

Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2025

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WG1

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Athens

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Content of the Communication

- information on the status of European fisheries monitored in 2023
- orientations for the Commission's proposals and consultations with third countries on fishing opportunities for 2025.



to improve the resilience of fishers, boost the recovery of fish stocks towards the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels, and maintain healthy stocks at MSY level.

Far fewer fish stocks are now overfished compared to 2003. Fishers are seeing socio-economic gains from the stocks that have been managed at healthier levels for some time.

Energy remains one of the major costs in the EU fishing fleet during 2023-2024 despite the reduction in fuel prices continuing to undermine the gains made

Based on the feedback received on the “Fisheries and Oceans package» and the obstacles identified by various stakeholders for the smooth transition to the energy efficiency in the sector and for the successful implementation of all CFP elements



the Commission announces the launch of a full evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation (‘CFP Regulation’).

PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE FISHING IN THE EU (MEDITERRANEAN)

Thanks to the action taken by fishers and national administrations and the commitment from the European Parliament, Council and Commission to manage fisheries responsibly, **fishing has become more sustainable** and far fewer stocks are overfished in the EU.



In the Mediterranean and Black Seas, the median F/FMSY peaked at 1.90 in 2007, it levelled at 1.87 between 2008-2011 and has decreased since then. Over the last three years, the F/FMSY fell from 1.59 to 1.20 in 2022 reaching the lowest level since 2003. This trend is consistent in all sub-regions.

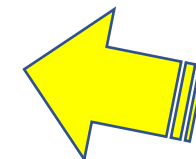


However, fishing pressure in the Mediterranean and Black Seas **is still 20%** above the median level considered sustainable. Though good progress on reaching sustainability has been made in 2023, more progress is needed, especially in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

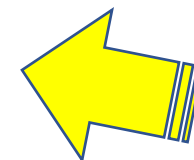


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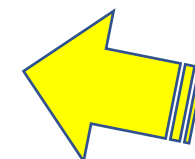
The scientific community is actively studying extent to which **factors other than fisheries** such as ocean warming, acidification, pollution and deoxygenation of the seas may have lowered fisheries productivity, although knowledge gaps remain.



What is known with some certainty, in addition to climate-induced species distribution shifts, is that planktonic species and the timing and the extent of plankton blooms have altered.



In the Mediterranean, the central and eastern areas are considered more vulnerable to climate change due to increased pressure from invasive species of tropical origin (such as Lessepsian species and other species), higher water temperatures and less ocean circulation, which leads to lower levels of dissolved oxygen.



The Mediterranean and Black Seas have **multispecific fisheries** and many stocks are shared with third countries.

The fishing mortality rate has approached a sustainable level for some stocks.

In 2021, 26 stocks reached FMSY or lower levels, but 38 stocks are still fished above sustainable levels.

Action must continue to reduce fishing and reach the MSY.

To do so, states must apply:

- **West Med MAP**
- **the 2030 Strategy of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).**

West Med MAP

In the transitional phase of the West Med MAP, and to achieve the MSY by 2025, the fishing opportunities for 2024 took an integrated approach based on **management tools** and the **compensation mechanism** to encourages MS to use more selective gear and/or to close areas to fishing.

Member States are encouraged to continue using this mechanism.

GFCM continued implementing MAPs

Adriatic Small pelagic MAP: the GFCM set lower catch limits for 2024 for anchovies and sardines, and a freeze of capacity for pelagic trawlers and purse seiners.

Adriatic Demersal stocks MAP: the GFCM set a maximum fishing effort limit for both bottom and beam trawlers, to achieve the MSY in 2026 for all 5 key stocks (European hake, Norway lobster, common sole, deep-water rose shrimp and red mullet).

Managing deep-water shrimp in the Ionian Sea, Levant Sea and the Strait of Sicily (including effort management for hake): lower catch limits were adopted
Harvest limits for red coral.

3. STATE OF THE EU FLEET (31 December 2023)

Since 2022, the number of vessels, GT and engine power has fallen by 0.44%, 0.52% and 0.10% respectively.

EU fishing fleet:

Vessels: 71.608

GT: 1.305.115

kW: 5.226.554

Several segments still **lack data to assess their balance** in full.

Member States are invited to increase their data collection efforts, especially in areas where the information is limited

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

In general most national fleets are expected to be profitable in 2024,

but


a socio-economic analysis indicates that a number of fleet segments will face challenging conditions, particularly those that depend on **overfished** stocks and use energy-intensive fishing gear.

By contrast, fleet segments that depend on stocks **exploited sustainably** and **that have increased their energy efficiency** tend to perform better and generate higher salaries for their crews.

This illustrates the important socio-economic gains in stock conservation and energy efficiency by EU fishing fleets.



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Though fuel prices have fallen, energy remains one of the major costs for the EU fishing fleet in 2024.

5. LANDING OBLIGATION

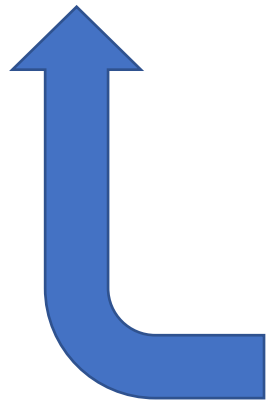
Landing obligation is one of the core elements of the CFP to ensure the marine biological resources are exploited in a sustainable way.

Member States mostly use traditional monitoring techniques:

- inspections at sea,
- inspections at landing
- aerial surveillance.

Reg. 2023/2842 will contribute to the effective monitoring of compliance with the landing obligation

These tools alone are not sufficient to tackle the issue of illegal discards of catches during fishing at sea and there are indeed indications of illegal and undocumented discarding.



5. LANDING OBLIGATION

Commission says.....:



- It is necessary to explore how vessels of less 18 metres LOA (and for those perceived as being below 'high risk') will be controlled and how to ensure compliance with the landing obligation;
- Improving the accuracy of catch recordings is essential essential for better stock assessments
- The weighing and registration of landed catches is essential in monitoring quota uptake and is fundamental to the successful fisheries management.

6. ORIENTATIONS FOR 2024 FISHING OPPORTUNITIES PROPOSALS

6.1 Key stages to setting the next fishing opportunities

In preparing its proposals for the 2025 fishing opportunities, the Commission will take into account:

- ❖ the findings of the judgment issued by the Court of Justice on 11 January 2024 in [Case C-330/2244](#).
- ❖ the scientific advices issued by the ICES and the STECF

The Commission invites Member States and stakeholders to assess the scientific advice as soon as it is publicly available.

Stakeholders can provide feedback or recommendations **through Advisory Councils**, national authorities and individually to the Commission.

6. ORIENTATIONS FOR 2024 FISHING OPPORTUNITIES PROPOSALS

6.1 Key stages to setting the next fishing opportunities (Med)

1) To pursue the objectives set in the EU West Med multiannual plan:

On 1 January 2025, the transitional phase of the West Med EU MAP (Reg. 2019/1022) will end, and the plan will enter into the full implementation phase. This means that the FMSY ranges in the multiannual plan could be used, if the stocks are above the precautionary reference points, to possibly apply flexible measures to mixed fisheries.

The proposal for fishing opportunities should include the available management tools, FMSY ranges, and the compensation mechanism to improve gear selectivity and area closures. The STECF evaluates progress in the implementation of the multiannual plan annually.

2) To pursue the objectives set in the GFCM plans in line with the 2030 strategy.

3) to improve the protection of European eel.

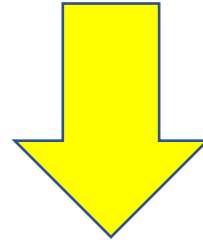


The Commission encourages Member States to implement accompanying measures under the EMFAF programmes.

6. ORIENTATIONS FOR 2024 FISHING OPPORTUNITIES PROPOSALS

6.1 Key stages to setting the next fishing opportunities (Med)

Shared stock management is also necessary to ensure sustainable fishing in international waters and to level the playing field in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.



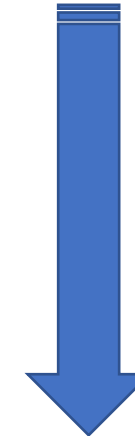
The proposal for fishing opportunities in 2025 will cover **current GFCM measures** and **additional measures to be adopted** at the annual GFCM session in November, including important measures to implement the Adriatic small pelagic species and demersal species multiannual plans, long-term measures for European eel and for red coral.

6. ORIENTATIONS FOR 2024 FISHING OPPORTUNITIES PROPOSALS

6.1 Key stages to setting the next fishing opportunities (Med)

The progress made in the Mediterranean must continue and accelerate, building on the results of the GFCM high-level conference of October 2023 and the 2024 Fish Forum.

Greater focus is needed in the **GFCM/FAO SSF Summit (July 2024)** and the **Regional Aquaculture Conference (December 2024)**.



These will be important **milestones** in the process to prepare the next MedFish4Ever Ministerial declaration for the next Ministerial Conference in 2026.

CONCLUSION

The overall sustainability of EU fisheries improved further in 2023, thanks to continued action. For the Mediterranean, despite recent improvements in the state of some stocks, more action and greater commitment is required to tackle the situation.

Climate change affects human activities and the intensity of pressures as well as the links between these. The EU is tackling marine pollution through a number of legislative and policy initiatives under the broad framework of the zero pollution action plan.

The Commission's proposals for fishing opportunities in 2025 will seek to enable stocks to recover, consolidate the fish stocks that have reached sustainable levels and to boost the resilience of fishers.

The Commission invites Member States, Advisory Councils, stakeholders and the public to provide feedback on this Communication by 31 August 2024

THE WORK AND ROLE OF ADVISORY COUNCILS IN 2023 (from staff working document)

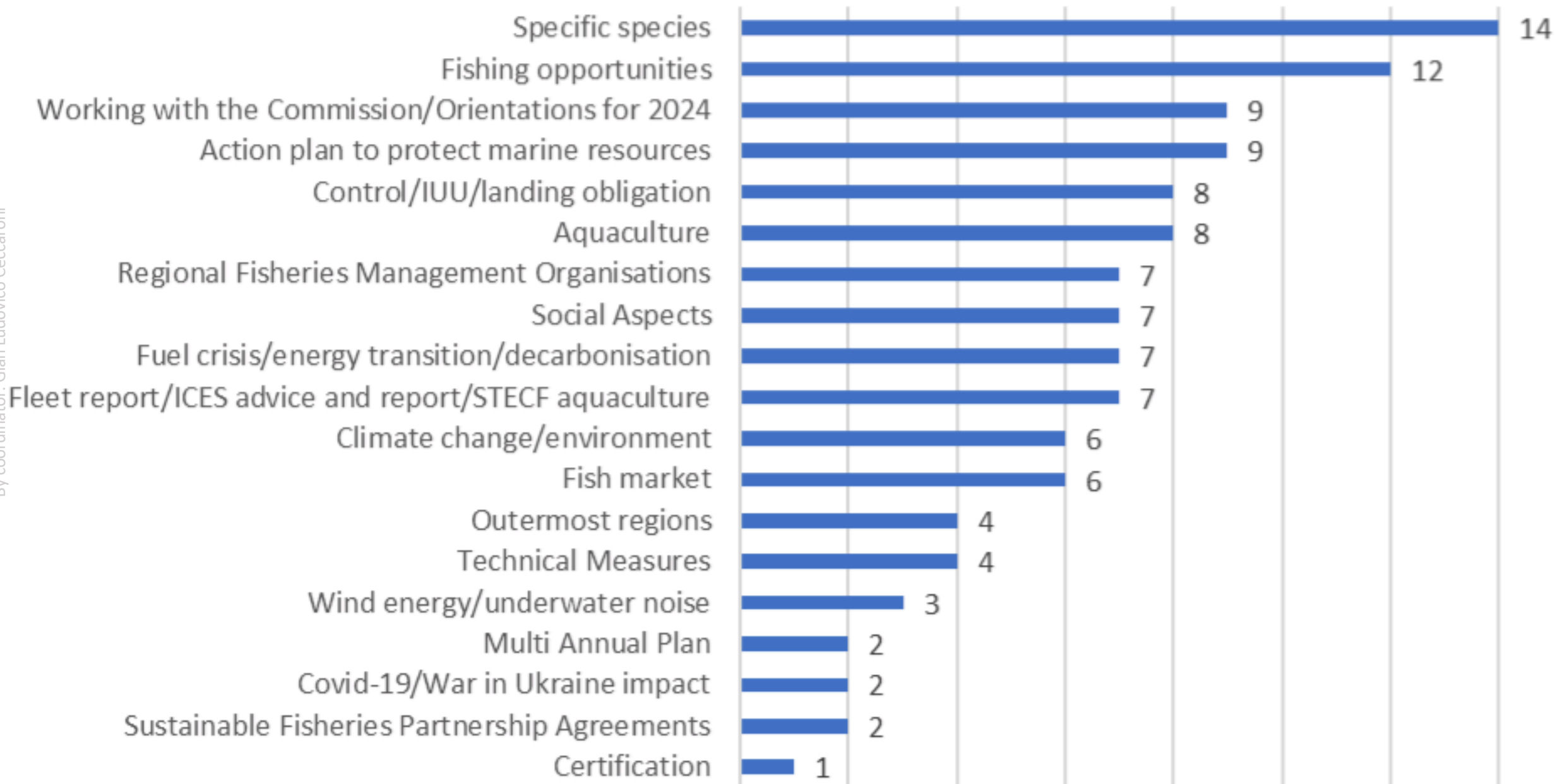
Recommendations on the Mediterranean (from MEDAC - part) in 2023

Topics: such as fishing opportunities, implementation of the EU Western Mediterranean multiannual plan, implementation of GFCM multiannual plans, implementation of the landing obligation in the Mediterranean Sea and contributions to EU proposals to the GFCM.

In the EU proposals for GFCM recommendations, **the Commission incorporated parts of all MEDAC advice** on new multiannual plans, new fisheries restricted areas in the Mediterranean Sea, and measures on red coral and non-indigenous species. **The Commission promoted in all the GFCM proposals the need for a regional level-playing field, as requested by MEDAC.**

In preparing the annual fishing opportunities proposal for the Mediterranean, **the Commission took into account parts of MEDAC advice**, including implementation of the compensation mechanism under the Western Mediterranean multiannual plan, notably by proposing to increase the level of compensation and include additional technical criteria.

Number of recommendations made by ACs around specific topics



The importance of ACS (from staff working document)

- ❖ ACs are the Commission stakeholders' forum and a vital part of policymaking under the CFP.
- ❖ Their recommendations are of the utmost importance to the Commission as they enable EU and national policymakers to draw on local knowledge and experience.
- ❖ Advice by ACs is an important input to policymaking and the development and implementation of measures, even though not every recommendation leads to a change in legislation.
- ❖ Conservation measures need to be adopted taking into account the available scientific, technical and economic advice.
- ❖ AC recommendations may lead to different outcomes, such as contributing to research and policy documents or to scientific advisory bodies' terms of reference.
- ❖ They may also trigger the launch of a study on a specific issue.
- ❖ Above all, AC meetings and recommendations make it possible to discuss and get a better understanding of the issues at stake and involve stakeholders in policymaking.