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**Report of the Working Group (WG3) on GFCM related issues
Athens, 22 April 2013**

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The working group 3 on GFCM related issues met in Athens on 22 April 2013. The meeting was focused on the preparation of the GFCM annual meeting and its main objectives were to get updated on the latest progress of the GFCM ongoing processes and to provide input from EU stakeholders on management recommendation.

1. The RAC MED Executive Secretary opened the working group and thanked the participants. The coordinator welcomed the invited speakers: Henri Farrugio, chairman of the SAC (GFCM Scientific Committee); Marcelo Vasconcellos, GFCM secretariat; Fabrizio Donattella, DG MARE and Mauricio Pulido, fisherman. The Agenda was adopted with a minor change (interchange of points 5 and 7).
2. **Activities of the subcommittee on stock assessment of the GFCM/SAC.** Dr. Farrugio, chairman of the SAC, starting its presentation by explaining that within the SAC, the Sub-Committee of Stock Assessment (SCSA) carry out the assessment of some stocks with especial emphasis on shared stocks distributed in one or more GSAs. The working group of demersal stocks of the SCSA assessed a total of 29 stocks, 8 of them expanded in more than one GSA. All of them were classified as in overfishing status. The working group of pelagic stocks assessed a total of 12 stocks, 2 of them expanded in more than one GSA. From these stocks one was classified as collapsed (sardine in GSA07), one as overexploited and the rest either fully or sustainable exploited. The main advice from the SCSA is to reduce fishing mortality for all overfished and/or overexploited stocks. The advice for sardine in the Gulf of Lions (GSA07), considered as collapsed, is to close the fishery. Dr. Farrugio continued with a detail description of the state of the stocks of sardine and anchovy in the North Adriatic Sea (GSA17). The scientific advice for both stocks is not to increase the current fishing mortality. The states of these stocks were particularly relevant for the later debate on a proposal for a multiannual management plan for small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic.
3. Sergi Tudela (WWF) asked about the situation of sardine in GSA06, which limits with GSA07 where the stock was considered as collapsed. Dr. Farrugio answered that the situation was better than that for GSA07.
4. Mr. Eusebi Esgleas Pares (FNCCP) pointed out that Spain has already reduced fishing effort in GSA06 by 70%.



5. **GFCM FWP activities concerning the development of multiannual management plans.** Dr. Marcelo Vasconcellos, from the GFCM secretariat, made an explanation of the concept of “management plan” and its benefits. Management plans should deliver on policy goals through specific objectives set in consultation with stakeholders and making use of the best available knowledge. Then he introduced the “Guidance on a general management framework and presentation of scientific information for multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in the GFCM area” adopted in 2012 during the 36th Session of the Commission in Morocco. During the first phase of the implementation of the Guidelines the target fishery identified as a pilot case was that of small pelagics in the Adriatic. The fishery involves 5 countries (Italy, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Albania) and is distributed over GSAs 17 and 18. Sardine and anchovy are the most important species in the fishery. The second phase includes the expansion of this case study to all Mediterranean sub-regions (West, Central and East).
6. The debate on the previous presentation started with the intervention of Snezana Levstik (KGZS, Slovenia) who presented a specific case of an Adriatic fishery which is undergoing difficult problems. The fishery involves vessels from Trieste (Italy), Istria (Croatia) and Slovenia. She explained that according to the Mediterranean Regulation the purse seiners need a specific derogation and that the only way to solve the issue is through a management plan.
7. The representative of the Greek administration wondered if the GFCM process, giving the information available, is not too ambitious, since we would need to have the needed scientific information and take into account the socioeconomic impact. Mr. Vasconcellos replied that management plans should be developed taken into account the recommendations of the SAC. He also stressed that we should be even able to develop management plans when having uncertainties. The way to address the uncertainties is by considering precautionary measures and research actions.
8. Mr Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) asks for clarification on several issues. (a) First on methodological aspects in the process of development of the management plan for the Adriatic Sea. He wanted to know if the plan is already drafted and if so how was the drafting process, and how was carried out the consultation with the stakeholders involved. (b) He also highlighted the importance of compatibility of management plans at regional and national level which need to be coherent and match each other. (c) In relation to the fisheries unit considered for the Adriatic he suggests that both GSAs (17 and 18) would be likely wisely to be considered together as a unique management unit and the need to address fleet migration inward and outward the Adriatic. (d) He finally asked for clarification on the calendar for the adoption of the management plan, where we are now, when the validation of the Task Force will take place and how to conciliate the GFCM calendar with the EC proposal.
9. Mr Vasconcellos replied to every point as follows: (a) He explained that that the first step towards the development of the management plan was a questionnaire sent to the National Focal Points in January and that this preliminary consultation gave a flavor of the type of things concerning the stakeholders. There is no recipe for consultation and there is still time for feedback before the next Task Force meeting in May. Then we have to think on the details of the plan. This work is not on the GFCM secretariat but on the Contracting Parties. (b) He agreed on the needed coherence between regional and national management plans and said that national plans shall not be less restrictive than the regional one. (c) He also agreed on the consideration of the Adriatic sea as a single management unit. The SAC was already asked to deliver advice on small pelagics on both GSAs together but it is not available yet. (d) The current proposal for the Adriatic management plan comes from one Contracting Party. Both process are taking place in parallel and hopefully merge in the end.



10. Mr Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) asked that the opinion of the MED RAC is duly taking into account. Co-management has no precedent at regional level and it is not being implemented yet.
11. Mr. Alessandro Buzzi (Federcoopescpa) expressed his concerns related to the variations of the stocks in GSAs 17 and 18, and asked how will be the SAC involved in the management. Mr Vasconcellos explained that in the Adriatic the SAC agreed an objective in terms of reference points. The group acknowledged important fluctuations of the stocks and thus flexibility should be considered in the adoption of licenses schemes. He also explained that the Guidelines give specific functions to the SAC.
12. Mr Farrugio (chairman of the SAC) expressed the readiness of the SAC to carry out scientific analysis if data are available.
13. Mr Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) asked about how to deal with the reference points at national level. Mr Vasconcellos explained that reference points can only be considered at stock level.
14. The representative of the EC highlighted that 12 month ago nobody even thought about a real management plan at regional level in the Mediterranean, and this year we are already discussing something concrete since a real management plan is on the table. The process is already launched and we need to evaluate how to incorporate the RACs views in the process. The RACs should be updated and make its input to the process. The process at GFCM and within the EC has different speeds but both of them should match in the end. 2013 is a test case of the process.
15. The representative of Pasesges thanked the representative of the GFCM for his presentation and emphasized the need to consider not only to end overfishing but also to tackle the problem of economic losses and other threats as pollution. He also highlighted the need of the homogenization of monitoring and control measures among the different GFCM parties.
16. Mr Farrugio replied that the SAC SCESS is in the process of developing bio-economic models in order to address the economic impact of the different management options, that the SCMEEE is giving consideration to the problem of pollution, and that the SAC, following the EAF approach, is also incorporating climatological variables to the analysis.
17. **Managing fisheries through co-management - the Catalan sandeel fishery case study.** Mr. Mauricio Pulido, a sandeel fisherman, presented the co-management model in place in his fishery. A co-management committee, integrated by the administration (national and Catalan), the fishing sector, scientists and NGOs was created in April 2013 in order to properly manage and monitor the fishery through a comprehensive and adaptive management plan. The committee is integrated by a plenary, which meets in principle once a year, and by a permanent commission which meets once a month. The permanent commission is in charge of the follow up in real time of the development of the fishery. It coordinates the scientific study, design and adapts the management plan according to the scientific advice, develops action protocols and establishes sanctions measures. Decisions are adopted generally by consensus. If no consensus achieved, decisions are adopted by a majority of 7 of 10 votes (2 from the national administration, 2 from the Catalan administration, 2 from the sector, 2 from scientists and 2 from NGOs). The management of the sandeel fishery through co-management is proving to be a real success, first in terms of compliance and reporting, due to the complete buy in from the fishing sector, and also in terms of income for fishermen since strict new measures and compliance to the rules translated into an increase of price of more than 3 times per kilo of fish.
18. Mr Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) asked details about the fishery, like number of vessels and ports involved, the geographical scope, species covered by the management plan, number of crew members, presence of the owner on board, respective income for the owner and employees, reasons for the increase of price, supervising and inspection competencies and penalties.



19. Mr. Pulido answered every question as follows: there are 25 vessels involved in the fishery registered under a closed census (only 20 operating during the current scientific fishery), all registered in 6 ports. Target species are either “sonso” or “llangueta”, never other species. Since the co-management committee is in place the number of crew has increased. The earning per fisherman is the same share for each member of the crew (including the owner) and the vessel. The price has increased due to the control in the offer, since catches has reduced by 40-50%. All the production are legally reported and sold avoiding the previous existing black market. There are no economic sanctions in place; the only sanction is the withdrawal of the right to fish, the worst for a fisherman.
20. The coordinator asked about allocation of catches and the impact of a daily allowable quota per vessel in the increase of price. Mr Pulido explained that there is a yearly maximum catch established, but also a daily one per vessel in relation to the number of members of the crew which is key in controlling the market. Sanctions for over-quota catches are double, a weekly deduction of catches from the Friday’s quota and a monthly one from the following month.
21. Mr. Eusebi Esgleas Pares (FNCCP), also member of the co-management committee, added that although 20 vessels participate in the current scientific fishery only 10 vessels per day are allowed to fish.
22. Mr. Mario Ferretti (Federpesca), after manifesting being very impressed by the case, asked about how to match this case practically with the Mediterranean Regulation. Mr Pulido explained that the fishery needs two derogations from the Mediterranean Regulation, the mesh size and the minimum distance to the coast. The current scientific study, expected to end this summer, will constitute the basis for the development of the definitive management plan according to the Mediterranean Regulation.
23. Mr. Ferrari (Federcoopesca) expressed his surprise about the involvement of WWF and Greenpeace.
24. Mr. Sergi Tudela (WWF) expressed WWF’s will to be deeply involved in achieving sustainable and profitable fisheries together with fishermen and all stakeholders through co-management.
25. Mr. Ferrari (Federcoopesca) asked the EC about the situation of the management plan for the Goby fishery in Tuscany and Liguria.
26. The representative of the EC replied that management plans should be developed by stakeholders.
27. Ms. Snezana Levstik (KGZS) expressed to be overwhelmed by the presentation which could give some hope for the survival of the purse seiners activity in the Trieste Bay. She expressed that we are in an historical moment when real co-management is possible and not only for artisanal fisheries but for all.
28. The representative of the EC clarified that this approach shouldn’t be seen as a way to avoid compliance with the Mediterranean Regulation. It shouldn’t be applied to maintain an activity that has no future.
29. **Proposal for a management plan of small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea.** Mr Fabrizio Donatella, from the DG MARE, explained the intension of the EC to present a proposal for a management plan for pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea in the annual meeting of the GFCM in May 2013. There are too much recommendations adopted by GFCM sometimes difficult to implement and control. Therefore, to improve effectiveness, the EC decided to concentrate in 2 or 3 main issues. He explained the details of the proposal, which addresses basically anchovy and sardine in GSA 17 (North Adriatic) where we have clear scientific recommendations, and some precautionary measures for the same stocks in GSA 18. The plan includes measures, as clear reference points, minimum conservation size, and others. The 5 countries involved in the fishery



should submit their national fishing programs before the season starts in order to be allowed to fish. The plan is fully compatible with the Mediterranean Regulation and will never replace it.

30. Mr. Ferrari (Federcoopescas) expressed his reservations in relation to the establishment of quotas. He wondered if in the case of an existing sustainable exploitation there is a need of implementing a management plan. He pointed out the Mediterranean Regulation established that the Council has competence on shared stocks (art.18). He also pointed out that with the new provisions addressed to the fishing of fry we will be changing those in place under the Mediterranean Regulation. Furthermore, he does not understand why the EC is formulating a proposal for a recommendation on these GSAs where the GFCM considered that the fishery is sustainable. Finally, he thanks the RAC MED for having distributed the EC draft proposal. Mr. Donatella replied saying that this proposal of a management plan on small pelagics started one year ago with the involvement of the European Member States' administrations. Maybe it is ambitious, but we need to manage the fishing effort.
31. Mr Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) made a detailed exposition of suggested management measures for the management of a small pelagics in the Adriatic by trawlers and purse seiners as recently agreed by the Italian Producers Organizations (POs). They first highlight the need to consider both geographical subareas (GSA 17 and 18) as only one management unit. Their proposal includes a comprehensive set of management measures as follows: access to the resource granted by fishing permits allocated under a strict point system, reduction of fishing effort commensurate with an exploitation rate $E=0,33$, which is even more restrictive than that in the EC proposal, reduction of the fishing activity to 4 days per week for pelagic trawlers and 5 days per week for purse seiners, prohibition of any fishing activity during the four days of full moon, minimum landing size and minimum distance to the coast, catch limits (still to be agreed by the POs) and daily catch limits according with the number of members of the crew (39kg/day up to 7 crew members, more for additional crew members with a maximum of 59kg/day), landing in the base port, sanctions in terms of suspension of fishing time, nomination of a management committee by many actors (although not NGOs) and commercial measures.
32. The EC representative thanked the exposition and took well note of the recommendations.
33. Ms. Snezana Levstik (KGZS) complained about how the original problem of the purse seiners in the Trieste Bay turned into a whole management plan for small pelagics in the Adriatic.
34. The representative of the EC corrected the mentioned perception of the process, which started last year with the adoption of the Guidelines to develop management plans in the GFCM. Now we are on the phase of the implementation of the Guidelines and this is the pilot case chosen to start. It shouldn't be seen as a way to solve an EU problem, nor as to review the EU rules provided by the Mediterranean Regulation.
35. Mr. Sergi Tudela (WWF) explained the position of his organization in relation o the adoption of management plans. The adoption of management plans is since long ago recommended by the SAC and much needed in the Mediterranean in order to achieve a sustainable fishing activity. Plans should be adaptive according with the scientific advise of the SAC. WWF would not enter in the discussion of specific technical measures of the plan which sometimes involves even political decisions. The organization strongly supports the adoption of scientifically based management plans with the right general objectives for recovery of maintenance of a sustainable fishing activity. Market measures should not be overlooked since they are directly linked to both, a proper management and the profitability of the activity. A management plan in place could enormously help the certification of a given fishery. WWF would be ready to support these kind of initiatives. Finally expressed their big concern for the dramatic situation of Mediterranean demersal stocks as for the collapse of sardine in GSA 7 (Gulf of Lions).



36. Mr. Farrugio (chairman of the SAC) expressed his support to the adoption of management plans and certified that the EC proposal is totally aligned with the scientific advised provided by the SAC. However, he criticizes the adoption of “frozen” values which can become outdated any time. He recommends more flexibility. The current situation is good and we need the plan to keep the good shape of the fishery but with more flexible parameters.
37. The representative of the EC underlined that, for instance, Croatia could increase its fishing effort. He replied that flexibility should be balanced with conservation.
38. The coordinator introduced the last point of the agenda about the potential **Identification of the most commercially important shared stocks by the EC and GFCM member States to be subject of management plans**, in order to contribute to the current GFCM process. There were no contributions from the participants.
39. Finally, the coordinator thanked all participants for the interested debate with the hope that their contributions are duly taken into account.

