Results of the STECF summer plenary meeting on the Compensation Mechanism

West Med MAP

Institut Català de Recerca per a la Governança del Mar

Cofinançat per la Unió Europea

Generalitat de Catalunya

CSIC Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas

Institut de Ciències del Mar

Introduction

5 years transitional WM-MAP period → 1st January 2025 permanent phase

Proposal for fishing opportunities for 2026

European Comission suggests maintaining fishing management practices:

1. Regulate fishing effort for trawlers and longliners
2. Catch limits for deep-water shrimps
3. Compensation mechanism for trawlers

STECF summer plenary (25-02)

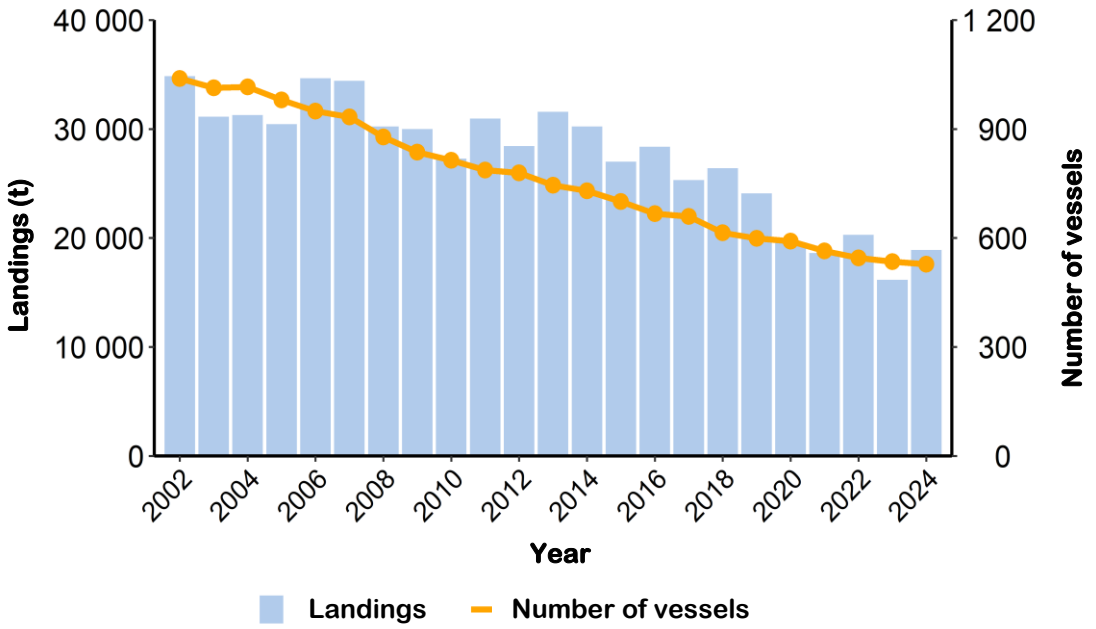
Assessment of measures in the Compensation Mechanism (CM):

- TOR 1: Review CM criteria and evaluate their potential effectiveness on stocks recovery
- TOR 2: Review additional recommendations
- TOR 3: Review which criteria are the most efficient for stocks recovery and socio-economic impact. Suggest new conservation measures.

Effort reduction conducted during the last years

Number vessels, days at sea and landings

Northern GSA 6



Reduction during the last 20 years (2004 – 2024)

- 42% reduction number trawlers.
- 50% reduction total days at sea.
- 35% reduction landings.

Effort reduction during WM-MAP (2020 to 2024)

- 20% reduction in number of vessels (trawlers).
- 20% reduction in total days at sea.
- 23% reduction in landings.
- 25% reduction in number fishers.

Current situation (2025)

- **27 days** + compensation up to 2024 assigned days (approx. 130)
- Most of the fleet is now out of fishing days
- Multispecific fishery is being driven by one single species

Compensation mechanism (CM)

EU Regulation 219/2025
Article 8 Compensation mechanism (CM)

EU Regulation 219/2025	Compensation mechanism	Increase of fishing days	Before 01/05/25	>40% vessels	100% vessels
a (new)	**Remove OTT**	24,00%	35,00%	40,00%	
b (mod)	**Selectivity 45 mm**	9,30%	18,60%	25,00%	30,00%
c (mod)	**Selectivity 50mm**	15,40%	30,80%	40,00%	50,00%
d (new)	**Closure 6w 100-500m (May-Sep)**	10,00%			
e,f (mod)	[GSA 1,2,5-11] **Closure 4w (May-Oct)**	15,00%			
g (new)	**National closure area 5% 100-500m**	4,00%			
h (new)	**Temporary closure area:** Reduction 20% catch of hake spawners	13,00%			
i	**Temporary closure area:** Reduction 25% catch of juveniles + Reduction 20% catch of spawners	3,00%			
j	**Permanent closure >800m**	3,00%			
k	**Low contact otter boards**	3,00%			
l	**Highly selective gear:** Reduction 25% catch of juveniles + Reduction 20% catch of spawners	3,00%			

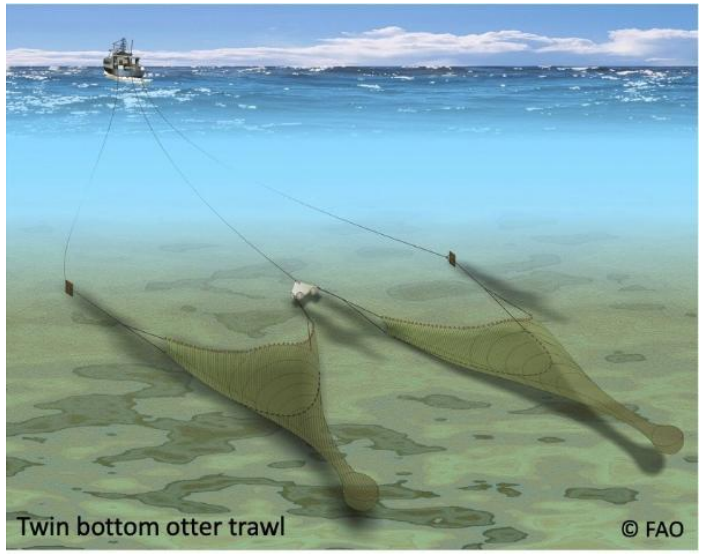
Remove Twin bottom otter trawls (OTT)

Increase of fishing days: 24 - 40%

STECF

- Only affects GSA7 (French fleet)
- 1 fishing day with OTT gears represents 1.25 with Bottom trawls (OTB)
- OTT sweeps 30% more area than OTB
- More fuel consumption and economic performance (40-60% compared to OTB)

GSAs that prohibited OTT in the past are not being compensated.
The same rule applies to other management measures that were applied in the past. E.g. the GSAs that historically reduced the number of days are penalized, as the reduction is applied to the fishing days performed

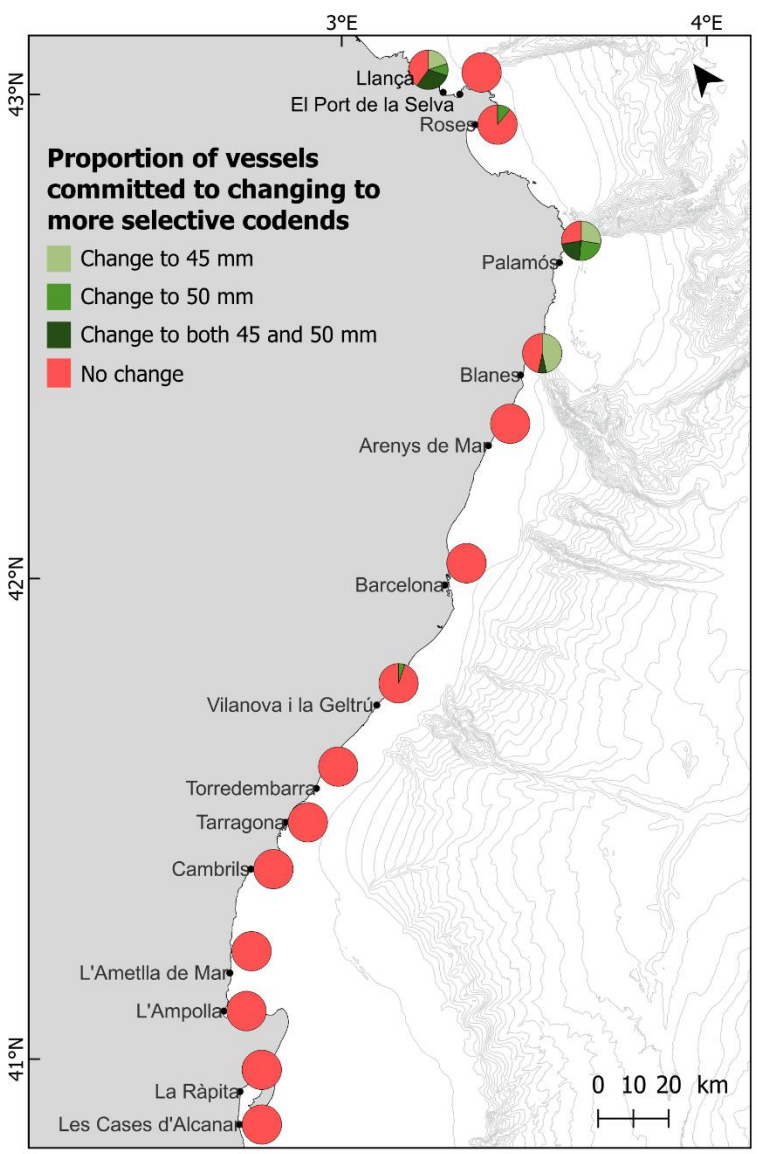


STECF comments: Selectivity

Increase of fishing days:
45mm: 9.3 - 30%
50mm: 15.4 – 50%

- Promote from individual voluntary level to a fleet compulsory level.
- Reduction in catches of small-sized individuals.
- Exclusion of <20cm hake compared to 40mm, but a relevant fraction of undersized fish would remain in the codend. Achieving L50 of 20cm for hake require 55mm, however, it would lead to the loss of certain species and size classes of commercial interest. More limited loss in deep-water shrimp fishing.
- Measures that reduce hake fishing mortality at age 0 will have limited effect on recovering the stock to MSY levels, as constitutes a small fraction of the total mortality.
- EC regulations lack specifications on codend length, allowing short SM codends.
- No linear relationship between the reduction of effort and F has been observed until now, the mechanism does not clearly quantify how changes in selectivity relate to increased effort. STECF concludes that it is difficult to quantitatively evaluate whether the CM will contribute achieving management objectives.

Compulsory implementation of gear selectivity

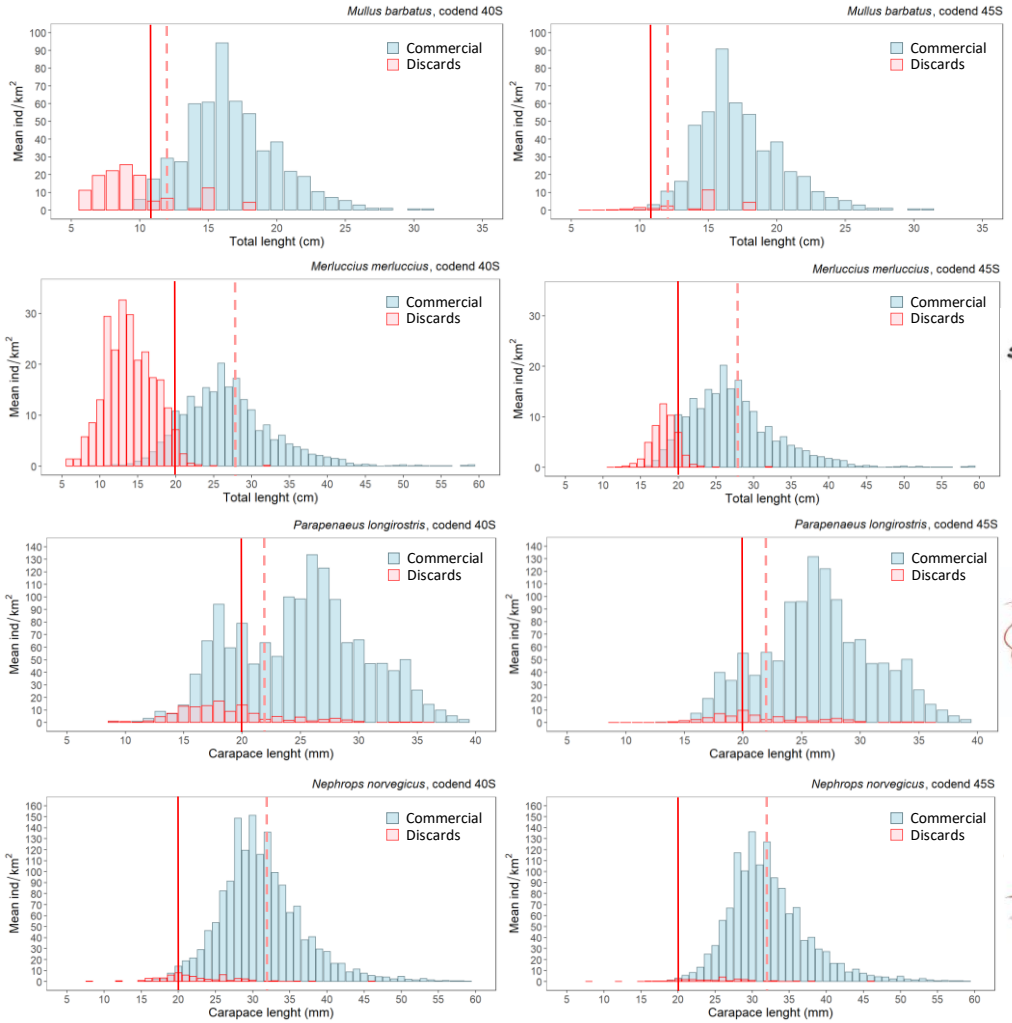


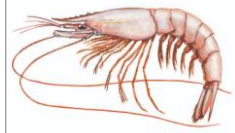
- **Compulsory in the spanish Mediterranean from June 1st 2025**
- Low implementation until now (low % compensation)
- Time is needed to evaluate the effect of this measure, especially in the case of long-lived species

Improvements on gear selectivity

40 mm

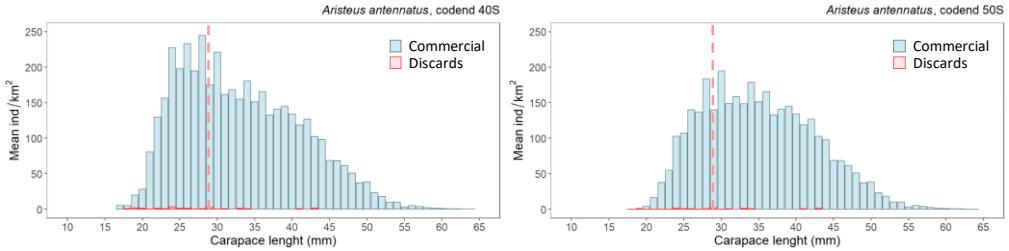
45 mm





40 mm

50 mm



MCRS for each species

Average of length at first maturity (L50)

STECF comments: Closures

Temporary closures will not allow restoring benthic habitats.

Closure 6w 100-500m (May-Sep):

- Risk of fleet displacement, probably to shallower grounds due to the ARA TAC. Small vessels are more affected for the difficulty of accessing deeper grounds.

Increase of fishing days 10%

[GSA 1,2,5-11] Closure 4w (May-Oct):

- Benefitial for ARA as spawners aggregate, but economically detrimental as it is the highest peak of the fishing season and may push effort later on the year when age 1 individuals start appearing.
- End of summer -> 2nd peak of HKE reproduction appears. Potentially benefitial for GSA 5-7, but not GSA 1, 8-11 (different seasonality)
- GSA9-11 already close in October.

Increase of fishing days 15%

National permanent closure area 5% 100-500m:

- Better permanent closures applied to all gears rather than temporary or only trawlers (Certain et al. 2023).

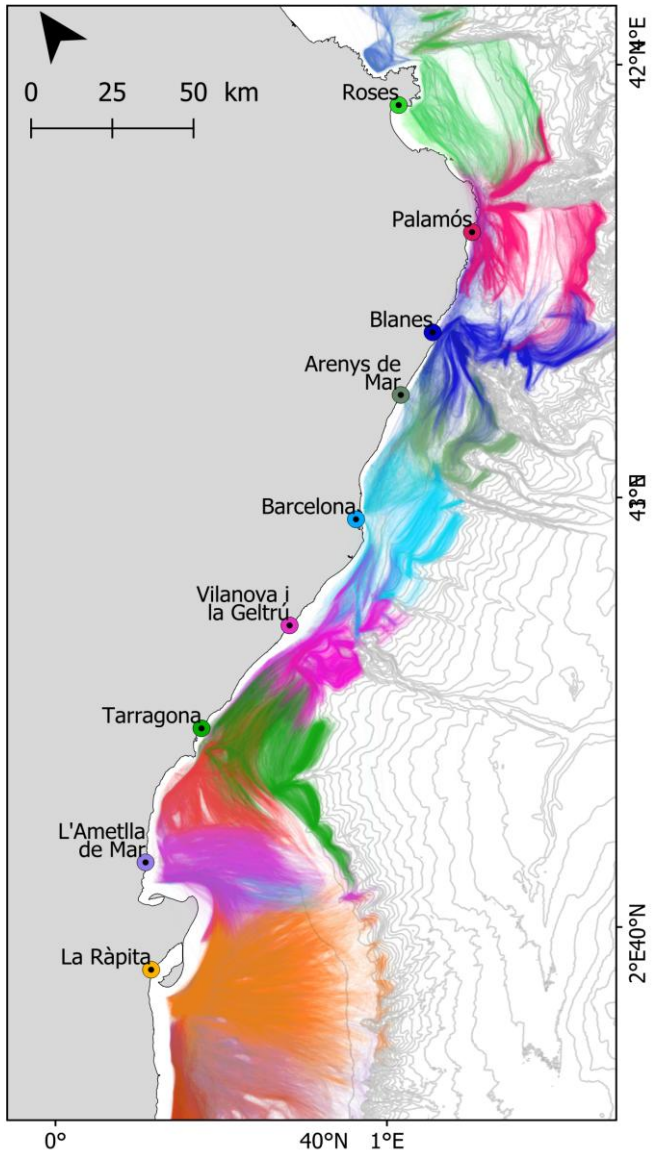
Increase of fishing days 4%

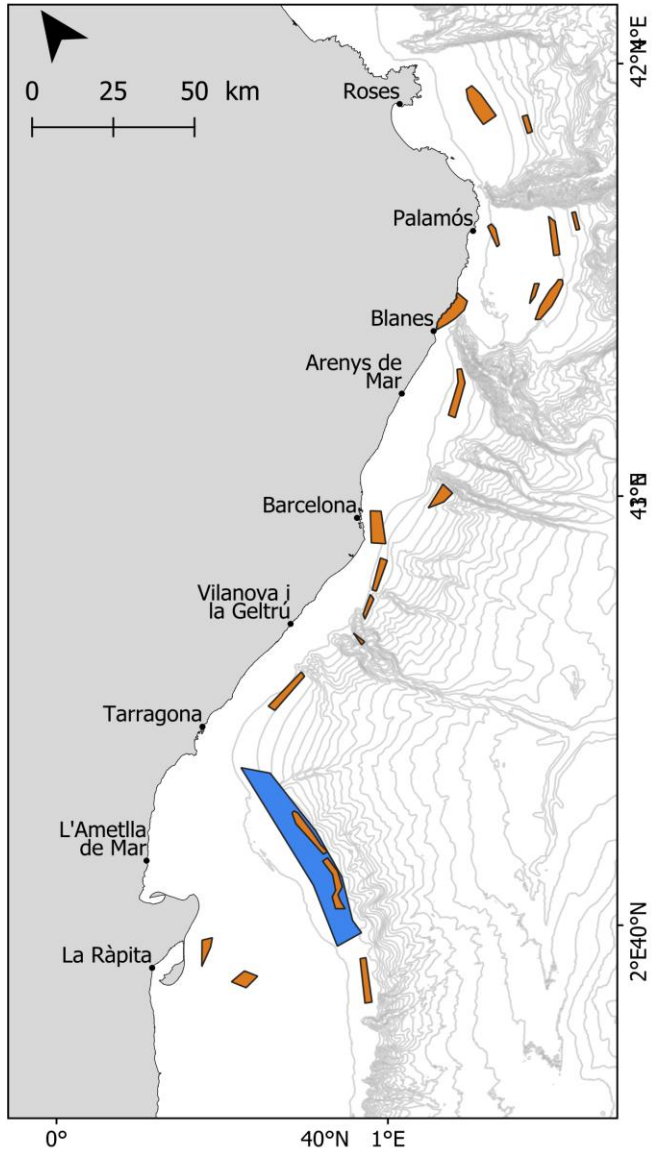
Temporary closure area for reduction 20% catch of hake spawners

- Not possible to identify spawning HKE aggregations with MEDITS. Not possible to evaluate effectiveness of the CM.

Increase of fishing days 13%

Permanent closure areas





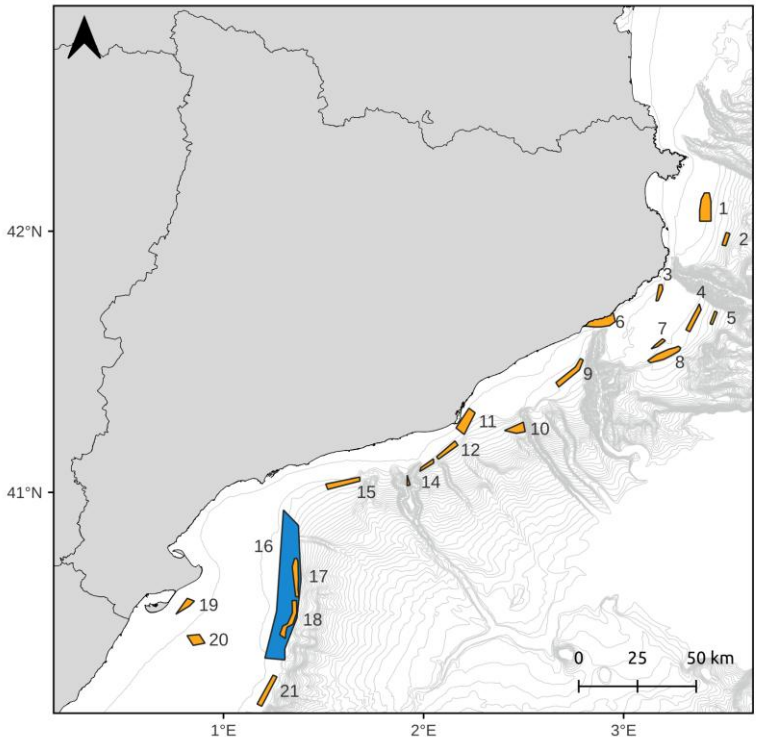
3.8% of the Catalan fishable area is permanently protected

The 800-1000 m band represents **10.3%** of the fishable area in Catalonia
Deeper than 1000 m: banned in 2010 (work done with WWF)

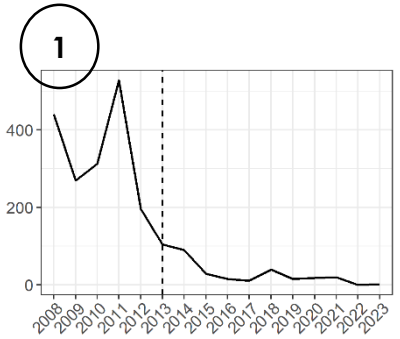
Increase of fishing days: 4%

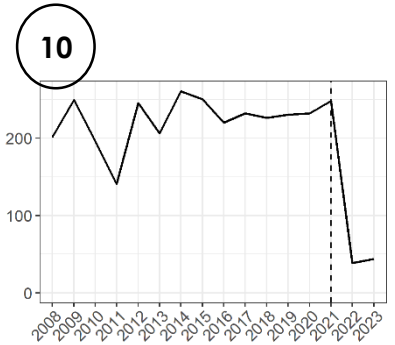
Increase of fishing days: 3%

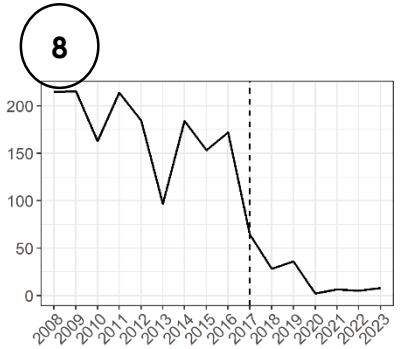
Permanent closure areas

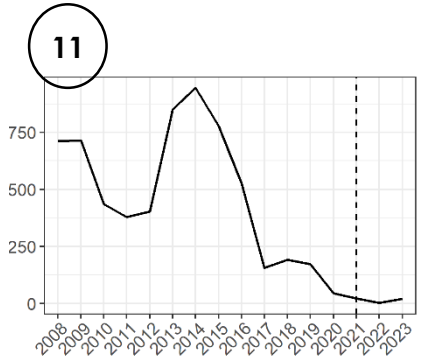


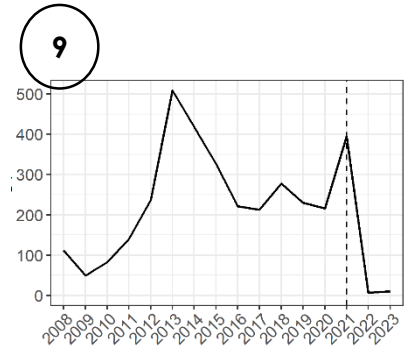
Fishing time (h/km2)

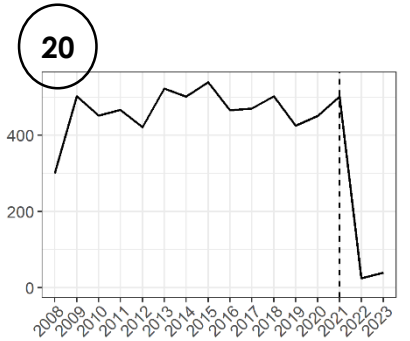








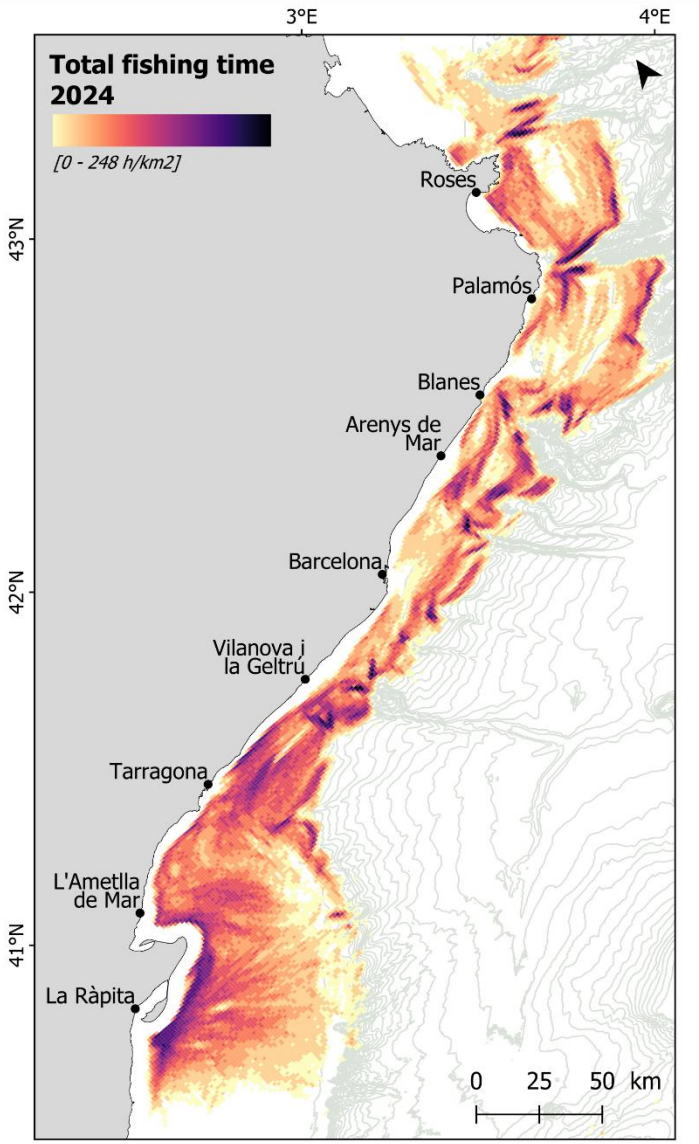




Increase of fishing days: 4%

Permanent closure areas

Increase of fishing days: 4%



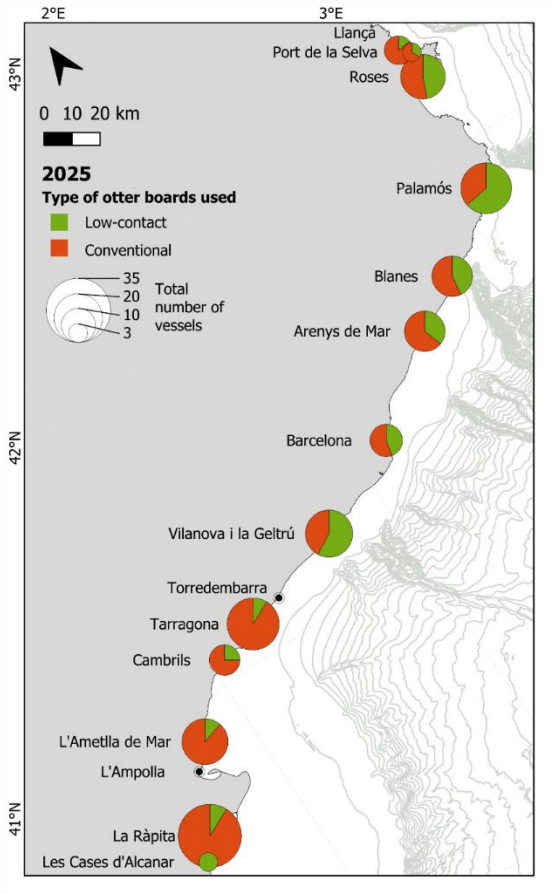
- Fisheries dynamics will sweep entire fishable area even with less vessels
- No-take areas are essential to population and ecosystem recovery
- Needs more incentives for implementation


Roses-Palamós, control (not protected)


Roses-Palamós, 5 years protected

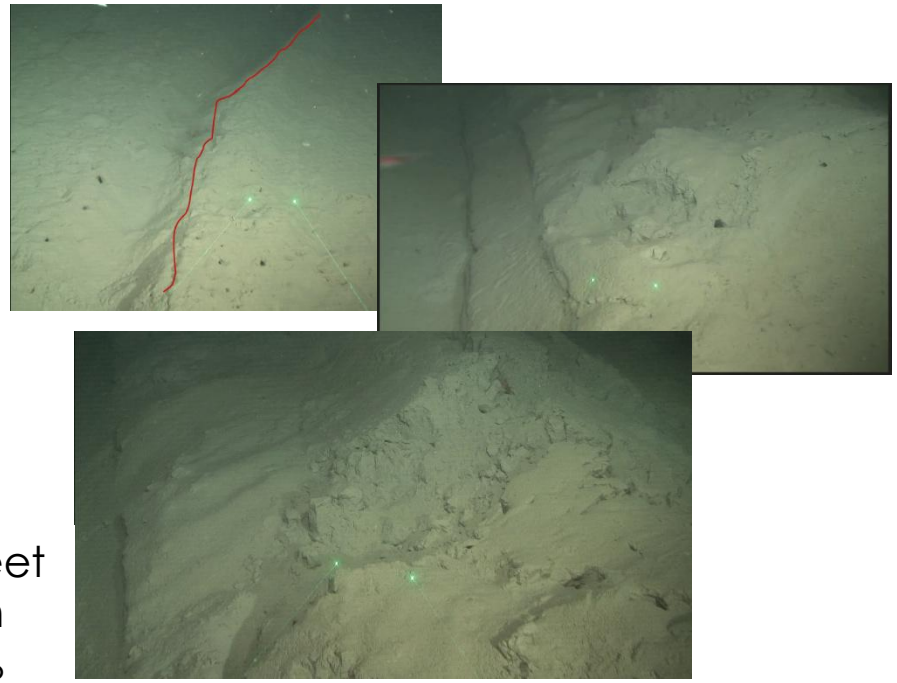
Low-contact otter boards

Increase of fishing days: 3%

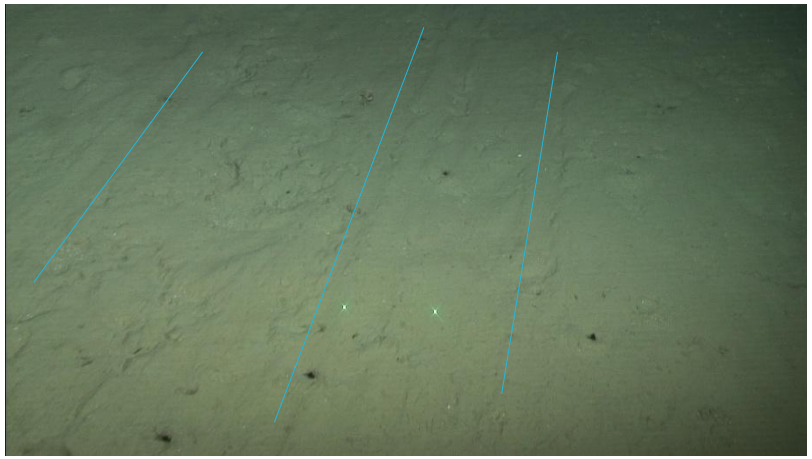


20.3% of the Catalan bottom trawl fleet was using low-contact otter boards in 2024. On April 2025 it reaches the 37% of the fleet.

- Difficulty of translating benefits of low-contact otter boards to reduction in fishing days
- Ecosystem recovery (habitat recovery, burrowing species)
- CFP calls for ecosystem-based management but low-contact otter boards get a little compensation



Conventional



Low-contact

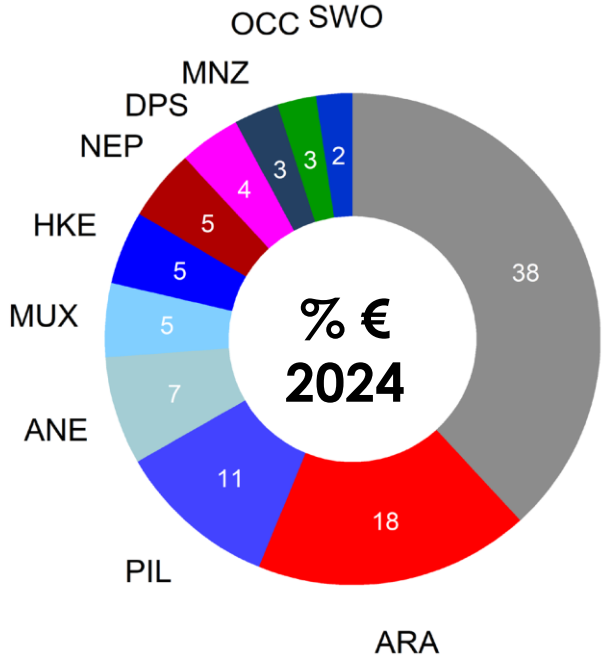
STECF general remarks

- It is difficult to assess the coherence between the effectiveness of compensation measures and the percentage of recovery days assigned.
- The overlap of different regulatory and compensation schemes with quotas complicates evaluation of individual impacts.
- Frequent redefinition of compensation mechanisms leads member states to adopt short-term, fragmented measures that reduce effectiveness.
- A longer time series of catch and effort data per vessel and country is needed to identify trends and fishing pattern changes linked to compensation mechanisms.
- Available data and information currently collected within the Data Collection Framework do not allow to assess the social impact of the implementation of CMs. Closed areas, gear changes and days at sea changes are likely to have social impacts such as safety at sea, change in job satisfaction and changes to family and community life (Clay and Colburn, 2020). Identifying data needs and criteria for social impact assessment is essential for effectively responding to current and future requests for advice.

Catch limit on blue and red shrimp

Management of the blue and red shrimp

- Fished in submarine canyons by largest vessels (20-28 m LOA)
- Deep-sea metier (smaller vessels favor coastal)
- Most important species in revenues
- No discards



Particularities of the fishery

- Recruitment at **> 800 m** (non-exploitable grounds)
- Dense shelf water cascading
- More **selective gear** in deep-sea fisheries
- Stock assessment results vary between models

Management measures affecting the fishery

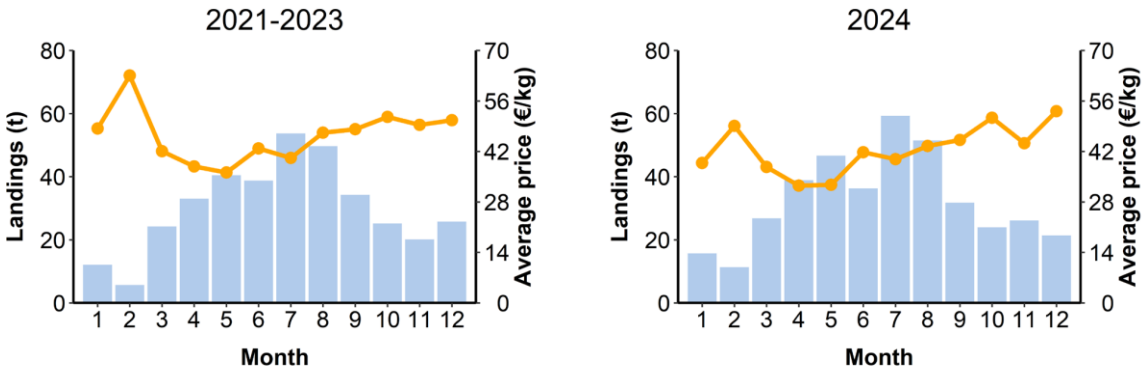
- Reduction of **fishing days**
- **Catch limit** on blue and red shrimp (Spain)
  - 2022: **872 t**
  - 2023: **828 t**
  - 2024: **787 t**
  - 2025: **708 t**

Stock	Source	Assessment method	B Ref. Point	F Ref. Point	Ref. Year	Area	Trend B	Trend F	Bcurr/B tgt	Fcurr/F tgt
ARA	GFCM WGSAD 24	SPICT	B/Bmsy	F/Fmsy	2023	GSA 1,5	⇧	⇩	above	below
	GFCM WGSAD 24	a4a	B/Bmsy	F/Fmsy	2023	GSA 6	⇳	⇩	below	above
	ICATMAR 25-06	SPiCT	B/Bmsy	F/Fmsy	2023 2024	GSA 6	⇧	⇩	above	below
	STECF EWG 24-10	a4a		F/Fmsy	2023	GSA 1-2		⇩		above
	STECF EWG 24-10	a4a	B/Bmsy	F/Fmsy	2023	GSA 5, 6-7	⇳	⇩	below	above

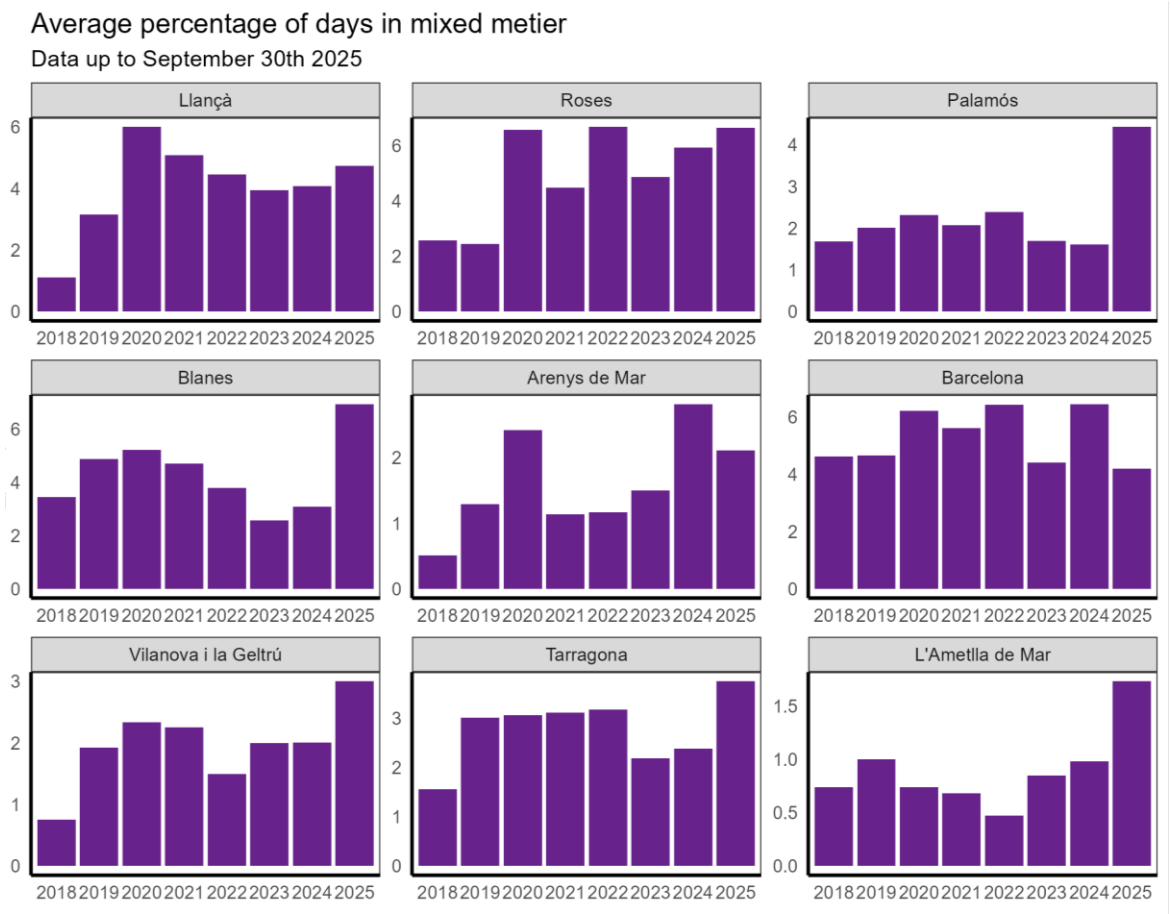
Management of the blue and red shrimp

Quota update N GSA 6 (30/09/2025)

Quota is at **94% before yearly peak in price** around Christmas



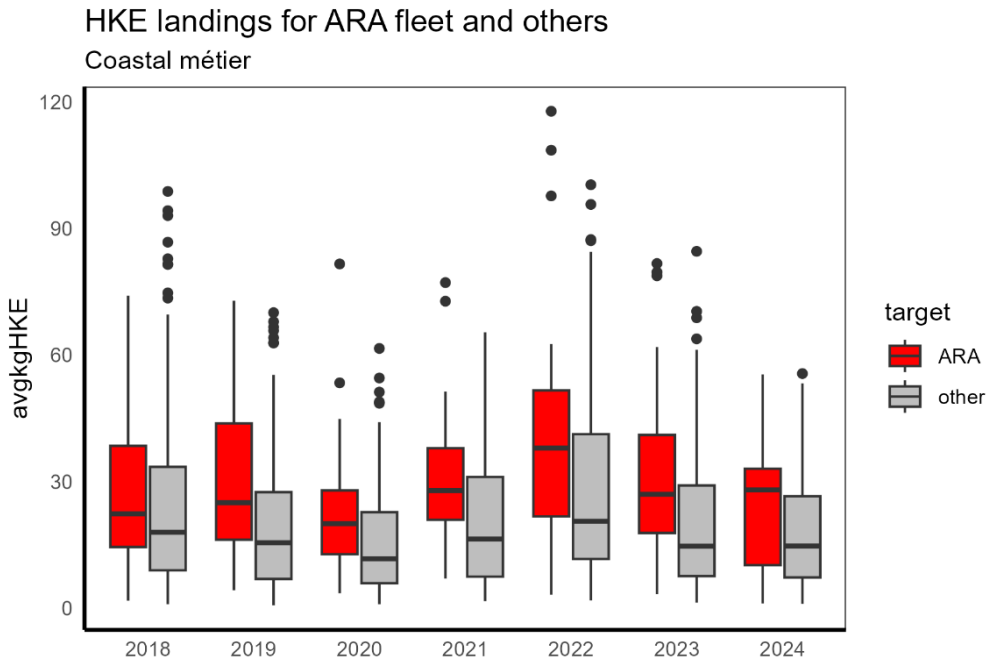
- Some ports are **changing fishing strategy** in favor of fishing over more coastal grounds, to avoid surpassing shrimp catch limit
- Usually largest vessels with a **higher fishing capacity** (20-28 m)
- Transformation Deep into coastal days

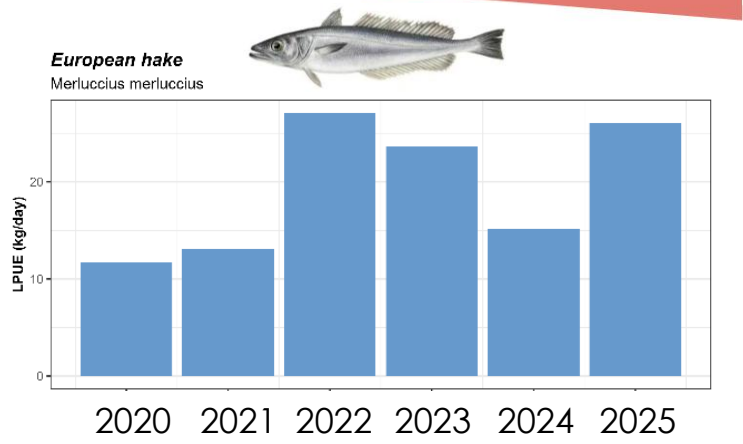


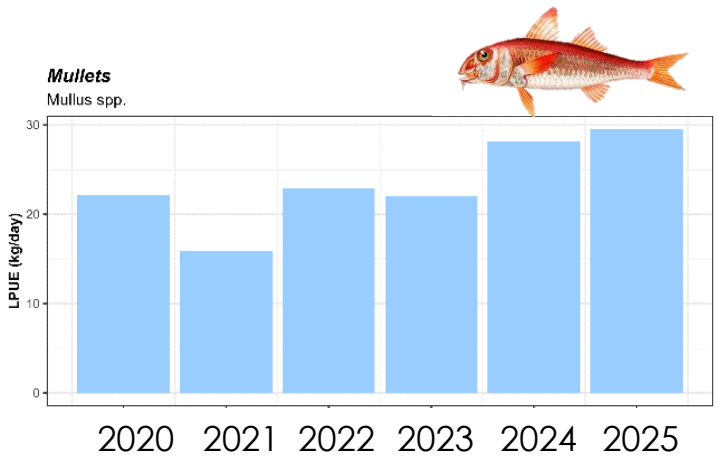
Management of the blue and red shrimp

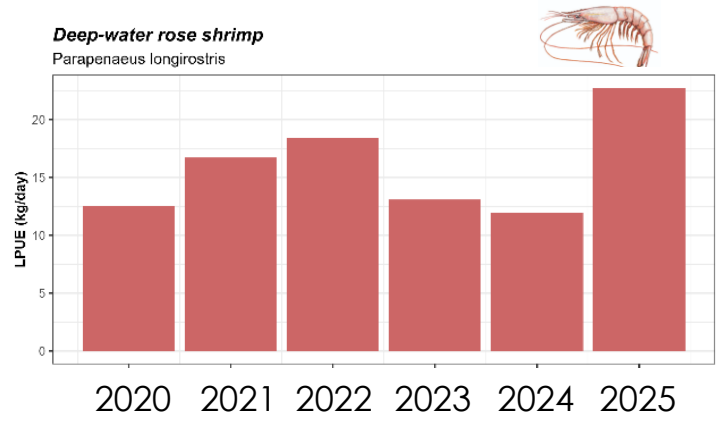
- Larger vessels catch more fish
- 2025 shows higher LPUE values for species of interest

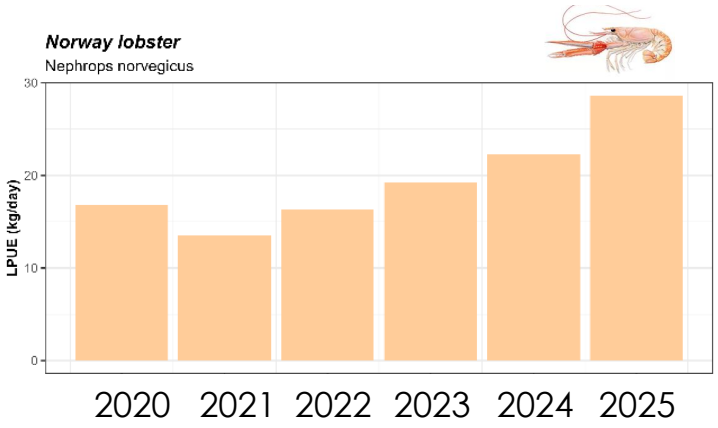
Landings Per Unit Effort January-September

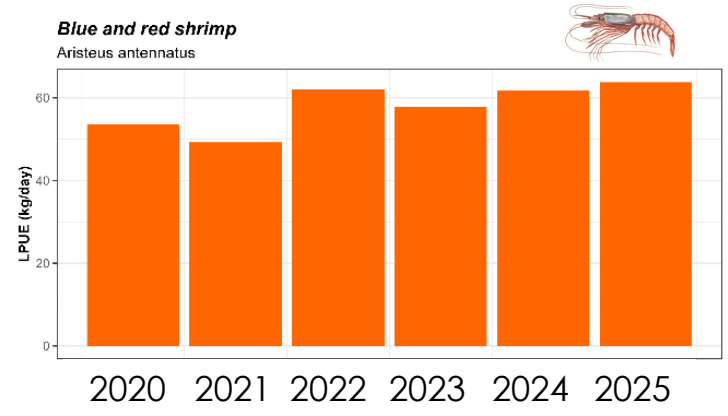












Key messages

- Compensation mechanisms require stronger commitment and clearer regulatory support from administrations to be effective. Incentives should be substantial enough to drive real implementation.
- Permanent closure areas and technological improvements (e.g., low-contact otter boards) are not adequately compensated relative to their ecological value.
- The continuity of compensations remains uncertain: will existing measures continue to receive support once they become part of the status quo?
- The recent quota on blue and red shrimp, combined with reduced fishing days, is having harmful consequences for the fishing system. It displaces the fleet toward coastal areas, increases effort, may encourage practices that were long absent and threatens the credibility of the data. Such measures should not be used as future management tools in the Mediterranean.
- Ongoing regulatory instability discourages investment in sustainable practices. A comprehensive review of the management system is needed.

Thank you

Jordi Ribera Altimir (jribera@icm.csic.es)
@jordiribe

icatmar.cat
@icatmar1
linkedin.com/company/icatmar
github.com/ICATMAR

Institut Català de Recerca per a la Governança del Mar

www.icatmar.cat

Co-funded by the European Union
Generalitat de Catalunya
CSIC Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
Institut de Ciències del Mar