

Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/1
establishing further precautionary and emergency measures in 2016 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18)

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

RECALLING that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING that, according to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), states should widely apply the precautionary approach to the conservation, management and exploitation of marine living resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment, and highlighting besides that the lack of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/27/2002/1 on the management of selected demersal and small pelagic species and, notably, paragraph 2 therein;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/30/2006/1 on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and small pelagic species and, notably, paragraphs 2 and 3 therein;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 on a multiannual management plan for fisheries exploiting small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 17 (northern Adriatic Sea) and on transitional conservation measures for fisheries exploiting small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 18 (southern Adriatic Sea);

CONSIDERING Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1 on precautionary and emergency measures for 2015 on small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 17 and amending Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1;

NOTING that for anchovy in geographical subarea (GSA) 17, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) at its seventeenth session (FAO headquarters, March 2015) has considered the status of the stock as overexploited and in overexploitation for two consecutive years and that it recently advised to reduce fishing mortality immediately;

NOTING that the latest stock assessment of anchovy indicates a declining trend in spawning stock biomass (SSB) since 2005;

NOTING that for sardine in GSA 17, the SAC has considered the status of the stock as in overexploitation and advised to reduce its fishing mortality;

RECALLING that the SAC has considered that the stocks of anchovy and sardine are distributed in GSA 17 and GSA 18;

NOTING that, due to the instability of the stock assessment model, the SAC recommended a comprehensive revision of the input data, including the reference points under Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1;

CONSIDERING that, pending the revision of input data and reference points, as for 2015, additional measures for 2016 shall be taken to reduce fishing mortality for anchovy and sardine;

NOTING that since temporal restrictions are considered to have a beneficial effect on fisheries, a closed season during the spawning season of anchovy in the Adriatic Sea shall be applied;

NOTING that hydroacoustic surveys have the potential of providing the latest biomass estimates and that their results can support management decisions;

NOTING that, under Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1, a reduction of the fishing effort as well as spatio-temporal closures are being applied in 2015 for vessels fishing small pelagic stocks in GSA 17;

ADOPTS, in conformity with Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

Reduction of fishing mortality in the Adriatic Sea

1. For the year 2016, the contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs), whose vessels have been fishing small pelagic stocks in GSA 17, shall reduce the fishing effort established under paragraph 27 of Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1. To this end, by way of derogation from the provisions of paragraph 27, Part VI, for the year 2016, each fishing vessel targeting anchovy shall not exceed 144 fishing days per year.
2. For the year 2016, in order to protect nursery and spawning areas, the CPCs shall apply spatio-temporal closures of no less than 15 continuous days and up to 30 continuous days for vessels fishing small pelagic stocks in GSA 17 and GSA 18. These closures shall be designated in waters under their jurisdiction and shall take place between 1 April and 31 August.
3. The CPCs shall notify the GFCM Secretariat, by 30 November 2015, of the closure dates.
4. National control programmes established under paragraph 29 of Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 shall be adapted accordingly.

Review of the management plan

5. The SAC shall organize, in 2015, a specific technical meeting to review input data and propose revised targets based on fishing mortality at the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) level – or using the exploitation rate as a proxy – and SSB, as well as the reference points of the management plan. The SAC shall assist in setting up a joint assessment for both small pelagic stocks covering the Adriatic Sea (GSA 17 and GSA 18).
6. For the purpose of paragraph 5, the SAC shall assess the biological, economic and social implications of implementing several management scenarios with the objective of restoring and maintaining the populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the MSY. To this end, the SAC shall also consult its Subcommittee on Economic and Social Sciences.
7. The SAC shall propose alternatives to make the results of the hydroacoustic surveys of the previous year available during the first month of the year.
8. Based on the SAC advice, the GFCM shall review, and if necessary adapt, the content of the management plan in 2017.