

# Building a future for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

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Food and Agriculture  
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General Fisheries Commission  
for the Mediterranean  
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pour la Méditerranée



## CONCLUSIONS OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON “BUILDING A FUTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA”

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### Preamble

The Regional Conference on “Building a future for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” (7-9 March 2016, Algiers, Algeria) enjoyed the robust attendance of over 200 participants, which included policy-makers, scientists, practitioners, fishers representatives, fish workers, civil society organizations, NGOs, research institutions, international organizations and more. The conference was organized by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), including its Mediterranean regional projects, in collaboration with the Algerian Ministry for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries and in partnership with CIHEAM-Bari, MedPAN, and WWF.

In 2013, on the occasion of the First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (27-30 November 2013, Malta), the main challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of the small-scale fishery sector in this region were brought to the forefront. Since then, such issues have continued to gain prominence in discussions on small-scale fishery management in the context of the Blue Growth Initiative in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

This Regional Conference was conceived as a practical response to the outcomes of the Symposium in Malta, seeking to capitalize on the momentum already generated in order to offer a tangible strategy for the future sustainable development of this sector. Concrete case studies were carried out, which further explored key themes identified through the Symposium, and their results were presented in a format which deliberately sought to promote discussions, express opinions and share experiences in order to better grasp priorities and opportunities for this sector.

There is no doubt that small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea play a significant social and economic role. These fisheries constitute over 80 percent of the fishing fleet, employ at least 60 percent of total on-vessel fishing labour and account for approximately 25 percent of the total landing value from capture fisheries in the region. At their best, small-scale fisheries exemplify sustainable resource use: exploiting living marine resources in a way that minimizes environmental degradation while maximizing economic and social benefits. Yet concerted effort is needed to ensure that best practices become standard practice.

In recognition of this need for a concerted action for the sustainable development of the small-scale fishery sector, the Algerian Ministry for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries graciously offered to host the

Regional Conference with a view to mobilizing such an effort. This event perfectly aligned with the “Aquapêche 2020” strategy, recently launched by Algeria as a result of a nation-wide consultation process with all stakeholders and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the FAO. Consistent with Blue Growth principles, this strategy is also expected to provide a decisive contribution towards the promotion of sustainable small-scale fisheries, both at the national and regional level.

The following conclusions have been developed based on the outcomes of the Regional Conference. The conclusions are put forth to urge actions in support of sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and they are grouped, first, under a cluster of general and transversal proposals and, next, under five clusters relating to the specific thematic sessions of the conference.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In light of the UN Sustainable Development Goals which, among other issues, stress the importance of providing access for small-scale artisanal fisheries to marine resources and markets, the importance of the Regional Conference on “Building a future for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” was acknowledged. Widespread support was expressed by conference participants for the conference objectives to raise awareness, share knowledge, and devise future strategy to promote this crucial fishing sector.

In particular, the following general proposals were made:

- Tailor implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) to the Mediterranean and Black Sea context and provide support to GFCM contracting parties in the implementation of these guidelines.
- Launch a comprehensive and region-wide survey to develop accurate, timely and complete baseline data on the value and economic impact of small-scale fisheries, with a view to ultimately informing policy interventions.
- Launch wide-ranging consultations, including a mechanism for the sustainable development of the small-scale fishing sector and specific actions to develop coordinated policy to support this sector. To this end, implement a joint regional strategy which builds on existing regional networks and platforms and promotes a level playing field throughout the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- Develop a regional programme aiming to provide support and technical assistance, in particular to developing countries, in order to build capacity in the field of small-scale fisheries. Carry out at the national level, where necessary, an analysis of legislation and institutional mechanisms which ensure the full participation of small-scale fishers in all activities regarding the sustainable development of the sector (development of alternative activities, co-management, financial support, labelling, traceability, right to decent work, social protection, etc.)
- Build the political will to invest in small-scale fisheries as a crucial tool to transform fisheries management, particularly within the context of the Blue Growth initiative and the implementation of the reformed EU Common Fisheries Policy. It was suggested that the GFCM member countries, the European Commission and FAO provide joint leadership in this regard (i.e. through the organization of a high-level event).
- Disseminate the conclusions of the Regional Conference on “Building a future for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” to relevant international meetings, such as GFCM regular sessions, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and relevant European Union (EU) meetings.

## SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE PANELS

### *PANEL I – Supporting the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea under the Blue Growth perspective*

Blue Growth is a recent concept that seeks to create sustainable economic, environmental and social development in the aquatic environment. As Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries are dominated by small-scale fishing activities, if the exploitation of fish resources in these seas is to contribute to Blue Growth, then small-scale fishing will necessarily play an integral role in Blue Growth strategies.

In light of the discussions held during the panel, it is proposed to:

- Develop indicators to measure the economic and social impact of small-scale fishing, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. In particular, efforts should be made to estimate not only the value of the output produced by such fishing and its economic impact on coastal communities in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, but efforts should also be made to measure small-scale fishing's impact on related sectors such as fish processing and tourism. Furthermore, an analysis of the interaction of small-scale fishing with other sectors, particularly those also engaged in Blue Growth strategies (i.e. marine transportation, oil and gas, tourism, etc.), is needed for a better understanding of both the wider economic and social impacts of small-scale fishing, as well as, the risks these other sectors may pose to small-scale fishing communities.
- Examine the economic impact of small-scale fishing under different exploitation arrangements, with a view to identifying circumstances under which this activity might generate an investable surplus and undertake studies to estimate the potential size of this surplus. Similarly, efforts should be made to identify points of entry for technological, management, marketing and policy interventions that would facilitate the above-mentioned favourable circumstances.
- Identify relevant parameters – having acknowledged the need to develop a common definition of small-scale fisheries - for the classification of “small-scale fishing” in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, based on relevant regional characteristics (e.g. dimension of the vessel, gear used, activities of non-vessel based fisheries, etc.) and in relation to the harvested resources.
- Disseminate information on the effectiveness of the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) and promote its use as a data collection tool for small-scale fishing. Provide technical assistance in the practical application of the DCRF in the collection of standardized data on small-scale fishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- Produce a desk study on the social protection systems and national legislations in place and available to small-scale fishers in the Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian States, with a view to identifying and promoting the most successful options.
- Identify policy interventions which facilitate income and livelihood diversification for small-scale fishers. In particular, efforts should be made to identify opportunities for cross-over between the small-scale fishing and small-scale aquaculture sectors.
- Develop, in collaboration with GFCM members, a pilot programme that would test ways to both better integrate small-scale fisheries into a Blue Growth approach, as well as better integrate small-scale fisheries in the decision-making processes of other sectors whose Blue Growth activity may have an impact on small-scale fisheries.

## *PANEL II – Strengthening the role of stakeholders in the context of management and co-management schemes*

Acknowledging concrete evidence on how co-management can be an effective approach for both resolving conflicts and developing innovative solutions for the management of small-scale fisheries, key actions were identified that would create enabling conditions for the institutionalization of stakeholder engagement through co-management schemes. Such key actions include the need for stronger investment in capacity building, both for institutions and for fisher organizations, and the need for a better understanding of legal and institutional frameworks that allow for the participation of fishers in fisheries management. The panel stressed that while Blue Growth presents important opportunities for small-scale fisheries, the effects of Blue Growth in other sectors may also present a risk to these fisheries. Stronger organization and co-management initiatives are needed in order to guard against such risks.

In light of the discussions held during the panel, the following actions are proposed:

- Conduct an analysis to assess national and international legal frameworks with a view to identifying institutional contexts that allow for the establishment of small-scale fisheries co-management schemes and with a view to defining general rules for the engagement and compliance of small-scale fishers with these schemes.
- Prepare best practice guidelines for the enforcement of small-scale fisheries co-management schemes in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Such guidelines should be linked directly to the SSF Guidelines and, in addition to providing advice on the institutional and legislative context, should provide direction for the elaboration and implementation of participatory processes, co-management settings and tools, approaches for monitoring, control and surveillance schemes and indicators to monitor the effectiveness of management measures.
- Provide support to currently ongoing co-management processes in the Mediterranean and build commitment for their multiplication across the region. A regional programme, based on a solid institutional framework and building on existing experiences and partnerships, should be established to offer a longer-term vision on how co-management can benefit small-scale fisheries at the regional scale.
- Map fishing activities in order to provide relevant information to be integrated into marine spatial planning processes. Such processes are crucial to securing tenure rights and access to the resources for small-scale fishers, and thus ensuring livelihoods and the sustainable development of communities reliant on small-scale fisheries. The GFCM, on behalf of its member countries, should advocate for this issue at a high-level with the European Commission, prior to the commencement of the marine spatial planning processes.
- Establish a capacity building programme devoted to supporting stakeholder roles in small-scale fisheries co-management and tailored to different targets (institutional, marine protected areas administration, local administrations, natural and social scientists, civil society, small-scale fishers and other resource users).

### *PANEL III – Improving the efficiency of marine protected areas (MPAs) as fisheries management tools and benefits from involving the small-scale fisheries sector*

Recognising the priority socio-economic and environmental challenges for the management of marine ecosystems, marine protected areas (MPAs) offer a potential solution to concurrently address a multiplicity of issues. Indeed, an important strategy for reconciling conservation and sustainability objectives is the integration of the small-scale fisheries sector into management decisions in and around MPAs. Action must be taken at the local and national levels in view of reaching international and regional agreements. Such action can be effected by decision makers, MPA managers, fishers, scientists and the private sector.

In light of the discussions held during the panel, it is proposed to:

- Adapt and draw lessons from the experience of MPAs with no take zones and regulated buffer zones that have been successful in involving fishers in management decisions and in processes that both safeguard wild resources, while also preserving the livelihoods upon which small-scale fishers depend. Given the socio-economic benefits obtained by small-scale fishers in these exemplary MPAs, learning from such cases would provide guidance on how to sustain economic, social and cultural aspects of the profession. To support replication of these successful MPAs, adequate legal frameworks, political will and financial and human capital would be required.
- Replicate examples of collaboration at the inter- and intra-ministerial level that demonstrate the successful management of small-scale fisheries in and around MPAs when working “hand in hand”. Such integrative models could encourage top-down and bottom-up processes in many riparian countries for securing the future sustainability of the profession, while also providing international technical guidance.
- Improve the management of MPAs, including multiple use MPAs, by relying on the scientific and traditional knowledge of fishers, by involving concerned users/stakeholders and by using adaptive approaches. To this end:
  - Tailor management in light of the outcomes of long term comparative monitoring of biological features, ecological effects of small-scale fisheries and socio-economic benefits in and outside MPAs
  - Develop adaptive participatory approaches for management plans for small-scale fisheries in and around MPAs, based on biological and socio-economic data, which could be jointly formulated, implemented and revised by MPA practitioners and fishers.
  - Adopt regulations to overcome conflicting uses of MPAs which could have a negative impact on the livelihood of small-scale fisheries, having regard to relevant conservation objectives
  - Consider participative management, in cases of use conflicts, specifically those between small-scale fisheries and recreational fisheries, to create a balance between the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries and, where applicable, the sustainable development of responsible tourism, so as to achieve conservation objectives.
- Consider conservation efforts, and MPAs in particular, as an investment in natural capital rather than as a public expenditure. As such, efforts should be made to protect this investment from risks, such as conflicting marine-based activities and land-based pollution.
- Safeguard the small-scale fisheries sector in and around MPAs, including by setting up cooperatives, through strategies that are integrated in development plans devised by local authorities and that provide a market edge in favour of responsible and sustainable fisheries practices.

## *PANEL IV – Enhancing small-scale fisheries value chains*

The value chain of small-scale fisheries is enhanced by a favourable environment where fishers are strongly connected with other local actors, including public and private institutions and even consumers. This permits the creation of competitive economic clusters, which can foster the development of coastal communities. Clustering must be encouraged, eliminating all possible bottlenecks. In the case of SSF in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, four relevant areas of intervention have been identified: sustainability aspects (including governance and MPAs), marketing strategies (quality aspects), inter-sectoral integration and provision of infrastructures and services (in particular, access to markets and credit).

In light of the discussions held during the panel, it is proposed to:

- Identify best practices for value creation, especially in the fields of labelling, direct sale, processing, diversification, inter-sectoral integration and vertical coordination. Additional case studies should be carried out to further examine such best practice interventions and to promote their replication in various Mediterranean and Black Sea contexts.
- Model successful value chains, particularly in cases where clustering of various coastal economic activities occurs, to identify entry points for innovation and to better understand the scope for fisher cooperation in resource management and in product marketing.
- Establish a capacity building programme to support stakeholder roles in the creation of cooperatives, formulation of agreements with public and private institutions, development of partnerships and projects for coastal development.
- Better study and analyse issues related both to credit and financial institution support. Public institutions should provide basic infrastructures and services to foster value chains and to prevent market failure. Access to formal finance is a crucial concern. This includes access to both formal credit for capital expenses and financing for fishing operations. Facilities and financial products can be developed in partnership with banks for medium to long-term investment. Formal financing schemes (production contracts, storage receipts) can be applied with the participation of fishers, traders and public authorities.

## ***PANEL V – Putting the principles of the SSF Guidelines into practice: the case of the Mediterranean and Black Sea***

The SSF Guidelines constitute an important tool for supporting actions to securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. These guidelines take a holistic perspective on the needs of small-scale fisheries and recognize that the implementation of these guidelines will necessarily be cross-sectoral. With a view to adapting these guidelines to the regional context, key elements to operationalize the principles of the SSF guidelines were explored: (i) Policy and legal frameworks; (ii) Main stakeholders; (iii) Institutional structures; (iv) Key entry points; and (v) Collaboration with other initiatives. The panel noted the importance of action at the local level and the need for effective participation of fishing communities. There are already positive developments taking place in the region in support of the SSF Guidelines implementation, e.g. the existence of regional organisations and platforms such as the Maghreb Platform for sustainable small-scale fisheries, the Mediterranean Platform of Artisanal Fishers (MedArtNet), Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) and the Mediterranean Advisory Council (MEDAC), and the development of national policies and initiatives (e.g., Aquapêche 2020 in Algeria, SSF national action plan proposals in EU countries).

In light of the discussions held during the panel, it is proposed to:

- Establish a GFCM working group on small-scale fisheries to facilitate the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in the GFCM region by developing national action plans and taking into account recommendations from relevant events and existing experience within the region and beyond.
- Strengthen the GFCM engagement with small-scale fishing communities by establishing a mechanism for supporting organisational development and agreeing on a modus operandi for meaningful collaboration. In particular, FAO's work on small-scale fisheries should be taken into account and special efforts should be made to collaborate with existing small-scale fisheries organizations and platforms, as well as to include women and marginalized groups in such collaboration.
- Promote, without compromising environmental sustainability, the improvement of socio-economic conditions within small-scale fisheries, particularly through the promotion of livelihood diversification as appropriate, and the endorsement of the principle of decent work, as defined by the Work in Fishing Convention (C188) of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Furthermore, ratification of this convention by GFCM member countries should be encouraged.
- Promote and facilitate the development of a forum for small-scale fisheries associations of northern and southern Mediterranean riparian countries, particularly through specific projects financed by member countries or by other international, governmental or non-governmental entities.

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