



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels  
MARE.D.1/ACD

Dear M. Marzoa,

I would like to congratulate you for your recent election and look forward to continuing collaborating closely with the Mediterranean Advisory Council. I have well received your advices of 3 November and 2 December<sup>1</sup> and thank you for their content that fed very well in the discussions at the December AGRIFISH Council on the Fishing Opportunities in the Mediterranean Sea in 2023.

Let me express that being aware of the difficulties the fishing sector is facing, the EU has taken initiatives to offset the economic losses and additional costs of businesses along the seafood supply chain in the context of the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine. European support is available for the sector's transition towards less fuel-dependent activities as well as for the adoption of measures to restore fish stocks, to reduce discards and the bycatch of sensitive species.

The European Commission will soon publish a report on the implementation of our Common Fishery Policy as well as an ambitious Marine Action Plan and an Energy Transition Initiative. These publications aim at opening a large debate with all marine stakeholders in order to collect their insights, including the one from all MedAC members, on how to best support the European fishing sector transition towards secured and sustainable profitability and how to contribute to biodiversity protection, better stocks recovery and better resilience of coastal communities.

Having said that, I have taken note of the different points you raised in your advice concerning the future of coastal communities in the Mediterranean, especially in the context of the implementation of the multiannual management plan for demersal stocks (West Med MAP).

I would like to reiterate that the Commissioner and myself always welcome feedback and constructive discussions to implement the measures agreed upon to ensure the success of the MAP. As you are aware, the West Med MAP already contains a derogation for the timeline to achieve MSY in order to cater for the need to address the socio-economic

---

<sup>1</sup> Ares(2022)7629376 and Ares(2022)8374742

Mediterranean Advisory Council  
c/o MASAF - Ministero dell'agricoltura, della sovranità alimentare e delle foreste  
Via XX Settembre, 20  
00187 Roma  
Italy

impacts and it provides support from both the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) for the sector transition.

The Commissioner stressed again during the December AGRIFISH Council his concern on the use of EU funds, especially the EMFF in some Member States, that face a high risk of de-commitment while the sector needs support to improve selectivity as well as fuel efficiency investments. In the face of crisis, it is crucial our fishing sector becomes more resilient and can rapidly adapt.

In this context, the Commission accepted additional legal flexibility available under the MAP and supported by best scientific advice. This aims to support the sector optimize its use of fishing effort allocations, namely in allowing transferring fishing effort within a segment and between segments active in coastal and deep-water areas.

As you know, the AGRIFISH Council came to an agreement in December 2022 on the Fishing Opportunities for 2023 in the Mediterranean including the five new MAPs by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) as well as continuation of effort reductions for trawlers under the EU West Med MAP and the management of deep-water shrimps through catch limits while expanding the compensation mechanism to promote a better protection of juveniles and spawners. The Fishing Opportunities regulation rewards fishers' efforts in respect of increased selectivity and efficient closure areas, which are key for our fisheries to become more sustainable and our stocks to recover.

For the West Med MAP specifically, the scientific advice once again confirmed that we need to continue our combined actions to achieve the goal of sustainable fisheries management (maximum sustainable yield – MSY) by 1 January 2025. To ensure that EU fisheries remain on track for this milestone, the regulation makes use of all the management tools and other flexibility elements available under the plan.

It continues the reduction of the trawling fishing effort by 7%, combined with the implementation of additional management tools, such as catch limits for deep water shrimps and controlling the effort freeze for longliners. Furthermore, in order to strengthen ecosystem resilience, the regulation expands the compensation mechanism introduced in 2022, granting 3,5% additional fishing days for trawlers. This provision rewards the use of more selective gears, the establishment of more efficient closure areas to protect juveniles and spawners, and greater use of minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) for the protection of juvenile hake.

All measures will ensure the reduction of fishing mortality, while minimising the socio-economic impact on the fleets and allowing for the fleet to transition to more sustainable fisheries with the support of EU funds. In the current context of the fuel crisis, we need to continue identifying concrete means to reduce energy consumption by gear and by fishing vessel types as well as continue our efforts to sustain the sector, support the diversification of its activities that will make it more flexible and resilient, in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

Finally, let me assure you that the EU is engaging vigorous efforts to foster human capital and skills, to attract young people into the fisheries sector through educational and communication measures, to grant start-up support to young fishers, to improve safety and working conditions on board fishing vessels, and to improve gender balance as well as to facilitate labour relations involving all relevant stakeholders.

My services and I remain available for further exchanges and I would like to reiterate the acknowledgment of your concerns. I look forward to further constructive cooperation with you.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA

c.c.: Ms Andersson Pench, Lainé, Focquet, Dragon