



Ref.: 219/REL

Rome, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014

## REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP (WG3) ON ISSUES RELATING TO THE GFCM

### **Grand Hotel Bernanrdin, Portoroz, Slovenia**

Participants: See attached list

Coordinator: Susana Sainz-Trapaga.

Documents attached: Agenda, slides presented by Miguel Bernal and Miguel Nuevo.

1. The coordinator welcomed the participants, the representatives of the GFCM, the EC and of EFCA and immediately began the meeting by asking if there were any changes to be made to the agenda. As no changes were proposed the agenda was approved as it stood.
2. The coordinator gave a brief overview of the work of GFCM and the procedure for the adoption of multiannual management plans within the GFCM, then passed the floor to Miguel Bernal, who began his presentation by explaining the GFCM guidelines on multiannual management plans and the current process of adoption of management plans. He pointed out that management plans should set out operational objectives, identify areas and fishing gears and mechanisms for the practical implementation of the plan, the procedures for monitoring, reporting and reviewing the plans. All these steps must be approved in consultation with stakeholders on the basis of the best available scientific information. In addition, he underlined that it is necessary to establish measures for the scientific follow up of the plans, moreover mechanisms for revision of the management plan itself must be in place. Mr Bernal stated that the FAO has recognized the applicability of the ecosystem approach to fisheries, recalling that fishing is an ecosystem that has a social component as well as the biological and economic ones. He continued his presentation by pointing out that the GFCM has several subsidiary bodies, and focused on the role of the SAC (Scientific Advisory Committee) which provides information on the status of stocks and ecosystems, socio-economic variables and available data and information on fisheries. The SAC sees the participation of the contracting parties, NGOs and intergovernmental bodies. Mr Bernal then proceeded to illustrate several case studies on management plans in which the GFCM is working on, spread through several areas, including the north Adriatic, Western Mediterranean, Alboran Sea, Central Mediterranean, Strait of Sicily and the Black Sea. He concluded by recalling that in 2013 the GFCM, on the basis of a proposal formulated by the European Commission, adopted the management plan for the north Adriatic and a series of transitional measures for south Adriatic (GFCM/37/2013/1), in addition to the adoption of three other resolutions, and also



approved a guidelines on transitional measures to facilitate the future implementation of management plans, which are non-binding guidelines.

3. The HGK representative, Krstina Mislov, took the floor to state that in the GFCM management plan for the Adriatic, there is no reference to sustainability and profitability. In addition, she reiterated that the specific nature of Croatia had not been taken into consideration and she would also like to see the definition of “fishing day” reviewed.
4. The GFCM representative noted that the SAC had already requested a revision of some of the technical and socio-economic aspects included in this GFCM Recommendation in order to be consistent with the objectives of the Recommendation; it will be necessary to wait until the annual Session of the GFCM to establish how to proceed with this matter. Furthermore, while the intervention of the Croatian representative was deemed acceptable, the GFCM representative pointed out that this stock is over-exploited and some measures to reduce the exploitation rates are required. He also recalled that, during the management plan adoption process, the MS were asked to consult the stakeholders, but that the technical part of the Recommendation were not reviewed by the SAC and its subsidiary bodies before approval, as expressed in SAC’s last report.
5. The coordinator thanked the GFCM representative for the clarification and added that this intervention demonstrated the importance of the process of consultation with stakeholders, which needs to be systematic. She expressed that the role of the RAC looks crucial in providing a forum for discussion and asked how the RAC could best contribute to improve this consultation.
6. The representative of the French Ministry added that the best solution would be to submit a proposal for a management plan to MEDAC and then send it to the Scientific Committee of the GFCM. He concluded by pointing out that the time interval between SAC and the Commission meetings regrettably does not leave enough time for meetings in which to carry out socio-economic assessment.
7. The representative of the Italian Ministry reiterated the importance of MEDAC’s advisory role and the strategic role of the GFCM, the only forum in which there is interaction with non EU countries with whom we have shared stocks.
8. The Federcoopesca representative, Mr Ferretti, agreed with the representative of Croatia, but nevertheless recalled the importance of reviewing technical aspects of the plan particularly in the case of small pelagics where natural fluctuations are important.
9. The President of MEDAC underlined that there are plans to reform and enhance the GFCM consultation process, however the GFCM is obliged to work through the MS, and also consult with stakeholders through the MS. This is a limit which could result in delays. He further recalled that MEDAC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the GFCM, and moments of discussion and consultation ensued. He expressed the hope that the MS will proceed through MEDAC and not only in accordance with their internal consultation procedures.
10. The representative of the EC intervened to make a comment and update the participants on state of advancement of the draft Recommendation on small pelagic species. She reiterated that the management plan was adopted by the GFCM on the request of the EC, and at that time Croatia was not a member of the EU. Sustainability is a policy to be pursued at regional and sub-regional level, the Mediterranean has many non EU countries and as such is different from other regions. It is important to ensure equal opportunities and a framework that is applicable to all parties, which will only be possible through international regional organizations. With regard to the evaluation of the plan, she replied by saying that it will take some time to assess its validity. She reiterated that the EC had notified the GFCM concerning the list of vessels and the maximum capacity, and that no indication had been received from the MS that the limit on fishing days had not been respected. She also recalled that a specific monitoring program has been in place since March this year, which includes control measures for swordfish and small pelagic species which will be illustrated later by the



EFCA. She also expressed agreement with all the comments made so far, and with the fact that consultation with stakeholders is a weak point, which is why the new CFP is expected to give the Advisory Councils an enhanced role.

11. The representative of the Slovenian KGZS took the opportunity to inform the EC that the 30-day fishing ban in Slovenia would further reduce the ability of the fishermen to earn a living, given that the fishing season is already shorter due to the weather and sea conditions. She also reiterated that there is no precise definition of “fishing days”.
12. The EC representative responded by saying that in the revised plan a redefinition of “fishing days” is foreseen, and that the biggest challenge for this year has been the deadlines that were so close together.
13. In relation to the next management plans to be developed by the GFCM, its representative informed the meeting that the GFCM will continue to work on the case studies presented to the floor, and indicated that the Coordination Committee of the FAO Regional Project MedSudMed had included many activities that relate to trawl fisheries in the Strait of Sicily targeting the red shrimp and hake which will be worked on for the next two years. For the Alboran Sea, the GFCM will try to provide some elements for future management measures. The GFCM representative invited the MEDAC to suggest other cases which could be studied. He also expressed the commitment of the GFCM in improving the management of the small-scale fisheries sector. The meeting was informed that a concept note for a Regional Programme on small-scale fisheries is being developed, recalling the GFCM Regional Symposium on Small Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, carried out on November 2013 in Malta, which the MEDAC President attended. He encouraged MEDAC to present its own position on the case studies in question through their Member States.
14. The representative of Slovenia intervened to state that small fisheries does not have a clear definition and that the industry would like to see a distinction between artisanal and industrial, she asked whether a better definition will be provided.
15. Mr Bernal replied that an *ad hoc* session was held during the above mentioned Symposium on the definition of small-scale fisheries, however it will probably not be possible to achieve a definition that will satisfy everyone because the Mediterranean has a highly diversified fleet: there are fishing and aquaculture methods that are in part artisanal and part small-scale coastal fishing and there are and even differences at intra-regional level.
16. The coordinator thanked the participants and passed the floor to Miguel Bernal of the GFCM to present the recommendations of the latest SAC sub-committees meetings: availability of all information on line (new on-line services to be launched during 2015), incorporation of VMS data in the stock assessments, assessment of the role of small-scale fisheries, inclusion of socio-economic impacts in management plans, a management plan for red coral, practical guidance on artificial reefs, and adoption of marine protected areas and Fishing Restricted Areas (FRAs) as fishing management tools. In addition, the subcommittee of stock assessment concluded that for demersal species there are only three stocks that are exploited in a sustainable way, for pelagic species there are fewer scientific assessments and among them 2 depleted in the Gulf of Lions. He concluded by informing the meeting that overall fishing mortality in 2013 in the Mediterranean seems to show a slight decrease in relation to that in 2012.
17. The representative of EMPA thanked the previous speaker and emphasised that the conclusions are always the same, but if the 2013 data acknowledge that exploitation is sustainable, we should remember that this is the result of the measures implemented 2 or 3 years before, and when you apply corrective measures you have to wait a few years to see the consequences, so as to be sure that the direction in which you are going will be the right one.
18. The Coordinator thanked the participants and, as there were no further questions, passed the floor to the representative of EFCA for the presentation on the control plans.



19. The EFCA representative informed the meeting that the current Joint Deployment Plan (JDP) concerns bluefin tuna, swordfish and small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea. Where bluefin tuna and swordfish are concerned, reference is made to the ICCAT recommendations. The JDP sees the participation of all Member States and the EU, and will be implemented by means of two campaigns: bluefin tuna and swordfish on the one hand and anchovies and sardines in the Adriatic Sea on the other. The EFCA has sought to harmonize inspection and control procedures in order to standardize data collection, to plan missions and courses for inspectors, with the aim of encouraging compliance with the recommendations of the CFP, making use of the assistance provided by the EU Member States.
20. The coordinator thanked the EFCA representative for the presentation and asked how they would handle non-compliance with the obligations by third countries.
21. The representative of EFCA responded by saying that in the event of non-compliance, results are analyzed and then transmitted to the Member States. At present, in the European context, they are in contact with the three governments that have agreed the JDP.
22. The coordinator thanked the EFCA and again gave the floor to the representative of the GFCM for the final presentation on the GFCM reform process.
23. Mr Bernal recalled the steps taken during the reform, starting in 2009 with the Performance Review, which was carried out by independent experts by means of a *task force* that proposed the establishment of a framework program to provide guidelines for the operation of the GFCM, allowing the activities and donors to be identified. He recalled how the GFCM is based on an agreement between all the countries of the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and that the last month in Athens an extraordinary session of the Commission was held, which almost completed the development of a proposed amendment for the Agreement, providing a new legal framework for the GFCM. On the whole, the amendments drafted in Athens were considered satisfactory, including references to GFCM assistance at sub-regional level, and the proposed text was submitted to the Annual Session of the GFCM for its final endorsement.
24. Mr Buonfiglio stated that the invitation to attend the session in Athens was also received by MEDAC, but it had not been possible to and so a letter was sent in which he called for greater involvement of stakeholders.
25. Before closing the meeting, the coordinator explained that having been elected as vice president of 1/3 she wanted to give everyone the chance to take over the role of coordinator of this WG.
26. The Executive Secretary informed the meeting that the Secretariat had not received any application from the participants and asked whether there was anyone who would like to apply. There were no other candidates so Susana Sainz-Trapaga was reconfirmed coordinator of WG3.
27. The Chair thanked the coordinator and all those who had attended, he announced that MEDAC will continue to work on the issue of small-scale fisheries. There being no further matters to be examined the meeting of WG 3 was closed in order to leave time for the issues of WG1.

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