

16. Sergi Tudela (WWF) informed the meeting that the press release had just arrived from the previous day's Council meeting, during which it had been decided that, during the forthcoming Coreper meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, a proposal for a Council mandate on the reform to the CFP would be presented. It would therefore be highly desirable for RAC MED to send its letter in the shortest possible time.

17. The coordinator thanked the participants for the lively debate and informed the Meeting that the letter would be written in English only. Mr Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) recalled that in order to get the letter sent out in time, it would be necessary to send it to the ExCom members by 26<sup>th</sup> April at the latest. Where the EMFF is concerned, as it is highly likely that it will be approved in July, it would be necessary to see that a specific measure is inserted to finance the structures necessary for the storage of discards. An office at the landing point and a freezer



unit for the fishery products landed. With this in mind it would be appropriate to begin quantifying the economic resources available to realize this. A rough estimate would be around 20-25 thousand Euro. It would also be necessary to calculate the cost of the investments. Where management is concerned there are further complications: in Italy a 7Kg case of fisheries products costs (all inclusive) 1.5 Euro to be frozen, transported and for the labour costs. The animal feed industry would collect the same case for just 20 cents. Therefore, even if we do not consider the cost of the fisheries product involved, this operation would have a cost of 1.30 Euro and the EMFF would only finance it for a short time. He concluded by stating that it was necessary to quote the numbers involved so as to comprehend the socio-economic aspects that the landing of discards would imply.

18. The Executive Secretary proposed that the letter should be translated by the interpreters and adopted by the WG participants immediately after the lunch break, so as to optimise the time available and then send it to the ExCom members. The letter was unanimously approved. OCEANA specifically opposed the initiative, which was duly noted in the letter.

19. There were no further comments and the coordinator closed the meeting, thanking all the participants and the interpreters for the work done.

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