

**MEDAC Advice on Resolution GFCM/47/2024/1: "A roadmap for a joint project to collect all required and identified scientific evidence to provide a basis for the discussion of potential additional measures for the long-term portion of the management plan for demersal fish in the Strait of Sicily, in response to Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/4".**

During MEDAC meeting of the FG on Strait of Sicily held on 26 February 2024 in Rome, the expert Fabio Fiorentino presented "Updating the state of the demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily" ([LINK to the presentation](#)).

The presentation stimulated a debate among MEDAC member on the GFCM Resolution GFCM/47/2024/1, establishing a structured roadmap to collect scientific evidence to inform the long-term portion of the Strait of Sicily demersal stocks management plan (2026–2030), set out by Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/4.

Following the discussion, MEDAC members agreed on the following priorities for improving sustainable fishery management in the Strait of Sicily, aligned with the objectives of the resolution:

- 1) **Ensuring fair competition, market, and fishing effort traceability to strengthen traceability and both fishing effort and import controls to protect EU fish production** from unfair competition with third-country imports.
- 2) **Identification and protection of critical habitats to prioritize the conservation of nursery and spawning areas for key demersal species**, as well as vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), particularly in the southern Strait of Sicily to ensure the common level playing field. To this end, MEDAC supports the inclusion of the protection of southern nurseries areas for hake and key relevant species, as permanent spatial closures, in case of need, in the long-term measures of the Strait of Sicily management plan on demersal stocks and calls for careful and constant monitoring of the effects produced by the existing protected areas.
- 3) **Improved fishing gear selectivity to reduce discards and bycatch** by encouraging the voluntary use of more selective fishing gears, in line with the resolution's emphasis on mitigating the impact of fishing activities.
- 4) Verify through scientific data the **impact of other marine uses on fisheries resources** and regulate the use of equipment that has a negative impact on fisheries resources in the Strait of Sicily (e.g., the use of the air gun technique for offshore oil and gas exploration).

Additionally, MEDAC members emphasized the need for coordinated scientific cooperation among all relevant GFCM CPCs to ensure that the scientific roadmap outlined in Resolution GFCM/47/2024/1 is effectively implemented.

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**MEDAC strongly supports swift action to enforce Resolution GFCM/47/2024/1, recognizing that the scientific evidence gathered through this initiative will be crucial for shaping additional long-term measures under the multiannual management plan for demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily.**

**Furthermore, MEDAC reiterates that the implementation of the resolution is essential to ensuring a common level playing field between European and non-European countries operating in the Strait of Sicily.** This mechanism is crucial to prevent unfair competition among fleets, ensuring that all operators abide by the same fisheries management rules and sustainability commitments.

