

**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)**

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* 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* the Guidelines on a general management framework and presentation of scientific information for multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in the GFCM area of application, agreed during its thirty-sixth session (Morocco, May 2012);

*NOTING* that, for anchovy and sardine in geographical subarea (GSA) 17 (northern Adriatic Sea), the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) has recurrently advised not to increase the fishing effort and the fishing mortality although the fishery is considered sustainable;

*NOTING* the strong changes that occurred in 2010 concerning the assessment of the status of the small pelagic stocks in GSA 17 which, with a view to drawing the attention of scientists, call for the setting up of an agreed multiannual management system at the multilateral level;

*NOTING* that, for anchovy and sardine stocks in GSA 18 (southern Adriatic Sea), the SAC is not yet in a position to provide a formal assessment;

*CONSIDERING* that fishing mortality should be kept below safe thresholds to ensure long-term high yields while limiting the risk of stock collapse and guaranteeing stable and more viable fisheries;

*CONSIDERING* that the small pelagic fishery is multispecies and that management decisions should therefore be taken considering at least both sardine and anchovy;

*CONSIDERING* that small pelagic stocks play a fundamental ecological role in transmitting biomass and energy from short trophic webs towards higher trophic levels;

*CONSIDERING* the socio-economic importance of fisheries exploiting small pelagic stocks and the need to ensure their sustainability;

*CONSIDERING* that certain fisheries management measures need to be revised and adapted to the evolution of both the status of exploited stocks and scientific knowledge and that an appropriate method to this end shall be established;

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

## PART I

### General objectives, scope and definitions

#### General objectives of the multiannual plan

1. A multiannual management plan for the fisheries exploiting the small pelagic stocks in GSA 17 shall be developed, consistent with the precautionary approach. It shall be designed to provide high long-term yields consistent with the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and to guarantee a low risk of stock collapse while maintaining sustainable and relatively stable fisheries.
2. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) whose vessels have been actively fishing small pelagic stocks including, *inter alia*, sardine and anchovy in GSA 17 agree to implement such a multiannual management plan for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with the general and specific objectives and measures set by this recommendation.
3. A set of transitional precautionary management measures for the fisheries exploiting the small pelagic stocks in GSA 18 shall be developed in order to ensure that, pending formal scientific advice by the SAC, the stocks and fisheries are kept out of undesirable status.
4. The CPCs whose vessels have been actively fishing for the small pelagic stocks including, *inter alia*, sardine and anchovy in GSA 18 agree to implement such transitional management measures for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with the general and specific objectives set by this recommendation.

#### Geographical scope

5. The multiannual management plan provided by the present recommendation shall apply to GSA 17 as defined in Resolution GFCM/33/2009/2 on the establishment of geographical subareas in the GFCM area of application, amending Resolution GFCM/31/2007/2, which lies northward to the straight line connecting the point of 41° 55' N and 15° 08' E on the Italian coastline and the terrestrial border between Croatia and Montenegro.
6. The set of transitional measures provided by the present recommendation shall apply to GSA 18 as defined in Resolution GFCM/33/2009/2 which lies from the coastlines 41° 55' N and 15° 08' E (Croatia-Montenegro border) and 40° 04' N and 18° 29' (Albania-Greece border).

#### Definitions

7. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
  - a) "Vessel actively fishing for small pelagic stocks" means any vessel equipped with either trawl nets, purse seiners or other types of surrounding nets where the total catch of small pelagic stocks of sardine and anchovy account for at least 50 percent of the catch in live weight.
  - b) "Fishing day" means any continuous period of 24 hours, or part thereof, during which a vessel is present within GSA 17 and/or GSA 18 and is searching for fish, shooting, setting, towing, hauling a fishing gear, taking catch on board, transshipping, retaining on board, processing on board, transferring and landing fish and fishery products.

## PART II

### Specific objectives of the multiannual management plan for GSA 17 and of the transitional measures for GSA 18

8. Pending the identification of target reference points in line with the MSY, the general objectives of the plan set out in paragraph 1 above shall be attained while maintaining:
  - a) the exploitation rate  $E (=F/Z)$  at less than 0.4 per year on appropriate age groups both for anchovy and sardine stocks, while considering that the average natural mortality over the same age groups is of 0.81 for anchovy and 0.76 for sardine.

- b) precautionary mid-year spawning stock biomass (SSB) levels, estimated in a manner consistent with the same methodology, above 109 200 tonnes for sardine and 250 600 tonnes for anchovy (hereinafter SSBpa).
  - c) the levels of fishing fleet capacity and fishing effort at the levels authorized and exerted in 2011 for the exploitation of small pelagic stocks in GSA 17.
9. In the event that the mid-year SSB level falls below 179 000 tonnes for anchovy or 78 000 tonnes for sardine (hereinafter SSBlim), the procedure under paragraph 16 e) shall apply.
10. The objective of the transitional measures for the small pelagic fishery in GSA 18 is to start preparing the ground for a future management plan while reducing the risk that, in the absence of relevant scientific assessment, the biomass level of the stock could drop below undesirable values with negative consequences also on the economic viability of the fisheries concerned.

### **PART III**

#### **Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the plan**

11. CPCs shall ensure adequate annual scientific monitoring of the status of small pelagic stocks in GSAs 17 and 18, in particular that of sardine and anchovy as well as of the other fisheries concerned.
12. SAC shall provide advice on an annual basis on the status of small pelagic stocks (sardine and anchovy) in GSA 17, including catch forecasts in line with the precautionary approach and the MSY, and in GSA 18.
13. Based on the SAC advice, the GFCM may review the content of the multiannual management plan.
14. Whenever the GFCM, on the basis of the advice provided by the SAC, finds that the fishing mortality or the exploitation rates and associated SSB levels, specified in paragraph 8, are no longer appropriate to achieve the objectives indicated in paragraph 1 above, it shall revise those exploitation rates and/or biomass levels accordingly.
15. When the SAC advice indicates that the general or specific objectives of the multiannual management plan are not being met, the GFCM shall decide on additional and/or alternative management measures to ensure that those objectives are met.

### **PART IV**

#### **Management measures**

16. a) When the SAC considers that the mid-year SSB levels will continue to be equal to or greater than 109 200 tonnes for sardine and 250 600 tonnes for anchovy in the subsequent year and the exploitation rate is lower than 0.4, the fishing effort for small pelagic species, both in terms of capacity and fishing activity, shall be maintained at the level of 2011.
- b) When the SAC considers that the mid-year SSB levels will continue to be equal to or greater than 109 200 tonnes for sardine and 250 600 tonnes for anchovy in the subsequent year and the exploitation rate is higher than 0.4, then GFCM shall decide on the modalities to ensure that there is an adequate adaptation of the fishing effort with respect to the fishing effort exerted in the previous year, either in terms of capacity and/or fishing activity, for small pelagic species.
- c) When the SAC considers that the size of the stock is below the precautionary mid-year SSB levels of 109 200 tonnes for sardine and 250 600 tonnes for anchovy and above or equal to the biomass limit reference point, as set in paragraph 9 above, the GFCM shall decide on the modalities to ensure that the fishing effort exerted the previous year, either in terms of capacity and/or fishing activity, is adapted according to the highest ratio, among the two species, of the difference between the precautionary and the current biomass levels with respect to the difference

between the precautionary biomass level and the minimum biomass acceptable level ( $(SSB_{pa} - SSB_{curr}) / (SSB_{pa} - SSBlim)$ ).

d) When the SAC considers that the size of the stock of one of the two species (either anchovy or sardine) is above the biomass threshold reference point ( $SSB_{pa}$ ) while the current size of the stock of the other species is between the biomass limit reference point ( $SSBlim$ ) and the biomass threshold reference point ( $SSB_{pa}$ ), the GFCM shall decide on the modalities to ensure that the fishing effort exerted the previous year by small pelagic fishing fleets, either in terms of capacity and/or fishing activity, shall:

i. remain unchanged if the stock size is greater than halfway between the  $SSBlim$  and  $SSB_{pa}$

*or*

ii. be adapted according to the difference between the precautionary and the current biomass levels with respect to the difference between the precautionary biomass level and the minimum biomass acceptable level ( $(SSB_{pa} - SSB_{curr}) / (SSB_{pa} - SSBlim)$ ).

e) When the SAC considers that the size of the stock of one of the two species (either anchovy or sardine) is above the biomass threshold reference point ( $SSB_{pa}$ ) while the size of the stock of the other species is below the biomass limit reference point ( $SSBlim$ ), the GFCM shall decide on the emergency measures to be taken in order to ensure a recovery of the stock, including the closure of the fishery. Such decision shall take into account the evaluation by the SAC of the different alternative management scenarios as well as the market and socio-economic consequences that these scenarios could imply.

f) When, for whatever reason (e.g. lack of appropriate data), the SAC is not in a position to provide an accurate advice on the status of small pelagic stocks and on the exploitation levels, the GFCM shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to take in order to ensure sustainability of the fishery. These measures shall be based on SAC recommendations, taking into consideration the socio-economic elements pertaining to the relevant fishery. The revocation of these measures shall be subject to the availability of appropriate scientific advice.

17. As from 2015 and based on the assessment made by the SAC on the impact of management measures referred to under paragraph 16 a) to f), the GFCM may consider adopting additional measures when necessary, including on catch limitations, to achieve the objectives of this plan for small pelagic fisheries in GSAs 17 and 18.

## PART V

### Technical conservation measures

18. Fishing for fry of small pelagic stocks shall be prohibited with all types of fishing gear in GSA 17 and GSA 18.

19. Anchovy and sardine smaller than the minimum conservation size in total length, as reported below, shall not be caught, retained on board, transhipped, transferred, stored, sold, displayed or offered for sale:

Anchovy	9 cm
Sardine	11 cm

The minimum conservation size in total length may be converted into 110 specimens per kg of anchovy and 55 specimens per kg of sardine. Specimens which are smaller than the minimum conservation size are hereafter named “undersized specimens”.

20. The areas of aggregation of anchovy and sardine juveniles in their first year of life shall be protected from fishing activities with fishing gear suitable to catch them. CPCs shall communicate to

the GFCM Secretariat the areas and period protected under this scope by making reference to the GFCM statistical grids as established by Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1.

21. Notwithstanding paragraph 19, when, due to unavoidable circumstances, undersized specimens of anchovy and/or sardine are effectively caught, the master of the catching vessel shall record those catches of undersized specimens (estimated weight and number) in a specific section of the logbook. Without prejudice to the provisions foreseen in paragraph 19 and when a system to avoid discards and an obligation to land all catches is established by a CPC, the master of the fishing vessel shall not be allowed to discard those catches and shall therefore land the fish caught, independently of the size of the fish caught, in line with the provisions stipulated by the CPC. All quantities landed shall be recorded and shall not be displayed, offered for sale or used for human consumption.

CPCs implementing a landing obligation scheme shall notify its content and characteristics to the GFCM Secretariat in advance of the subsequent GFCM annual session with a view to informing the other parties.

## **PART VI**

### **Fishing effort and fish capacity control**

22. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 November 2013, the list of all trawlers (single and pair trawlers), purse seiners and surrounding nets without purse line authorized to fish for small pelagic stocks and registered in harbours located in GSAs 17 and 18 or operating in GSA 17 and/or 18 although registered in harbours located in other GSAs on 31 October 2013 (hereinafter referred to as the reference fishing capacity for small pelagic stocks).

Trawlers and purse seiners are classified as fishing actively for small pelagic stocks when sardine and/or anchovy account for at least 50 percent of the catch in live weight.

For each vessel, the list shall contain the information referred to in Annex 1.

23. Any fishing vessel not included in the list established under paragraph 22 above shall not be allowed to fish for, or retain on board or land any quantity greater than 20 percent of anchovy and/or sardine if the vessel is engaged on a fishing trip in GSA 17 and/or GSA 18.

24. CPCs shall promptly notify the GFCM Secretariat of any addition to, any deletion from and/or any modification of the fishing fleets, as identified under paragraph 22 above, authorized to operate for small pelagic stocks in GSA 17 and/or GSA 18, whenever such changes occur.

25. The GFCM Secretariat shall keep the list of fishing vessels authorized to fish for small pelagic stocks in GSA 17 and/or GSA 18 up-to-date and make it available on the GFCM website, in line with the confidentiality requirements of the CPCs.

26. CPCs shall ensure that the overall fleet capacity of trawlers and purse seiners actively fishing for small pelagic stocks in GSA 17, in terms of gross tonnage (GT) and in engine power (kW), as recorded both in the national and in the GFCM fleet registers, never exceed the reference fishing capacity for small pelagic stocks as established under paragraph 22 above.

27. Trawlers and purse seiners fishing for small pelagic stocks as identified in paragraph 22 second sub-paragraph above, irrespective of the length overall of the vessels, shall not operate for more than 20 fishing days per month and shall not exceed 180 fishing days per year.

28. Each CPC shall ensure to set up adequate mechanisms in terms of recording each fishing vessel in a national fleet register, recording the catches and fishing effort of the vessels via both the logbook and the remote sensing and monitoring of the activities and landings of the fishing vessels through catch and effort sampling surveys, according to the rules stipulated by each CPC.

The above sub-paragraph is without prejudice to Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application.

## **PART VII**

### **National programmes of control, monitoring and surveillance**

29. National control programmes for the implementation of the provisions of this recommendation shall be established by the concerned CPCs through specific plans. These plans shall contain the elements listed in Annex 2 and ensure, *inter alia*, a proper and accurate monitoring and recording of the monthly catches and fishing effort deployed so that mechanisms are set up at the national level to avoid any overshooting of the fishing effort.

30. Those national control programmes and plans shall be communicated each year to the GFCM Secretariat, during the last quarter of the previous year and not later than 30 October of each year. In case the GFCM finds a serious fault in the plan submitted by a CPC and cannot endorse it, the GFCM shall decide by mail vote, by 15 December, on the suspension of small pelagic fisheries for the CPC concerned in the subsequent year. The GFCM Compliance Committee shall adopt specific rules and procedures to prepare the necessary examination.

31. CPCs that do not submit the plan by the deadline specified in paragraph 30 above, are not allowed to carry out small pelagic fisheries operations in the area until the plan is submitted and endorsed by the GFCM.

The list referred to in Part VI, paragraph 22 shall contain for each vessel the following information:

- Vessel name
- National registration number (code assigned by CPCs)
- GFCM registration number (country ISO 3-alpha code + 9 digits, e.g. xxx000000001)
- Port of registration (full name of the port)
- Previous name (if any)
- Previous flag (if any)
- Previous details of deletion from other registers (if any)
- International radio call sign (if any)
- VMS (indicate Y/N)
- Vessel type, length overall (LOA) and gross tonnage (GT) and engine power expressed in kW
- Name and address of owner(s) and/or charter and/or operator(s)
- Main target species
- Main gear used for small pelagic species and fleet segment allocation
- Time period authorized for fishing with pelagic trawlers or purse seiners for small pelagic species (if any of such authorization)

### **Guidelines for the preparation of specific monitoring and control plans for small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea**

Specific monitoring and control plans shall clearly define the following:

***a) Means of control***

Description of human, technical and financial means specifically available for the implementation of the plans. Particular attention shall be given to the description of the patrol vessels, including details on the organizations managing them as well as their spatial and temporal autonomy and on-board facilities (number of beds, etc.).

***b) Annual fishing plans***

The details of any system in place for national monitoring and control of the fishing plan. The methodology to ensure the respect of the rules to record catches (completion/submission of logbooks, landing declarations and sales notes) and the mechanisms established to cross-check and verify information received from different sources.

***c) Sampling methodologies***

Each country shall specify and describe which sampling strategy will be applied to verify the weighing of catches at first sale as well as the sampling strategy for vessels not subject to logbook/landing declaration rules.

***d) Inspection protocols***

Define inspection tasks and procedures in accordance with inspections and proceedings to ensure, in particular, the continuity of evidences observed during inspections.

***e) Guidelines***

Explanatory guidelines for inspectors, producers organizations and fishers, regarding the set of rules in place for the small pelagic fishery:

- rules for the completion of various documents, including inspection reports, fishing logbooks, transshipment declarations, landing and take-over declarations, transport documents, sales notes;
- technical measures in force, including mesh size and/or mesh dimensions, minimum catching size, temporary restrictions;
- sampling strategies;
- cross-check mechanisms.

***f) Inspection benchmarks***

- Objective

Each country shall set specific inspection benchmarks in accordance with risk-based methodologies.

- Strategy

Inspection and surveillance of fishing activities shall focus on fishing vessels likely to catch small pelagic species. In addition to the specific benchmarks defined, random inspections of transport and marketing of this species shall be used as a complementary cross-check mechanism to test the effectiveness of inspection and surveillance. Moreover the strategies and action plans for the control of markets and transport shall be included.

- Priorities

When defining risks, different gear types shall be subject to different levels of prioritisation, depending on the extent to which the fleets are affected by fishing opportunity limits. For that reason, each country shall set specific priorities.

- Target benchmarks

CPCs shall implement their inspection schedules taking into account risk-based methodologies and defining specific targets. Minimum benchmarks are defined below.

- Level of inspection in ports.
- As a general rule, the accuracy to be achieved should be at least equivalent to what would be obtained by a simple random sampling method, where inspections shall cover 20 percent of all landings of small pelagic species by weight in the country.
- Level of inspection of marketing operations.
- Inspection of 5 percent of the quantities of small pelagic species offered at first sale.
- Level of inspection at sea.

**Flexible benchmark:** to be set after a detailed analysis of the fishing activity in each area by analysing both vessel monitoring system tracks and aerial surveillance results. Benchmarks at sea shall refer to the number of patrol days at sea in the management areas.

***g) Joint operations***

Concerned states shall define together joint actions at sea and ashore to fight illegal and unrecorded catches. Those joint actions shall be defined in accordance with control and inspection criteria and priorities agreed between them.