



## 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) 22-25 June 2021



### IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMMES, RPOA FOR SSF IN THE MED, AND ADVANCES ON RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

**Recreational fisheries** The SAC endorsed the proposed list of species to guide the collection and analysis of recreational fisheries data and ultimately support the provision of advice on the management of these fisheries.

In light of the diversity of legislation governing recreational fisheries, the SAC stressed the importance of compiling available information on existing legal frameworks, with the support of the CoC, in order to advise on their harmonization at the regional level.

**Monitoring RPOA-SSF implementation** The SAC noted the significant interactions between small-scale and recreational fisheries in some (although not all) CPCs, highlighting that further information was needed on species targeted by both sectors, in view of improving advice to address these interactions.

**Special attention to the research programmes on:** European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), red coral (*Corallium rubrum*), blue crabs (*Callinectes sapidus* and *Portunus segnis*), dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*).

The SAC highlighted the contribution of the **newly created subregional technical units** (two already established in **Málaga**, Spain, and Beirut, **Lebanon**, for the western and eastern Mediterranean, and **another two being established in Split, Croatia, and Tunis, Tunisia, for the Adriatic Sea and the central Med**) in advancing the implementation of the subregional approach, namely **by supporting countries in meeting national and GFCM sustainability objectives**.

*\*The contents of this presentation include notes of the observers attending at the meetings. The aim is mainly to update MEDAC members on the main topics of last meetings. Nevertheless, not all content has yet been approved. Notes are not official and MEDAC is not responsible for the use which might be made of this presentation.*



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### Additional advice at the regional level – The SAC:

- ✓ Reviewed a proposal of minimal technical specifications for bottom-trawl nets proposed by WGFIT: the Committee considered that endorsing the proposed minimum technical specifications **was premature**, noting that the analysis could benefit from further inputs from stakeholders, such as fishers and fishing gear technologists, as well as from an evaluation of socio-economic implications.
- ✓ Underlined the **need to advance in the establishment of a network of EFH** in the Mediterranean Sea in order to protect the nursery and spawning grounds of GFCM priority species with the highest overexploitation rates and the lowest biomass levels.
- ✓ Recommended to consolidate the existing network of climate change with the aim to provide regular technical advice on these topics, including through the creation of a **dedicated expert group**, and to assist in advancing towards regional and/or national **adaptation strategies to climate change**.
- ✓ was informed by the delegate of the **EU** of their ongoing work towards a **series of proposals for GFCM decisions** addressing, namely, the extension of certain provisions in management plans for key fisheries, in particular small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea, the establishment of new FRAs and the strengthening of existing ones, the conservation of vulnerable species and mitigation of fisheries impacts, as well as measures for recreational fisheries.



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## SMALL PELAGICS

The SAC acknowledged the status of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea – which, despite the extensive measures taken, were both overexploited and in overexploitation.

- ✓ underlining the importance of finalizing the benchmark assessment for sardine (Sardine pilchardus) while taking due note of the uncertainties to be solved before doing so
- ✓ Considering the imminent expiration of Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/8



THE SAC

- Endorsed the technical elements revising the management mechanism proposing a transitional period with additional precautionary measures, followed by a long-term adaptive management plan based on yearly advice on the status of resources.
- Recommended efforts be continued towards evaluating the trade-offs of implementing different management measures with respect to all desired outcomes (biological, social and economic)


## DEMERSAL SPECIES

The SAC noted with satisfaction that the status of Adriatic Sea priority demersal species showed **some improvements** (in terms of decrease in fishing mortality and/or increase in biomass)



**but** despite these positive signals, the fishing mortality levels for key stocks addressed by Rec. GFCM/43/2019/5 were between 12 to 66 % higher than the levels expected to provide MSY



The SAC, endorsed the proposal to continue applying measures to ensure an adequate reduction of fishing mortality for all key species.  MSY BY 2026



The SAC underlined the importance of carrying out MSE to assess the expected benefits and socio-economic impacts of the implementation of any such reduction

## FISHERY RESTRICTED AREAS: The SAC

- endorsed the proposal to establish a permanent closure in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA
- proposed Bari Canyon be considered for the establishment of a new FRA

### SMALL PELAGICS

The SAC noted that of 9 validated assessments:

- 3 stocks were sustainably exploited (European anchovy in GSA 7, sardine in GSA 7 and in GSA 9),
- 1 was uncertain (European anchovy in GSA 1)
- 5 were outside safe biological limits

### DEMERSAL SPECIES

The SAC noted that out of 25 validated assessments in 2021, only one was sustainably exploited (Norway lobster in GSA 9) and all others were outside safe biological limits.

#### THE SAC

- Highlighting the importance of having clear and **consolidated advice** for all priority species
- agreed that there was an urgent need to move ahead in implementing **management measures** for key pelagic and demersal fisheries
- clear technical elements from **MSE**, as well as **pilot studies** on selectivity and technical work in support of the establishment of spatial and temporal closures, **were required**

- ▷ The SAC endorsed the additional technical elements in support of improved management for **common dolphinfish** as a species of relevance for both the western and the central Med
- ▷ The SAC supported the continuation of technical work towards enhanced management of **blackspot seabream**, aimed at improving knowledge on the biology, socio-economic aspects and potential impacts of recreational fisheries, as well as progressing in the determination of spatial and temporal closures.
- ▷ The SAC welcomed the work done on **the Ebro delta margin FRA proposal**. The delegated of Spain informed the Committee that Spain would analyse internally potential ways to address the proposal at the national level



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- ▶ Proposal by Libya to divide the Libyan coast (GSA 21) into three marine subareas (i.e. GSA 21.1, GSA 21.2 and GSA 21.3)
  - ↳ The SAC suggested for Libya to draft a detailed document, with the support of the GFCM Secretariat, illustrating the justifications for the subdivision because any modification should be submitted to the annual session of the GFCM for review and possible endorsement

### SMALL PELAGICS

Only two validated stock assessments were available for this subregion, i.e. on European anchovy and sardine in GSA 16: uncertain status and providing precautionary advice to reduce fishing mortality. The SAC recommended that the assessment of these two species be further advanced.

### DEMERSAL SPECIES

In 2021, nine stocks had validated assessments; of these only one (i.e. red mullet in GSA 15) was considered sustainably exploited.

- ↳ In light of the worsening situation of European hake the SAC recommended to extend the current management plan for another year, noting the importance of adopting a combination of additional measures acting in synergy, and **to advance towards the implementation of a long-term multiannual management plan.**

The SAC reviewed and endorsed a proposal of large-scale multiannual pilot study on the selectivity of bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily (GSAs 12–16).



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The SAC noted that only one assessment had been performed, i.e. for giant red shrimp (*Aristaeomorpha foliacea*) in GSAs 18 and 19, which was found to be outside safe biological limits.

- ↳ Need to assess the status of all relevant stocks in the area by the end of 2021
- ↳ Noting the high value of these deep-sea resources and their unknown status, the SAC emphasized the **need to advance towards the adoption of a long-term management plan in the near future**, while swiftly implementing existing measures and requirements (Recommendations GFCM/43/2019/6, GFCM/42/2018/3 and GFCM/42/2018/4), and **endorsed additional precautionary measures**
- ↳ The long-distance nature of the fleets targeting these species underlined the crucial need to identify the origin of catches and then the SAC endorsed the proposal to improve the monitoring of authorized vessels and establish a **catch certification scheme**.
- ↳ The SAC recommended the implementation of existing GFCM protocols for the protection of VMEs considering its relationship with deep water red shrimp.



Considering the need to continue working on these topics, the Committee proposed to consolidate such network by establishing and implementing a research programme on deep-water red shrimp in the eastern-central Mediterranean.



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### SMALL PELAGICS

The SAC noted that the four validated assessments of small pelagic species, **all provided precautionary advice and revealed stocks in overexploitation.**

**Benchmark assessment of round sardinella:** although not finalized, resulted in qualitative (precautionary) advice for 2 of the assessed sardinella stocks: GSA 24 was deemed to be in overexploitation with biomass within the target levels, while GSAs 26 and 27 (Palestine) together were considered to be overexploited and in overexploitation; no advice had been provided for GSA 27 (Lebanon) owing to unclear stock structure



**To advance on management issues related to round sardinella,** the SAC endorsed the proposal to establish a pilot study towards the determination of the spawning season in Lebanon, as well as a programme addressing the management of round sardinella from an ecosystem perspective, including a qualitative appraisal of potential management measures aimed at informing a future management plan.

### DEMERSAL SPECIES

The SAC reviewed the 8 assessments of demersal species validated in 2021, noting that, **aside from red mullet in GSAs 22 and 24,** which were found to be sustainably exploited, **they were all considered to be outside safe biological limits.**