



SRC-CM – GFCM 9-11 March 2021



MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

- **Overview of the Status of fisheries in central Mediterranean**, as emanating from the GFCM report on the State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (SoMFi) 2020 - <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb2429en>

Outcomes of relevant technical activities for the management of fisheries in the western Mediterranean

Status of central Mediterranean fisheries, including assessments emanating from plenary and relevant benchmark sessions of the Working Groups on Stock Assessment

*Observers: An expert highlighted that the **conflicts between fishing gears** should be considered in the management of **hake**: in particular, the fishing mortality of each fishing gear (trawlers, gillnetters, longlines) should be assessed. A deep debate occurred on the hake stock status related to the **lack of data and to the need of further management measures on selectivity, EFH** etc. The debate also considered alternative reference points more appropriate for the species, other than $F_0, 1$. Furthermore, attention has been focused on **Coriphaena hippurus** because more data are needed in case of management measures (expected in 2022). More info on socioeconomic aspects should be collected and **stakeholders will be involved** in drafting process of management measures.*



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Observer: during the debate both for hake and for deep-water red shrimp a **delay in the assessments and in the consequent scientific advices was highlighted.**

Deepwater red shrimp:

- Identification and mapping of bottom trawl fishing grounds for deep-water red shrimp in the Eastern-Central Mediterranean Sea (GSAs 12-16, 18-27) (Nora TASSETTI et al)

Observer: this interesting presentation shown the **flows from the GSAs of Deep Waters fishing to the GSAs of registration and the GSAs of arrival.** However, the study does not include fishing vessels coming from extra-EU countries and then the basis for providing a scientific advice is not provided. On the other side, fishing activities occur mainly **from April to July, and the protection of the spawners can be more effective:** this information can be relevant for future recommendations. The management plan of hake will expire by the end of 2021.

- Update on most recent technical work carried out on deep-water red shrimp in the eastern-central Mediterranean (Sergio VITALE/GFCM Secretariat)

Observer: Starting from the already existing recommendations in the Strait of Sicily, **the further steps would go in the direction of the extension of the precautionary management measures** to all central Med GSAs through limitations to the fishing effort/capacity, minimum landing size, minimum mesh size, technical measures etc.

 **The stock assessment could be available by the SAC 2022 and the next steps towards the MAP should include the stakeholder consultation.**



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Red coral:

Notes of the observer - Current recommendation:

- Based on the precautionary approach
- **From 2020 to 2023**, freezing of fishing authorizations and harvests

The current recommendation has been already transposed in the EU Regulations and the prohibition of transshipment and retention onboard was extended to recreational fishery.

A scientific expert highlighted the detrimental effect of **acidification** because it should be taken into account in the future MAP. However, it would be ambitious the objective of a new MAP: it is suggested to focus on the implementation of the current plan, and thereafter on the consequences of climate change, such as acidification.

GFCM Secretariat clarified that the results of the current research plan will be available. Now the focus should be the facilitation of the implementation of management plan.

WGFIT and Driftnets:

Notes of the observer - Incidental by-catch data collection would be included in the new GFCM Strategy. New pilot projects aimed to reduce by-catch are needed.

During the COVID period the **illegal driftnets appeared again**: it is a real problem, and it must be addressed. However, the GFCM Secretariat recalled the attention to the main target of driftnets: it is an **ICCAT competence**.



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Technical inputs to the regional adaptation strategy to cope with the effects of climate change on fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea (Manuel Hidalgo) – See the Annex

Sensitive Benthic Habitats

- The GFCM Database on Sensitive Benthic Habitats: proposal for a data call (GFCM Secretariat)
- *Isidella elongata*, a deep Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem: mapping, species assemblages and ecological role in a conservation perspective (Pierluigi CARBONARA)

Observer: I. Elongata is distributed on bottoms deeper than 500 m. GSA 18 is the most interested by this species in terms of quantity of biomass and the association with other species. The study shown the impact of fishing activities on this species because its hotspots is often associated with the deep waters red shrimps. Age and growth data on congeneric species show the impact recovery period ranging from a few decades to one century. However, more information is needed about the growth rate and age.

Discussion on other subregional matters and follow-up activities, including within the midterm strategy and the new strategy

The following topics were addressed on the Southern Med: Proposal to divide the Libyan coast (GSA21) into three marine subareas, MEDITS survey in Tunisian waters, Discards caused by trawling activities in Gabes Gulf (GSA 14) and Design of a device for the mitigation of the accidental catches of marine vulnerable species in bottom trawl in the northern and eastern Tunisian waters GSA 12 and GSA 13.



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- Identifying **nurseries of main demersal species in the Strait of Sicily** (Fabio FIORENTINO)

The location of nursery areas should take into account the overlap of species distribution in order to protect more species with only one measure. The expert shown the results of several scientific papers and projects, where hydrodynamic connectivity, recruitment and migration of juveniles from nurseries to feeding or spawning areas were considered in the localization of the Essential Fish Habitats.

*Observer: Results of Mantis project highlighted the **effectiveness of spatio-temporal closures**, however **further EFH in the Southern part of the Strait of Sicily** and additional activities for the **control of fishing effort** are needed. Now, additional scientific information is necessary to identify effective EFH in the southern part of the Med: 3 years are estimated to be the time needed to collect enough information.*

*The scientific expert highlighted that **the hake management can be more effective through spatio-temporal closures, effort regime and selectivity improvement in the Strait of Sicily, and not through quotas.***

The WGFiT will be asked to deepen the topic of selectivity, especially considering that the square mesh of 40 mm catches less juveniles than the diamond mesh of 50 mm.



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- Study of the economic performance of different Tunisian fisheries (Yessine BEN ARFA)
- **Non-indigenous species (NIS)**
 - NIS: updates for the central Mediterranean subregion (Ernesto AZZURRO)
Observer notes: during the period 2017-2019 70 new established species, 36 species have expanded their distribution into new Med subareas. No increases were related to enlargement of the Suez Canal. The list of GFCM priority NIS includes Saurida lessepsianus, Lagocephalus sceleratus, Pterois miles, Siganus rivulatus, Siganus luridus, Fistularia commersonii and Plotosus lineatus, but also other species will be monitored. Proposed suggestions to control Non-Indigenous Species: market promotion and valorization of NIS products, Novel NIS products (from biomedicine to divers) and innovative/alternative fishing.
 - Fishing non-indigenous species for commercial exploitation in Ionian Sea (John A. THEODOROU)
 - Status of the blue crab *Portunus segnis* in Tunisian waters (Olfa BEN ABDALLAH)
The preliminary stock assessment in 2018 and 2019 showed that in the Gulf of Gabes, the blue crab stock is fully exploited.
- Pilot study on DNA metabarcoding to investigate biotic aspects of fisheries catches (potential pilot in central Mediterranean countries) (Tommaso RUSSO) *Please, see the notes on SRC-WM reported in [slide 7](#).*

The **official report** of the meeting will be available **after the GFCM SAC** (Scientific Advisory Committee) - **LATE JUNE**

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