



Report of the twenty-first meeting of the AdriaMed
Coordination Committee
(on-line, 25th May 2021)

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Preface

The Regional Project “Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea” (AdriaMed) is executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and funded by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forestry and Tourism Policies (MiPAAFT). The DG-Fish of the European Commission is co-funding the Project since 2007. In addition, since 2016 the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture (MAC) is co-funding the Project as well the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia (MAFFS) that initiated the co-funding of Project in 2018.

AdriaMed was conceived to contribute to the promotion of cooperative fishery management between the participating countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia), in line with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries adopted by the UN-FAO.

Particular attention is given to encouraging and sustaining a smooth process of international collaboration between the Adriatic Sea coastal countries in fishery management, planning and implementation. Consideration is also given to strengthening technical coordination between the national fishery research institutes and administrations, the fishery organizations and the other relevant stakeholders of the Adriatic countries.

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GCP/RER/010/ITA Publications

The AdriaMed Project publications are issued as a series of Technical Documents (GCP/RER/010/ITA/TD-00), Occasional Papers (GCP/RER/010/ITA/OP-00) and Scientific Reports (GCP/RER/010/ITA/SR-00) related to meetings and research organized by or conducted within the framework of the Project.

Occasionally, relevant documents may be translated into national languages as AdriaMed Translations (GCP/RER/010/ITA/AT-00).

Comments on this document would be welcomed and should be sent to the Project headquarters

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ABSTRACT

The twenty first Meeting of the Coordination Committee of the FAO AdriaMed Regional Project “Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea” was held on-line on 25th May 2021. It was attended by representatives of the Project’s participating countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro, and Slovenia), representatives of the Donor. The meeting sought to present and discuss the results of the activities carried out by the Project in the period March 2019 – May 2021.

The activities followed the methodological approach used by the Project and were presented according to the Project main components. The Committee discussed and agreed on project future implementation, outlining objectives, outputs and activities for 2021-2022.

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Report of the Twenty-first Meeting of the AdriaMed Coordination Committee

On line, 25th May 2021

Opening of the meeting and election of the Chairperson (Agenda Item n.1)

- 1 The Twenty-first meeting of the Coordination Committee of the FAO Regional Project AdriaMed “Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea” was held on line (via Zoom platform), on 25th May 2021.
- 2 The meeting was attended by representatives of the Donors (Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forestry Policies, MiPAAF, Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia); representatives from the countries participating in the Project (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia), a representative of other FAO Regional Projects (MedSudMed), representatives of the FAO Fisheries Division (NFI), representatives of the Secretariat of the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO GFCM), as well as the staff of the FAO AdriaMed Project.
- 3 On behalf of the Italian Ministry for Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies, the Director General for Fisheries, Mr Riccardo Rigillo, welcomed the participants wishing for the near future a meeting in presence. He acknowledged the preparatory work for the meeting done by the Project staff. He stressed the importance that his administration gives to the AdriaMed Project. AdriaMed has always been an important forum to share knowledge and to support the decision making processes. Mr Rigillo pointed out that one of the most important outcomes of the project was the creation of a network of people trusting each other and the Project. He recalled that the Project, running for over 20 years, was strongly instrumental for the development of the capacity of the countries to participate fully in GFCM, particularly during the last phase. The Project provided considerable support to capacity development in the field of stock assessment with the aim of developing the best possible fisheries management measures and ensure sustainable fisheries. Mr Rigillo recalled that stock assessment was only one of areas for support in the Project’s mandate and underlined that, now that the GFCM has stronger means and capacity on stock assessment, times are mature for a change and a re-orientation in the project’s main area of intervention. In this context, AdriaMed could be brought back to its origin and mandate: a project that promotes cooperation and development of capacity in all aspects of fisheries and aquaculture
- 4 Mr Rigillo stressed the importance of tuning the AdriaMed mandate to the issues emerging from the international agenda, with a focus on the aspects of particular importance for the Adriatic. He recalled how fisheries and aquaculture are pillars in a blue transformation process, in view of developing maritime economy and

contributing to the wellbeing of local communities. In this context, he shared the view that the Project, in the future, within a context of Blue Transformation, should move away from direct support to the stock assessment process and rather focus on supporting other aspects of fisheries and aquaculture. A change along these lines is challenging, however it will result in an added value for all, the Project and, more important, the Adriatic community. Mr Rigillo concluded recalling that the indications and priorities of the participating countries have always been at the basis of the project activities and focus and by encouraging the participating countries to express their views on the project future, he wished all a successful discussion.

- 5 The floor was taken by the Deputy Director of the FAO Fisheries Division, Ms Vera Agostini, who thanked the Italian Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies for the continued support to FAO and to the Fisheries Division. Ms Agostini acknowledged the great progress made by the AdriaMed Project in implementing its mandate in the Adriatic Sea, recalling its evolution since its inception in 1999. She pointed out that the participation in the meeting today witnesses once more the important role that the AdriaMed Project has had up to now, as well as the trust and sense of ownership generated in the Adriatic community. Ms Agostini thanked the participants for the commitment and for having shaped the Project as an effective tool to achieve important results. The exemplary cooperation spirit engendered and work that is taking place within the remit of the AdriaMed project was commended. The Project continues to make great strides every year, not only to support fisheries management, but also to holistically address sustainable development issues in the Adriatic Sea. The challenges faced have been extensive and complex and, on occasion, highly political, yet the AdriaMed Project demonstrated to be endowed with the proper tools to address these challenges.
- 6 Ms Agostini highlighted that, thanks to countries commitment and to the results achieved, the AdriaMed project has become an invaluable tool to enhance the scientific and technical cooperation among Adriatic countries. The seeds that this Project has planted have considerably underpinned the work of the GFCM towards achieving sustainability targets for fisheries in the Adriatic sub-region. They have also paved the way to the process of sub-regionalization of the GFCM, which will strengthen the organization and also consolidate its role. For FAO, the experiences acquired in the last two decades with the AdriaMed Project, as well as with the other management support projects in the Mediterranean, are an example to be replicated in other regions of the world.
- 7 AdriaMed, like FAO, is going through some changes in response to new challenges coming from the international agenda. The FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2030 gives considerable emphasis to food production and benefits for local communities, sustainable aquaculture and explicit consideration of the human dimension in the multiple uses of coastal areas marine services, all in view of a blue transformation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. As a consequence, new challenges are coming and the Adriatic community will be called to face them under a cooperative spirit. Ms Agostini pointed out that, building from the consolidated cooperative attitude

developed and trust gained, with the support of the countries and of the Donors, AdriaMed could continue to play a catalytic role in the implementation of the international agenda in the Adriatic area.

- 8 In this sense, this 21st Coordination Committee will be strategic, as in the past, to reiterate the interest and trust of all participating parties in the Project and to steer the coming Project activities toward the new emerging issues. Ms Agostini, by acknowledging once again the strong commitment of all AdriaMed participating countries towards the work of FAO concluded wishing a successful meeting.
- 9 The Coordination Committee paid its respects in honour of three important members of the AdriaMed Project who had unfortunately passed away recently, Mr Slobodan Regner, Mr Josip Marković and Mr Roman Čičmirko, noting they had contributed invaluable over the years to the work of the Project.

Adoption of the Agenda (Agenda Item n. 2)

- 10 The Chair drew the attention of the Committee to the Agenda, inviting comments or amendments. The Agenda was adopted with no changes.

Report on the Project's Progress (Agenda Item n.3)

- 11 The Project Fisheries Information Officer, Ms Milone, introduced this agenda item presenting the document "Report the Intersessional Activities of the Project" in which the main activities carried out by AdriaMed from March 2019 to May 2021 are described (Annex C). The activities carried out correspond to the established work programme, as approved during the 20th Coordination Committee Meeting and the Project mandate.
- 12 The meeting was informed that the reporting period was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. The restrictions on movement of people and the lockdown of national borders, within and among countries, prevented carrying out physical meetings and some field activities. The Project made all the efforts to amend/adapt the planned activities to the new situation. In addition, the foreseen EC-DGMARE co-funding for the period 2020-2021 discussed during the 20th Coordination Committee meeting, was not secured. This created a shortage in budget not envisaged during the planning phase. For these reasons, some planned activities were postponed or suspended. The meeting was invited to take into account these two aspects when discussing on the reporting activities.
- 13 The meeting was reminded of the five main areas of intervention of the Project: 1) strengthening of the sub-regional networks; 2) supporting the establishment of a sub-regional fisheries monitoring system based on standardized research and monitoring methodologies; 3) identification of management initiatives to be applied on a pilot scale in selected zones towards strengthening the international and regional

cooperation; 4) supporting shared fisheries management decisions, including promotion of harmonised fisheries legislation; 5) supporting the development of responsible mariculture, in particular the enhancement of positive interaction between fisheries and aquaculture.

- 14 Referring to objective 1, mention was done to the several meetings organised with the member countries in presence (2019) and virtually (2020/2021) besides the difficult situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The communication with Adriatic countries was maintained on virtual basis (e.g. Skype, Zoom, Teams) and was aimed to maintain tight connection with national counterparts and accommodate or amend the project work plan according to the different national conditions. In particular, discussion with partners was aimed at: i) following up on planned activities, and ii) finding overall agreement on possible future joint actions to be carried out in the framework or with the support of the Project.
- 15 Ms Milone informed the meeting on the ongoing technical support to the countries. In particular, following the internal re-organization of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro in Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, at the end of 2020, some actions were identified and support is being provided mainly on fisheries data collection. Support to the national fisheries information systems and institutional capacity development activities are also ongoing. Technical support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania is being given on fisheries data collection (fisheries dependent data, socio-economic); enhancement of aquaculture production statistics, (ancillary information on selected aquaculture activities); identification of a pilot action on Shkodra/Skadar Lake (Albania) on the use of aquaculture for stock enhancement purposes (see aquaculture section). Liaison with the Department for International Relations and Project Coordination, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina was maintained during the pandemic.
- 16 In its capacity of ASFA international Partner (Aquatic Science and Fisheries Abstract), the Project is continuing the activities carried out so far for the inclusion of Adriatic Scientific publications in the ASFA database. Support was also provided to the two collaborating centres created at the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (IOF) in Split, Croatia, and at the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor (Montenegro). Technical problems with the old ASFA software delayed the data input process. This was reflected in the annual report submitted, in summer 2020, to the annual ASFA Board meeting (on line via ZOOM, 10-14 August 2020). In February 2021, to solve this problem, a new software (namely OpenASFA) was launched. AdriaMed was among the ASFA partners that were testing the software before the official release.
- 17 The meeting was also informed on the series of activities to enhance the Project's visibility and ensure that participating countries are informed on the progress made in achieving the targets and outputs set during the Coordination Committee. These included: i) the updating of the AdriaMed web site (www.faoadriamed.org), ii) the preparation of a leaflet; iii) the finalisation of two contributions included in FAO publications; iii) enhancing the digital presence through GFCM and FAO websites as

well as on social media (GFCM and FAO Twitter accounts); iv) the preparation and circulation of a video, vi) the finalisation of a brochure on the work carried out in the past twenty years by the AdriaMed and MedSudMed Projects.

- 18 In the context of Project support to the establishment of fisheries monitoring systems in the Adriatic Sea, the Meeting was made aware on progress made concerning both small pelagic and demersal resources.
- 19 With reference to the demersal resources, mention was given to the support provided for scientific surveys at sea. The Project continued to support the full participation of South-east Adriatic countries in the Mediterranean Trawl Survey programme MEDITS; in particular, during 2019, both the participation to the annual Coordination meeting and the execution of the survey at sea in eastern GSA 18 were ensured. In 2020, due to the combination of shortage in funding (EC co-funding foreseen during the Coordination Committee were not secured) and the COVID-19 pandemic emergency the MEDITS surveys planned were not carried out. The support to the processing of data from scientific surveys by means of Underwater Television method targeting *Nephrops norvegicus* stock in the Pomo/Jabuka Pits area and beam trawling (Solemon survey) was also recalled.
- 20 Ms Milone highlighted the work done by the Project in support to the monitoring plan of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit Fisheries Restricted Area (FRA) approved by the 20th SAC and 42nd GFCM sessions. Besides the pandemic and the budgetary limitations, the project organized and supported three winter bottom trawl survey in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area (March 2019, March 2020 and March 2021). The surveys were carried out in collaboration with the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Split (Croatia), the University of Bologna- of Marine Biology Laboratory of Fano (Italy), and GFCM Secretariat.
- 21 The participants were informed on the progress made on standardization of fish ageing under the Project framework. In 2018, the Project launched an otolith images exchange on common sole (*Solea solea*). The work was tackled in the framework of the AdriaMed Study Group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading (SG-OTH-DEM). According to the roadmap agreed upon by the Adriatic experts, the SG-OTH-DEM succeeded to organize two otoliths reading exercises and 5 meetings with the final objective to provide inputs on the age data of the species before the benchmark assessment on planned in April 2021.
- 22 The WG-DEM met in presence in October 2019 and on line through the year in 2020: 10 virtual sessions of the WG-DEM were organized to progress on the agreed work plan. Particular attention was attached to the requirements of the GFCM Recommendation GFCM/41/201/3 on the establishment of a Fisheries Restricted Area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area, to the related monitoring plan, and to the appraisal of demersal stocks. An *ad hoc* Study group on *Mullus barbatus* was organized, with the first meeting held at the beginning of 2021. The objective was to make an overview of existing knowledge and data on the species and to agree on the formulation of the request of a benchmark assessment session on *Mullus barbatus* in the Adriatic Sea to

be put forward at the GFCM Working Group on Stock Assessment. The Study Group activities then aimed at preparing data towards the benchmark assessment.

- 23 The Committee's attention was drawn to the issue of small pelagic fishery resources. Reference was made to preparatory work done in view of the GFCM benchmark stock assessment of sardine (*Sardina pilchardus*) and anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus*). Between February 2019 and June 2020 in the framework of the Project: i) an intercalibration exercise on otoliths readings (anchovy) was completed, and five data reparation meetings were organised. The meetings agreed on a roadmap towards the benchmark and planned actions (studies) to be completed before and after the benchmark, with the aim to provide the best possible advice for the management of small pelagic fisheries.
- 24 The Coordination Committee members were reminded of the relevance of small-scale fisheries (SSF) in the Project activities given the role of SSF as source of income for local communities and in the exploitation of shared stocks. To cope with SSF-related priorities, the AdriaMed Working Group on Adriatic Sea Small-Scale Fisheries (WG-SSF) met in October 2019. The WG-SSF succeeded to: i) progress on the mapping of selected small scale fisheries, ii) to contribute to the vulnerability assessment of fisheries to climate changes (launched in the Adriatic in 2020); iii) to launch the SSF University DAY; and iv) to follow up on the on-going activities on non indigenous species (NIS) with the LEK II protocol with the organisation of a Webinar open to all the Mediterranean experts to spread the aims, approach and potential of the protocol implementation.
- 25 The meeting was informed on the event named SSF University DAY, organised as a contribution to the GFCM SSF University. The event was held on 10 November 2020, organized in cooperation with the other FAO Mediterranean Projects (CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed) and the GFCM BlackSea4Fish Project. The SSF University DAY saw the involvement of over 200 participants from 16 localities all over the Mediterranean and Black Sea. The DAY foresaw a common initial moment followed by national workshops in local languages to address common regional SSF issues such as collaborative science (including participatory data collection, reporting and monitoring), local ecological knowledge (LEK), climate change and environmental impacts of fishing.
- 26 On the evaluation of vulnerability of fisheries to climate change, AdriaMed, in cooperation with the other Mediterranean Projects (CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed) and the GFCM, initiated in 2019 the compilation of the available information. In March 2020, the Project facilitated the design and development of an online survey to tackle the expert judgement phase of the study on vulnerability. The online survey was launched in April 2020. A scientific document summarizing the results obtained in all the Mediterranean, including the Adriatic, with the same methodology was prepared and presented at the GFCM Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (April 2021). A further contribution including outputs of the study on vulnerability from all the Mediterranean was planned to be presented at the next GFCM SAC (June 2021).

- 27 The Meeting was informed on some specific actions in support of fisheries statistics being carried out by the Project. The Project supported the collection of biological samples of landings from commercial fisheries in Albania. This biological sampling has been planned and carried out in line with the requirements of the GFCM-Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF). The resulting data are now available for fisheries management, joint studies and stock assessment.
- 28 The Committee's attention was drawn to the socio-economic aspects of fisheries and the support that the Project is providing to fill gaps in data and knowledge on these aspects. Fisheries socio-economic surveys were supported in Albania, with the Fishery & Aquaculture Policies Sector of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania (2019 and 2021). Socioeconomic analyses of data were supported in Montenegro (2019-2021).
- 29 The Committee learned that, following its indications, the Project is giving increasing importance to the identification of possible management options for the Adriatic Sea fisheries, in line with GFCM recommendations aimed at establishing multiannual management plans for fisheries. In the intersessional period, attention was dedicated to the Jabuka/Pomo area and small pelagic fisheries resources (as already reported).
- 30 Regarding the Jabuka/Pomo area, following the scientific evidences collected through the years within the Project framework, on October 2017, the GFCM endorsed Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/3 on the establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in the Adriatic Sea. As follow up, the Project established the Study Group on Jabuka/Pomo Pit (SG-JP). Further to the three winter bottom trawl surveys in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area, online thematic sessions on the FRA monitoring were organized within the AdriaMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources. The experts agreed on and initiated to prepare contributions to be presented at the GFCM-Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (GFCM SRC-AS): one document summarising the work done so far (the table of contents was agreed during the SG-JP), and an updated version of the monitoring programme for the FRA. The contributions were drafted and presented at the GFCM SRC-AS on April 2021.
- 31 The Project continued to improve national capacity at institutional level by organizing training activities according to the requests formulated by the participating countries. Moreover, in cooperation with the other FAO Mediterranean Projects, the Project sought synergies on common activities. Reference was made to the FAO/GFCM/JRC "Summer School in quantitative fisheries stock assessment" organized in July 2019 in Capo Granitola, Italy. In 2020, to cope with the pandemic emergency the Summer School was replaced by a series of virtual trainings. In this framework, three trainings were organized: i) Introduction to integrated stock assessment using Stock Synthesis; ii) Online Course/Workshop on Empirical Indicators for Fisheries Management Advice; Introduction to GADGET.

- 32 Ms Milone made reference to the numerous initiatives and coordination meetings held with the other regional projects EastMed, CopeMed and MedSudMed and with the GFCM Secretariat in order to consolidate coordination and plan common activities.
- 33 The Committee attention was drawn to aquaculture related issues. A series of activities devoted to further support the development of aquaculture in the Adriatic region in line with the Strategy on Aquaculture were put forward. These included: contribution to the CAQ activities: support to the aquaculture data collection in Albania; technical assistance to the Centre for Marine Biodiversity and Conservation “BOKAAQUARIUM”; pilot actions towards the development and management of sustainable aquaculture in the Shkodra/Skadar Lake in Albania; activities to foster cooperation with the aquaculture farmer organizations (AFOs) and farmers and to organize training and capacity development for aquaculture farmers on aquaculture best practices.
- 34 At the end of the presentation, the Chair opened the discussion. The Committee members appreciated the amount and accuracy of the work done by the Project, and emphasized that it represents the follow up to the expected output of the last Coordination Committee Meeting and is fully coherent with expectations.
- 35 The representative of Albania, Mr Arian Palluqi, expressed the highest appreciation for the work performed through time by the Project in the Adriatic, and put considerable emphasis on the support provided to Albania. He particularly highlighted the work done on the standardisation of methodologies and the contribution to the development of scientific knowledge on fishery resources. Thanks to the support of the Project on this fields, Albania carried out joint surveys at sea, joint stock assessments and several monitoring and research studies like e.g. on alien species, on fleet monitoring, catch-assessment surveys. Mr Palluqi stressed the relevance of the AdriaMed support in strengthening the scientific cooperation and national expertise and institutional capacity, enabling Adriatic countries and Albania in particular, to cope with the international requirements (e.g. GFCM, EU). The tangible level of the results achieved was also reported during the last meeting of the GFCM Committee on Compliance (May 2021). He further pointed out the importance of the support provided on aquaculture, with the pilot action in Shkodra Lake and the support in collecting data on aquaculture. Mr Palluqi concluded praising the invaluable role played by AdriaMed to feed discussion on fisheries management in the Adriatic.
- 36 The National Focal Point of Montenegro, Mr Aleksandar Joksimović, congratulated the Project for the presentation and the excellent work carried out so far. AdriaMed provided an invaluable contribution to enhance scientific discussion in support of fisheries research, monitoring and management in the Adriatic. On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Mr Joksimović stressed the important role that the Project have had and still has for his country. He echoed Mr Palluqi on the importance of AdriaMed for countries like Albania and Montenegro as it played a fundamental role in the development of the fishing sector. AdriaMed was the common platform in which experts and managers from Montenegro could meet, for the first time after political instability, colleagues from all around the Adriatic.

AdriaMed itself acted as an important bridge that connected the regional research institutions thus strengthening the cooperation in the Adriatic.

- 37 Mr Joksimović acknowledged the support by the Project on joint surveys at sea and monitoring/research studies both on fisheries and aquaculture. He stated his sense of pride in being part of the AdriaMed Project and of the cooperative group established by AdriaMed. This group, since the beginning, share data and views, and hold technical discussion on the all dimensions of fisheries. All these aspects are essential to fulfill the GFCM and international requirements. In this line, he also recalled the important support that the Project provided in streamlining fisheries development policies in Montenegro in view of EU admission.

Development of the Project's Programme for the next period (Agenda Item n.4)

- 38 Mr Pedro Conte de Barros, Senior Officer of the FAO Fisheries Division, introduced to the Committee some elements for joint discussion on this agenda Item. Mr Barros referred to the challenges deriving from the international agendas that the Adriatic community will be called to deal with regarding sustainable food production and the fisheries and aquaculture systems. He put forward the trust that the FAO AdriaMed Project, with its cooperative approach could be one of the supporting tools to face them. Through time, AdriaMed and the Adriatic communities showed that, in a changing world with a lot of uncertainty, the best approach has to be based on open dialogue and shared solutions.
- 39 To tackle the new upcoming challenges, AdriaMed would require some changes and the time is right to launch further reasoning on a development of the Project activities for the near future. In doing this, Mr Barros pointed out the main elements that characterised AdriaMed in the past and that could be considered solid roots to build on, including trust from participating countries and the capability to be timely, flexible and effective in addressing new issues with a highly adaptive approach. With these bases, the Project may continue to focus on the original objectives, strengthening cooperation and provide technical support to capacity development for participating countries. In this framework, the Project will be called to finalise ongoing and initiated actions, support the identification of priorities, and continue promoting the development of capacity. Mr Barros continued pointing out that the tools for addressing these issues will be as usual, the Project Coordination Committee (to steer activities and decide any changes in priorities) and Working Groups (in which experts work out the details of the activities), the bodies that ensure dialogue and cooperation.
- 40 Moving further, Mr Barros pointed out some of the activities that could be tackled in the coming period, if the Coordination Committee so decided. Regarding continuation of ongoing or initiated actions, the focus would be on technical support to countries, particularly on fisheries resources/research programmes, small scale fisheries and

interaction between capture fisheries and aquaculture. Regarding new options, efforts should be put in place to ensure continuity to and support the reinforcement of the exceptional cooperative framework already established between scientific institutions, administrations and stakeholders. Following the indications from the member countries, the Project could also continue to promote the sharing of knowledge and experience, and to highlight the benefits of an integrated approach at local, regional and global scale as examples of good practices. In this sense, the possibility to disseminate the achievements of the Project network would be beneficial for Adriatic donors and countries and for FAO to replicate similar experiences in other region. Moreover, the Project will be called to further support the development of national human and institutional capacity, so to further its work in levelling the playing ground for discussion, providing all Adriatic countries with similar opportunities, capacities and tools to face emerging challenges.

- 41 Mr Barros concluded by highlighting the methodological approach that has served AdriaMed so well and that is a great asset when implementing all coming activities: strong support to the established cooperative approach; an adaptive and flexible approach and timeliness (e.g. through the annual Coordination Committee indication), to be ready to cope with emerging issues; a focus on adopting scalable models, to replicate and expand pilot scale actions at regional level; and an open communication channels and permanent fora for exchanging and sharing of experiences.
- 42 After the presentation, the Chairperson acknowledged the relevance of the elements presented as key aspects for the future development of the FAO Project. By echoing the presentation, he reminded the delegates that Adriatic countries will be called to use all possible tools to cope with the challenges ahead. In this context, AdriaMed, with all its potential, could be seen as an excellent tool to catalyse discussion and tackle relevant issues for the Adriatic. He also reiterated that the Coordination Committee is the body designed to steer and orient the work of the Project. The Chairperson then opened the discussion by inviting the delegations to identify priorities and needs that AdriaMed will be asked to cope with, while investing AdriaMed with the mandate to progress its work in the next years.
- 43 The representative of Montenegro, Mr Joksimović, underlined the importance of continuing with the activities planned within the context of the Project and pointed out the need to further develop the cooperative framework of the Project. He echoed the words of the FAO representative Mr Barros on addressing the challenges ahead and, by recalling the importance of the Coordination Committee, he called for the joint identification of needs and priorities to address coming challenges and quick resume/continue the activities of the project. With a joint effort of all the participating countries, donors and FAO, the Project will continue to support the countries in finding shared and common solutions for the development of strong linkages between management of the Adriatic fisheries and development of sustainable aquaculture. He concluded by reiterating the strong support by both the fisheries administration and the research institute of Montenegro to the project and wished the continuation of the

FAO AdriaMed project in its current form of a neutral forum for discussion and development.

- 44 The Chair singled out some aspects raised by the intervention of Mr Joksimović to contribute to draft the future lines of the project: the importance to give continuity to the work done so far and to the cooperative framework established by FAO. By echoing the words of the delegate of Montenegro, the Chair also underlined that the project is the best place to address and give the sense of continuity and cooperation asked for, by putting all Adriatic countries in a neutral forum for discussion and for implementing cooperative activities.
- 45 The representative of Slovenia, Mr Bojan Marčeta, echoed the importance of the FAO AdriaMed Project for the Adriatic Sea and for Slovenia in particular. He brought the Committee's attention to the importance of the Project for the research institutions in his country. Thanks to the Project work, connections were developed between Slovenian fisheries institutions and other Adriatic countries' institutions, and a cooperative framework was established thus contributing to the overall growth of the Adriatic and Slovenia network on fisheries. Mr Marčeta also pointed out the importance of the contribution of AdriaMed in enhancing the technical capacity and the sharing of knowledge and experience in fisheries research in Slovenia through the numerous trainings and workshops/working groups organized by the project. The acquired knowledge and capacity enabled Slovenia to fulfill the requirement of EC DCF and of the GFCM DCRF. Mr Marčeta concluded with a reiterated gratitude for the work of the Project that gave fisheries experts the possibility to continuously progress through years, and wished the continuation of the Project in the future years.
- 46 The representative of Slovenia, Ms Barbara Žinko, informed the meeting of the interest of the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food in the Project and of the willingness to continue supporting to the AdriaMed Project as a donor in the future.
- 47 The Chairperson, thanking Slovenia for the contribution, underlined the importance of the knowledge sharing pointed out in the previous interventions as a key point to be taken into account when dealing with the future of the Project.
- 48 The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Suada Hadžić, pointed out that her country is in a unique condition in the Adriatic Sea where fisheries and aquaculture are concerned. Bosnia and Herzegovina joined AdriaMed only in 2019, is still establishing in the partnership with GFCM and only recently initiated the accession phase to the European Union. To date, the country could not fully benefit from all the opportunities provided by the Project. Ms Hadžić acknowledged the importance of AdriaMed and reiterated the interest in its continuation, without overlapping with other initiatives in the area, and wished that Bosnia and Herzegovina could fully avail of the Project activities and support to cope with international requirements.
- 49 The Chair underlined the different rules and governance in place among the Adriatic countries put forward by the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Accordingly, the governance was singled out as a subject to take into consideration when thinking of the Project future.

- 50 The representative of Albania, Mr Palluqi expressed full support for the continuation of the AdriaMed Project, as a fundamental element to ensure the management and development of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Adriatic Sea. He also underlined three relevant features that contribute to make AdriaMed and FAO essential and successful: the possibility to provide countries with a completely neutral forum for joint discussion, the capability of the Project to adapt quickly its areas of intervention, and the autonomy and timeliness of response ensured by its Coordination Committee in which all countries are represented. With these bases, Mr Palluqi auspices that FAO makes all possible efforts to ensure that the project continues in the coming period.
- 51 Mr Palluqi also further stressed the importance of continuing to work together under the AdriaMed framework both at regional and on pilot scale, through the identification of pilot actions on specific shared fisheries, on aquaculture, and/or on critical habitats with the direct involvement of the three main actors (researchers, administrations and in the field workers). As an example, he brought the case of the discussion to identify new possible FRA in the Adriatic Sea as indicated in the management plan in place on the demersal fisheries resources in the Adriatic Sea. The catalytic role of the Project in facilitating the discussion and conveying scientific studies toward this aspect would be of utmost importance. In this respect Mr Palluqi underlined that the role to facilitate and ease the informal discussion among the countries involving all actors, administrations, scientists and fishers, has always been played by the Project through time.
- 52 Moreover, Mr Palluqi pointed out two aspects to be considered for the future development of the Project, the resuming of activities not completely addressed in the past, and the importance to consider all aspects of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture sectors that should be addressed as a whole integrated system. In addition, the project work programme should address studies on coastal zone management (interactions between artisanal fishery, aquaculture, coastal agriculture, etc.) with the aim of promoting adequate marketing strategies, improving employment opportunities and overall living conditions of coastal communities. Mr Palluqi also reiterated the importance for Albania to continue tackling fisheries and aquaculture in coastal lagoons. In this frame, he recalled the pilot activity supported by the project in the Skhodra Lake, that with small and practical restocking actions through aquaculture produced fingerlings, is helping local fishing communities. He concluded underlying that the main focus of the project in the future be much more devoted to the support to countries with a less developed fisheries and aquaculture sectors, like Albania.
- 53 The Chair summarized the key points highlighted by the Delegate from Albania. The autonomy was referred as an important aspect to be preserved, further to those already mentioned by the other delegations, i.e. coordination, sharing knowledge and governance. In this respect, the role of the Coordination Committee and of participating countries in providing inputs and steering the work of a FAO Project like AdriaMed was further reiterated. The Committee ensures the autonomy in the decision making process of the Project . An additional topic brought at the attention of

the Coordination Committee was the request that the Project in the future should increasingly deal with the interaction between capture fisheries and aquaculture including through pilot actions.

- 54 The National Focal Point of Croatia, Mr Nedo Vrgoč, recalled that he was one of the scientists involved in the AdriaMed team since the very beginning, 22 years ago. Mr Vrgoč made reference to the key elements that made AdriaMed successful through time. Out of the several projects that were and are currently in place in the Adriatic (all limited in time and objectives), AdriaMed was the only Project with a long term perspective and broad and extensive objectives. AdriaMed covered all areas of fisheries topics starting from biology research, up to the direct support to discussion on fisheries management. No fisheries activities were carried out in the last twenty years in the Adriatic without the involvement of AdriaMed. Out of this massive contribution, Mr Vrgoč remarked that the main achievement of the project was that through it, for the first time, all relevant scientists and scientific institutes from all Adriatic countries meet under the same umbrella and identified and completed joint research, data exchange, joint analyzes, cooperative work. Thanks to the role of neutral broker played by FAO through AdriaMed, the point of view of the Adriatic countries on all key issues of fisheries was forged and put forward at local, regional and Mediterranean level.
- 55 Mr Vrgoč, on the basis of the above, strongly invited all the representatives of the Adriatic countries to support the continuation of the Project, so that AdriaMed could continue to be, in the future, the place in which a common approach to fisheries (a sort of Adriatic approach to fisheries) should be developed and implemented. He underlined that, given its unique features (small semi-enclosed basin, well defined marine resources shared by six countries, of which three are EU members and three have initiated the accession procedures) a specific Adriatic approach is needed in the region, including a common approach to ensure sustainable exploitation. Through time, the Adriatic Sea with AdriaMed, has been recognized in Mediterranean as an example of good cooperation on fisheries. To pursue and maintain this Adriatic approach in fisheries, a common structure to allow the countries to coordinate the activities among them would be needed, and this structure is AdriaMed.
- 56 Mr Vrgoč echoed the interventions of the Chair and Mr Palluqi on the need, for the Project in the future, to look back at its roots and its original tasks: promote cooperation and scientific support to the responsible fisheries and aquaculture. The Project should focus on establishing collaboration and sharing of knowledge among scientists, fishers and administrations. Mr Vrgoč referred the efforts devoted by the Project in the most recent years on stock assessment. In doing this, he wished that, in the future, the Project may focus on aspects before and after stock assessment activities, leaving the pure stock assessment to dedicated international bodies (e.g. GFCM; EC-STECEF). In this line, he pointed out the importance of the Project maintaining its independence from both these and other bodies.

- 57 Mr Vrgoč further mentioned that work still has to be done by the Project on assistance in data collection and data standardization, standardization of methodologies and scientific capacity building. In addition, AdriaMed should facilitate the dialogue between scientists and national administrations in order to transform mere stock assessment recommendation into concrete proposals for appropriate management measures. He concluded that there is still room and need in the future of the AdriaMed work. Accordingly, he proposed that *ad hoc* working groups be held for the joint identification of future activities to be presented in the next Coordination Committee to be organized in two-three month time.
- 58 The representative of Croatia, Mr Ante Mišura, acknowledging the importance of the Project underlined that it has strongly contributed in improving fisheries management in the Adriatic. He further underlined the significance for continuing the project activities. He also recalled the GFCM subregionalization and the institution of the Sub regional unit in Split, He stressed that the future development of AdriaMed should be put into the proper perspective. Mr Mišura pointed out the importance of discussing in dedicated meetings to and the priorities to be tackled by the project. He reiterated the full support to the FAO AdriaMed Project in the future.
- 59 The Committee welcomed the inputs from the Croatia Delegation and concurred on the aspects mentioned. In particular, the Committee stressed that the GFCM is the only body with the mandate of adopting binding decisions for Mediterranean countries. For this reason, the role of the FAO AdriaMed Project could be of supporting countries without entering into the legal aspects of fisheries management.
- 60 The Committee also acknowledged the importance of continuity in the Project activities for not losing the efforts and results achieved in more than 20 years of activities. With respect to the future development, the proposal that AdriaMed should continue to tackle cooperation and knowledge sharing was acknowledged, as well as the importance that the Project continue to promote the sharing of methodologies and lessons learnt at Adriatic level. As further element, the Committee noted the importance attached by Croatia to the broadening of the Project scope through pilot actions, by following the pioneer approach that strongly characterised the Project in the first years of its activities.
- 61 Regarding the proposal of a Working Group (*ad hoc* meetings) to identify future Project actions, the Delegates were reminded that this role is a prerogative of the Coordination Committee and duplications should be avoided. However, given the importance to explore all possible areas of intervention, the organisation of *ad hoc* technical meetings to identify emerging technical issues in the Adriatic to be brought to the attention of the next Coordination Committee meeting was welcomed.
- 62 The Representative of Italy, Mr Mauro Colarossi, by acknowledging the unprecedented conditions we all are facing, congratulated with FAO (AdriaMed and NFI) staff for the organisation of the meeting and for the presentations given. Mr Colarossi singled out that several aspects should be considered when the future

development of the AdriaMed activities are dealt with. In particular, he pointed out the important role that aquaculture will play at global and local Adriatic scale in the future not only as a possible tool to protect natural marine resources, but also as a key sector for achieving a sustainable food system. Accordingly, in the framework of AdriaMed, the interactions between sustainable capture fisheries and aquaculture should be addressed and regarded as a priority working area. AdriaMed is equipped for dealing with this issue and will be called to playing a key role. Interventions in this domain should be integrated in a wider context toward a blue growth and blue transformation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, that should be taken as a milestone for the future management at Adriatic and Mediterranean level.

63 Mr Colarossi also reiterated that fisheries and even more aquaculture in a blue transformation context, will be instrumental to achieve sustainable food systems. On this context, AdriaMed could be a flagship project toward the achievement of specific goals of the agenda 2030 of the UN. The support of the AdriaMed Project in recent years, has always been fundamental, e.g. by promoting cooperation and dialogue among the countries of the Adriatic family, in particular in the fisheries field. Mr Colarossi continued by underlying as, to date, for Italy the Project activities should be oriented toward the above mentioned areas, blue growth, blue transformation and aquaculture, by taking advantage of the strong networking capacity and the trust that Italy and all the Adriatic countries put into the Project. By concluding, he mentioned the role that AdriaMed plays in the monitoring of the effectiveness of the Jabuka/Pomo pit fisheries restricted area. Regarding the organisation of new working groups, Mr Colarossi referred to the existing working groups and Coordination Committee rather than the creation of new one. AdriaMed can therefore be considered a useful coordination tool for Adriatic countries on capture fisheries and sustainable aquaculture that will require coordination and sharing of view and that will be at the center of Mediterranean debate.

64 The Chair acknowledged the intervention by Italy and quickly summarised the provided inputs. Some overlap with previous interventions were pointed out, together with new elements. Cooperation, coordination and continuity of the FAO Project activities were further stressed as key factors for building on past achievements and avoid the risk that the work done so far be lost. He acknowledged the importance attached by Italy to knowledge and governance, with reference of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit, a clear example of best practice and of the potential of the AdriaMed community. The reference to blue growth and blue transformation was also recalled, as they are the pillars to be tackled not only in the AdriaMed, but also in the Mediterranean agenda.

65 The Executive Secretary of the GFCM, Mr Abdellah Srour, took the floor. Mr Srour greeted all participants and updated the Committee on the implementation of the sub-regional approach, including in the context of the GFCM 2030 strategy. The GFCM is in the process of reinforcing GFCM's presence at subregional level, with 3 subregional technical units that are operational (Burgas, Beirut and Málaga) and two that are upcoming (Tunis – for which a meeting with the Agriculture Minister is

planned on June 2nd to finalize the inauguration of the units – and Split). The GFCM Secretariat is working to equip these units with material and staff, starting with a Fishery Officer and an Administrative Assistant in each unit, aiming to grow the teams with consultants and interns according to the varying needs. In particular, for the Split unit, administrative procedures with the hosting government are expected to be finalized before the end of the year and fixed term positions will be launched in the summer. It is also foreseen to duplicate the case of the Black Sea where a dedicated project (namely Blacksea4fish project) to support the subregion in fisheries research and management and a dedicated aquaculture demonstrative center to support sustainable development of aquaculture.

66 Mr Srour continued recalling that in July, GFCM countries will also adopt their new fisheries and aquaculture strategy for 2021-2030, which puts the accent on the subregional approach both in the identification of priorities and in the overall GFCM action. The strategy will also guide the collaboration with partners over the next 10 years. The session of the Commission will finally determine the modalities of implementation of the GFCM 2030 strategy as well as the interaction with partners. In light of all these aspects, the relationship between the GFCM and the regional projects will have to be revised and/or adapted. In particular, we have to acknowledge that the circumstances whereby the regional projects were providing direct support to the implementation of GFCM activities have changed. The GFCM Secretariat stand ready to collaborate as appropriate in this context, especially to ensure smooth transitions where needed.

67 Mr Srour concluded taking this occasion to express sincere gratitude for the work of AdriaMed and the regional projects over the years and all the support they provided to the GFCM in a wide array of key activities. By thanking all participants for the attention, he wish a good continuation of the meeting.

68 The Chair thanked Mr Srour for the contribution and for updating the Coordination Committee on the coming GFCM activities. The intervention confirmed what stated at the opening of the meeting, the GFCM and its Secretariat in the last period become stronger, especially in the field of stock assessment and in adopting management decisions. The structure that the GFCM is putting in place goes exactly into this direction.

Other Matters (Agenda Item n.5)

No other matters were put forward.

Conclusions (Agenda Item n.6)

69 The Chairperson summarised the overall aspects highlighted during the discussion of the agenda item number 4. He stressed that the importance of continuity in Project

activities was considered a priority by all countries. Many of the aspects that characterised the origin and first years of the FAO AdriaMed activities were also put into evidence as elements to be revamped in the coming period: cooperation and coordination among countries, the sharing of knowledge and discussions on governance. Further to these, new or not fully addressed working areas were highlighted: aquaculture related issues, interactions between capture fisheries and aquaculture, the implementation of pilot actions on fisheries like those that lead to widely acknowledged success stories throughout the Mediterranean (e.g. the work toward the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area protection); the widening of the scope of the Project by addressing new emerging items with the usual pioneer approach, through pilot or flagship activities that could lead to sustainable food systems and blue transformation of fisheries and aquaculture.

70 Some broad elements for the Coordination Committee to be considered as common principles for steering the FAO Project activities were presented in particular the Project shall:

- Ensure continuity to and support the reinforcement of the cooperative framework already established between scientific institutions, administrations and stakeholders;
- Share knowledge, governance practices and experience and highlight the benefits of an integrated approach
- Sustainable food systems and blue transformation as new challenges to be addressed by the Project
- Widening its scope by putting the attention on pilot actions towards Blue transformation with the involvement of fishers/fish farmers/stakeholders and local communities to be scaled up as flagship actions and success stories at Adriatic basin level
- Focus on areas of interactions between capture fisheries and aquaculture at coastal/brackish water areas
- Continue to play a key role to help translate recommendations into practical actions to be implemented by institutions and administrations
- Plan ad hoc meeting to provide technical scientific inputs to be brought to the attention of the Coordination Committee
- Continue cooperation and synergies with the GFCM and its subsidiary bodies also taking into account the discussion on the new strategy of the GFCM

71 The Committee further confirmed the importance that experts from the Adriatic meet and jointly discuss on possible future activities to be tackled by the Project after the formal approval of its Coordination Committee which remain the main decision fora for the AdriaMed activities.

72 Mr Bernal, from the GFCM Secretariat recalled that the GFCM, including the Adriatic countries, is discussing the new strategy and the implementation of the sub-regional approach, through including the technical unit for the Adriatic. In this view, he invited the Committee to consider the possibility to revise the role of AdriaMed in

support on fisheries management and in the interactions with the GFCM in the light of the outcomes of the discussion that will take place within the GFCM in the coming months.

- 73 The Committee acknowledged the contributions and further underlined the need to avoid overlapping and duplication between GFCM activities and AdriaMed, both having different mandate thus ensuring that all possible support is channelled in the best way to the Adriatic community. This was the main reason for the broadening of the FAO Project's scope that was pointed out as a pillar during this meeting. At the end of the discussion, the Coordination Committee concurred to adopt the bullets above as main starting areas to frame the AdriaMed activities in the coming period.
- 74 Mr Barros thanked all participants on behalf of FAO and further ensured the Committee that FAO will follow up on all the mentioned aspect and indications given by the countries. He echoed the NFI Deputy Director, Ms Agostini in confirming the willingness and readiness of FAO to fully support its member countries especially in an important area like the Adriatic. FAO will follow up indications received from this Coordination Committee. In this respect, FAO stands ready to receive further inputs on specific actions to be tackled.
- 75 General consensus with the outcomes was expressed by the Committee. The delegates took the opportunity to renew the maximum appreciation of the FAO AdriaMed Project and the interest in the continuation of the Project. It was concurred that member countries will be further contacted for participating in the identification of the context of the reference for the future development phase of AdriaMed through ad hoc meeting/s organized by the Project in autumn period. In the meanwhile, FAO will liaise with the Donors to find options to ensure the continuation of the Project AdriaMed activities without interruptions.
- 76 The Committee with all its members were further thanked for the participation, the interest and the inputs that will ensure continuation of the AdriaMed Project. The wish to meet again in person soon was unanimously expressed to continue joint discussion and address the new challenges the Adriatic community will be called to face.
- 77 The next Meeting of the AdriaMed Coordination Committee will be held on-line tentatively by the end of 2021. The date and venue will be proposed in due time by the Project.

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Agenda

- 1. Opening of the meeting and election of the Chairperson**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Report on the Project's progress**
- 4. Development of the Project's Programme for the next period**
- 5. Other matters**
- 6. Conclusions**

Report on the intersessional activities of the Project

(March 2019 – May 2021)

This document summarizes the main activities carried out by the FAO AdriaMed Project between March 2019 – May 2021, including workshops, training, research activities and the technical assistance provided to the countries; as well as the cooperation established with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) and Sub-regional Committees and other relevant institutions. The work programme and recommendations of the 20th Meeting of the AdriaMed Coordination Committee (Split, Croatia, 28 February – 1 March 2019) were implemented (*CC/20/info2*).

The FAO AdriaMed Project started in 1999 and it is funded by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF), the Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia (MoA) and the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry of Slovenia (MAFF). The Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission (DG MARE) was a co-donor of the project, supporting the project between 2007 and March 2020.

The activities carried out during the inter-committee period comply with the methodological framework of the Project and its mandate for this phase. This report details the main outputs of the Project activities and the results achieved with direct reference to the following Project Objectives:

1. Strengthening of the sub-regional network by involving relevant institutions of the fisheries sector to follow up on aspects of scientific coordination and cooperation;
2. Supporting the establishment of a sub-regional fisheries monitoring system, based on standardized research methodologies;
3. Identification of management schemes, to be applied on a pilot scale in selected zones, towards strengthening the international and regional cooperation;
4. Supporting shared resource management decisions, including promotion of harmonised fisheries legislation;
5. Supporting the development of responsible aquaculture, in particular for the enhancement of positive interaction between fisheries and aquaculture.

The reporting period was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. The restrictions on movement of people and the lockdown of national borders prevented carrying out meetings in presence and field activities. The Project made all the efforts to amend/adapt the planned activities to the situation, where possible, and to postpone the others.

In addition, the foreseen EC-DGMARE co-funding, discussed during the 20th Coordination Committee meeting, for 2020/2021, were not secured. This created a shortage in budget not envisaged during the planning phase. Several activities were therefore postponed or suspended.

1. Strengthening of the sub-regional network by involving relevant institutions of the fisheries sector to follow up on aspects of scientific coordination and cooperation

Meetings with the Member countries

The relations and interactions with the participating countries were further strengthened, thus contributing to the improved implementation of the Project work plan. Several meetings were organised in presence (2019) and virtually (2020/2021/) with the aim of: i) following up on planned activities, and ii) finding overall agreement on possible future joint actions to be carried out in the framework or with the support of the Project.

2019

Ad hoc meetings with the fisheries administrations of Croatia (Ministry of Agriculture), Italy (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies) Slovenia (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food), Albania (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) and Montenegro (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) were held taking advantage of the GFCM related meetings, to further progress in the planning of the Project activities and identification of priorities of the countries. In particular:

In March 2019, back to back with the GFCM Working Group on Small Scale Fisheries (Montenegro, 6-7 March 2019) a meeting with the Director General and staff of the Directorate for Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro (MARD) was held, together with the GFCM staff, to discuss on-going and future activities to be implemented in the Project framework. In particular, technical assistance and/or support on the following areas were identified: socio-economic data collection; fisheries control systems; allocated zone of aquaculture; upgrading of the Fishery Information System; and identification and characterization of ecosystem services. Synergies with the GFCM on common activities for fisheries monitoring and assessment were dealt with during the meeting.

In April 2019, in occasion of the *International Conference Adriatic Biodiversity Protection – AdriBioPro2019*, 7-10 April 2019, Kotor, Montenegro, a meeting with the Director of the Institute of Marine Biology (University of Montenegro) was organized. The meeting aimed at discussing on the planned activities agreed upon during the AdriaMed 20th Coordination Committee.

In May 2019, in occasion of the GFCM - Subregional Committee of the Adriatic Sea, a meeting with the Director of the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Croatia was held. The meeting aimed at discussing on the planned activities agreed upon during the AdriaMed 20th Coordination Committee.

On 16 July 2019, in occasion of the GFCM Working group on VMS, a meeting with the FAO Permanent representative of Albania and the National Focal Point of Albania and the Director General for Fisheries of Albania was held in Tirana at the FAO ALB

premises. The meeting focused on the Project Agreement to be signed as per general rule for the implementation of the Project activities in the country, on the need to include fisheries activities in the drafting of the FAO Country Programming Framework for Albania, and to set synergies in the activities to be carried out in the country.

In June 2019, back to back with the 21st Scientific Advisory Committee of the GFCM, meetings were held with representatives of the Ministries of all the countries covered by the Project. Similar meetings were also held in occasion of the 43rd session of the Commission in November 2019 (Athens, Greece). In addition, informal meetings were held throughout the year and opportunities were taken on occasion of international meetings to liaise with representatives and experts of the participating countries (both fisheries administrations and research institutes).

2020/2021

In the reporting period the project devoted its effort to maintain the relations and interactions with the participating countries besides the difficult situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The communication with Adriatic countries was maintained on virtual basis (e.g. Skype, Zoom, Teams) and were aimed to maintain tight connection with national counterparts and accommodate or amend the project work plan according to the different national conditions.

All these activities lead to: i) strengthened cooperation in the region and improved implementation of Project activities also considering the pandemic emergency; ii) priorities and needs of the participating countries better addressed and reflected in the workplan of the Project.

Meetings with the Donors

As indicated in the last meetings of the Coordination Committee and by the FAO Independent Evaluation (2012), the Project strengthened liaisons with the Donors (MiPAAF, EU-DG-MARE, Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia and intensified coordination meetings with them.

2019

Occasion was taken during the 21st session of the SAC (June 2019) and the GFCM 43rd session (November 2019) to meet, discuss and coordinate with the EU-DG-MARE staff for the preparation and submission of new grant application for additional funds in the framework of the GFCM strategy (2017-2020). An *ad hoc* mission was organized in Brussels (Belgium) to meet representatives of EU-DG MARE (14 October 2019) to discuss the project implementation and new funding opportunities; further discussion on the same topic was held at FAO-HQs on 18 November 2019. Several informal meetings were held with the Italian Directorate for Fisheries (MiPAAF) and advantage was taken in May, June, July and November 2019, to liaise with the Ministries of Croatia and Slovenia, as Donor countries of the Project.

2020/2021

Several informal meetings, in person when possible (considering the FAO HQ in the same city of MiPAAF HQs), and virtually, were held with the Italian Directorate for Fisheries (MiPAAF) and virtually with the respective Ministries of Croatia and Slovenia.

Technical support to the Member countries

The Project, as in the past years, continued to provide technical support to the Adriatic countries, upon request, to the national information systems, including the creation and/or updating of databases.

2019

A series of activities were discussed, identified, agreed on and tailored to address the needs of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro (MoARD) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania. Technical support identified was mainly on: fisheries data collection; exchange tours to avail of lessons learnt by other administrations in the process of accession to the European Union; enhancement of institutional capacity on Ecosystem services. Most of these activities were postponed to early 2020 and then postponed due to the pandemic. The workplan for 2019 identified in support to Bosnia and Herzegovina was postponed pending the outcomes of a Workshop on marine fisheries to be held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, planned in Mostar early 2020 and then postponed due to the pandemic. The workshop was meant to be open to all relevant stakeholders and aimed to further discuss on the technical support that the Project can provide and to gather inputs and feedback on the workplan.

2020/2021

In Montenegro, the MoARD was reorganized together with its Fisheries Directorate, now being the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. At the end of 2020 some actions of technical support were identified and support is being provided mainly on fisheries data collection/analysis and support to the national fisheries information systems and institutional capacity developing.

In Albania, technical support is being given on fisheries data collection (fisheries dependent data, socio-economic); aquaculture production statistics, (ancillary information on selected aquaculture activities); identification of a pilot action on Shkodra/Skadar Lake (Albania) on the use of aquaculture for stock enhancement purposes (see aquaculture section).

Liaison with the Department for International Relations and Project Coordination, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina was maintained during the pandemic. The possibility to identify possible pilot actions in the future were debated.

AdriaMed communication systems and visibility

The Project put in place a series of activities to enhance its visibility and ensure that participating countries are informed on the progress made in achieving the targets and outputs set during the Coordination Committee. These included: i) the updating of the AdriaMed web site (www.faoadriamed.org), ii) a leaflet (Project highlight) on the 10th year of support from EC DG-Mare “Promoting Sustainable Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea through Stronger Scientific Cooperation”; iii) a box on the enhancement on the management and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture work done in collaboration with the other NFIFM Mediterranean Projects, published in in the FAO + EU Partnership Report (Second Edition)¹; iii) enhancing the digital presence through GFCM and FAO websites as well as on social media (GFCM and FAO Twitter accounts); iv) a video with interviews to fishers/researchers “*Scientists and Small Scale fishers: stronger together for a sustainable future*” prepared in occasion of the SSF University DAY²; v) a box on the case of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit fisheries restricted area published in “The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2020”³, vi) a brochure on the work carried out in the past twenty years by the AdriaMed and MedSudMed Projects.

The visibility plan put in place resulted in an improved visibility of the Donors contribution in the Mediterranean Sea, as well as in a raised awareness on the work done by the Project in supporting the target set at international level (e.g. UN-SDGs, GFCM mid-term strategy) (CC/21/info14).

Information on Aquatic and Fishery Sciences (ASFA)

As one of the ASFA International Partners, the AdriaMed Project is continuing the activities carried out so far for the inclusion of Adriatic Scientific publications in the ASFA database. AdriaMed is also supporting the two Collaboration Centres created at the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (IOF) in Split, Croatia, and at the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor (Montenegro).

2019

A report summarizing the activities carried out was prepared and submitted to the ASFA Advisory Board Meeting (22-26 September 2019, UMT, Terengganu, Malaysia). In this context, articles from journals published in Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia (e.g. *Acta Adriatica*, *Ribarstvo*, *Anali za Istrske in Mediteranske študije-Series Historia Naturalis*, *Natura Croatica*, *Natura Slovenica*, *Studia Marina*) are regularly included in the ASFA database. In addition, as support to the other FAO Mediterranean Projects, the Project included in the AdriaMed ASFA Monitoring List all the documents issued by the projects CopeMed II, EastMed and MedSudMed.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/cb2372en/CB2372EN.pdf>

² <https://gfcml.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/SecPortal/EVnohYTrRYFErrVN7UaM6xgBAYJfc0ONmk6V32mLwPOgtg?e=M2FqYX>

³ FAO. 2020. The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2020. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb2429en> Last updated 10/03/2021 (page 125).

2020/2021

Technical problems with the old ASFA software delayed the data input process. This was reflected in the annual report submitted, in summer 2020, to the annual ASFA Board meeting (on line via ZOOM, 10-14 August 2020). In February 2021, a new software (namely OpenASFA) was launched. AdriaMed was among the ASFA partners that were testing the software before the official release. Training sessions on the use of the new software are being attended. The main achievements of this activity were: i) Improved dissemination of scientific information in the sub-region and worldwide; ii) Improved scientific capacity at national level; iii) Adriatic scientific journals included in the ASFA database; iv) all the FAO Mediterranean Projects documents regularly included in the ASFA database (CC/21/info12).

2. Supporting the establishment of a sub-regional fisheries monitoring system, based on standardized research methodologies

As part of its mandate, AdriaMed continued to support the establishment of fisheries monitoring systems in the Adriatic Sea (at national and sub-regional levels) through, *inter alia*, the standardization of the methodologies commonly applied on fisheries research and data collection. The activities within this component foresees support to scientific surveys, coordination meetings, and scientific research activities, addressing both demersal and small pelagic fisheries resources and socio-economic fisheries related aspects.

The Project is assisted in its technical work by thematic Working Groups (i.e. on Demersals, Small Pelagics, Small Scale Fisheries and Socio-economics). Each Working Group is supported by specific Study Groups as follows. The Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources is backed by thematic Study Groups (e.g. Study Group on Jabuka/Pomo Pit; Study group on stock assessment; Study group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading). The Working Group on Small Pelagic Fisheries Resources is usually assisted by the Study Group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading and the Study Group on Daily Eggs Production Method (DEPM).

Demersal fisheries resources

The Project continued its support to the development of a sub-regional fisheries monitoring system as well as fostering scientific cooperation in the area.

Study Group on Jabuka/Pomo Pit (SG-JP)

The activities, discussion held and outputs of the SG-JP are reported under Objective 3.

Working Group on Shared Demersal Fisheries Resources (WG-DEM)

2019

The annual meeting of the AdriaMed Working Group on Shared Demersal Fisheries Resources (WG-DEM) was held in FAO-HQs, Rome, Italy on 24-25 October 2019. The meeting was attended by researchers from the Adriatic fisheries research institutes of the countries involved in the Project. The WG-DEM discussed and defined the main issues to be addressed for the next intersessional period: 1) to identify the emerging

needs and priorities of the fisheries Research Institutions on data processing and analysis of the shared demersal stocks of the Adriatic Sea; 2) to follow up on the GFCM Recommendation GFCM41/201/3 *on the establishment of a Fisheries Restricted Area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area*, by setting a meeting of the Study group on Jabuka/Pomo Pit before the GFCM SubRegional Committee of the Adriatic Sea (May 2020) to report on the monitoring plan; 3) to proceed with the appraisal and stock assessment of demersal stocks. A series of scientific contributions stemming from the work of the WG-DEM, (full details can be found in the related Meeting Memorandum were jointly prepared and presented at the GFCM Working Group on Stock Assessment of Demersal (November 2019). As a result, the stock assessments of *Solea solea* in GSA 17, of *Sepia officinalis* in GSA 17, of *Squilla mantis* in GSA 17 and of *Squilla mantis* in GSA 18 were validated. Moreover the benchmark stock assessment of *Merluccius merluccius* in GSA 17 and 18 was updated thanks to the contribution of the project. (CC/21/info4 and CC/21/info 5).

2020/2021

To cope with the pandemic emergency and the difficulties to organize in person meetings and on the field activities, the Project carried out a series of online thematic sessions of the WG-DEM the aim was to adapt the activities planned according to the new situation. The series of meetings comprised eight sessions held from 18 May to 8 June 2020 plus additional sessions on 11 and 18 December 2020. The meetings were attended on average by 25 researchers from all the Adriatic fisheries research institutes of the countries involved in the project. The WG-DEM discussed and defined the work plan for the next months, which includes: i) the identification of emerging needs and priorities due to the new situation; ii) follow up on the GFCM Recommendation GFCM41/201/3 on the establishment of a Fisheries Restricted Area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area, by continuing the monitoring of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit and initiating the preparation of a document on the monitoring activities of the past three years, according to the SAC monitoring plan and by setting several meetings of the Study group on Jabuka/Pomo Pit before the GFCM Subregional Committee of the Adriatic Sea (April 2021) to report on the monitoring plan; iii) to formulate the request of a benchmark assessment for *Mullus barbatus* at the next GFCM Working Group on Stock Assessment of Demersal (WGSAD); iv) to establish an ad hoc Study group on *Mullus barbatus* to progress on the data preparation for the benchmark assessment; v) advancing with the appraisal and stock assessment of selected demersal stocks; vi) progressing on the assessment of vulnerability of fisheries to climate change; and vii) the preparation of a draft document compiling all the information available and possible management options for the creation of a sanctuary zone for *Solea solea* in the North Adriatic Sea.

Five scientific contributions stemming from the work of the WG-DEM were jointly prepared and presented at the GFCM WGSAD (January 2021): an updated assessment for the entire Adriatic Sea for *M. merluccius* (GSA 17 and 18), stock assessment for *Squilla mantis*, *Sepia officinalis* for GSA 17 and *Aristeomorpha foliacea* (GSA 18-19). Elements for the extension of the monitoring plan on Jabuka/Pomo Pit were presented for discussion at the GFCM Subregional Committee of the Adriatic Sea (April 2021) (CC/21/info4; CC/21/info5).

Study Group on *Mullus barbatus*

2020/2021

The AdriaMed Study Group on *Mullus barbatus* (SG-MUL) was established in 2020 to support the AdriaMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources (WG-DEM). During the AdriaMed WG-DEM in December 2020, the participants agreed on the request of a benchmark assessment of *Mullus barbatus* to be formulated to the GFCM SAC. The SG-MUL is aimed at the data preparation in support to the benchmark assessment of *Mullus barbatus* in 2021. The first meeting of the SG-MUL was held virtually on Skype on 15 January 2021. The meeting was attended by researchers from the Adriatic fisheries research institutes involved in Project activities. In particular, the first meeting was aimed at finalizing the presentation to be delivered at the forthcoming GFCM WGSAD (January 2021) for the request of a benchmark assessment session focused on *Mullus barbatus* in the Adriatic Sea (CC/21/info7).

Study Group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading (SG-OTH-DEM)

The Project progressed towards the harmonization of methodologies for fish ageing, growth parameters estimation of demersal resources.

2019

A first meeting of the *Study Group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading* (SG-OTH-DEM) was held on 24-25 May 2018 (Torre a Mare, Italy) with a session on *Solea solea* aimed at the definition of a common protocol to read sole otoliths. The Study Group was aimed at identifying: i) the possible causes of the differences found in the interpretation of otoliths structure of this species; ii) common steps to improve the precision of the readers and consequently the level of agreement; iii) common ageing criteria and ageing scheme; iv) a roadmap for otoliths exchange in the Adriatic Sea. During the first meeting, a road map to overcome some discrepancies on the ageing of *Solea* was agreed upon, this includes several steps: 1) Marginal otolith increment analysis; 2) preparation of sections/images for reading exercise; 3) reading exercise; 4) definition of ALKs for *S. solea*. In addition, the SG-OTH-DEM in May 2018 agreed to progress on the ageing (intercalibration) of *S. solea* otoliths by comparing three preparation methods (whole otolith, section, burnt section). As part of the roadmap, a second meeting was held in FAO-HQs, 29-30 October 2018. In this meeting a common set of *Solea* otoliths (~500 otoliths) was created for both the marginal analysis and the intercalibration. The common set of otoliths started to circulate among the research institutions involved in the exchange exercise in November 2018 for the marginal analysis. In July 2019 the exercise was completed. On November 2019 the common set of otoliths for the age reading (including the three preparation methods) was prepared and read by the experts. A copy of the images was circulated among experts for finalizing the reading. A follow up skype meeting was organized on 26 November 2019 with all the experts resulting in progresses toward full reading standardisation. As per roadmap identified, a further follow up meeting has been planned in 2020.

2020/2021

The reading of the common set of otoliths was concluded in February 2020. The Project organized two sessions of the SG-OTH-DEM dedicated to *Solea solea* as part of the virtual meetings of the Working Group of Demersal Fisheries Resources. (session I: 3 June 2020; session II: 6 June 2020). In both the sessions, the results of the first reading exercise were jointly examined by all the involved experts. As follow up of the discussion, the agreement on a common ageing scheme was consolidated but problems

in interpretation of common age criteria were further highlighted. Accordingly, the SG-OTH-DEM concurred to further progress through on line meetings and with the launching of a second reading exercise. Two additional meetings were organized on line (28 September 2020; 14 January 2021) during which the experts agreed: i) to repeat the reading exercise; ii) to provide the experts of stock assessment of *Solea solea* with clear indication on the age data of the species by the end of February and before the benchmark assessment planned in April 2021; iii) to address the future problems of discrepancies on age data between the correct dataset that will be used in the stock assessment and the official one (still not corrected) (CC/21/info4 and CC/21/info6).

Support to the research programmes on demersal stocks in the Adriatic

In the framework of the activities on demersal fisheries resources, the Project is supporting research programmes/activities focused on demersal fisheries resources.

MEDITS

2019

The Project supported the participation of experts from the south-eastern Adriatic (Montenegro) in the annual MEDITS Coordination meeting (Sète, France, 16-17 April 2019). In addition, the extension of the MEDITS trawl survey to the eastern waters of the South Adriatic Sea (Albania and Montenegro) was ensured by the Project with scientific campaigns carried out in August 2019; the survey was conducted in close cooperation with COISPA Tecnologia & Ricerca (Bari, Italy), the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor –University of Montenegro (Montenegro) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania. In total, 20 sampling stations covering Albania (15) and Montenegro (5) were performed. Occasion was taken while on board for training on data collection and species identification the new scientific staff of Albania and Montenegro (CC/21/info8).

2020/2021

Due to the combination of shortage in funding (EC co-funding foreseen during the Coordination Committee were not secured) and the COVID-19 pandemic emergency (e.g. all surveys at sea were suspended at national and international level) the MEDITS surveys planned to cover GSA 18 (Albania and Montenegro) in 2020 were not carried out.

***Solea solea* related activities**

2019

The SoleMon survey was carried out within the framework of the Italian National programme for the data collection. To ensure the completion of the SoleMon related activities, AdriaMed supported the participation of Croatian experts on board of the SoleMon survey in November 2019 and the joint analysis of the data collected.

2020/2021

Joint analysis of the data collected was done for the preliminary work before the benchmark assessment of *Solea solea* in April 2021 (CC/21/info6).

Jabuka/Pomo Pit monitoring activity

Bottom trawl survey (2019-2020-2021). The project organized and supported a winter bottom trawl survey in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area (March 2019, March 2020 and March 2021). The survey was part of the monitoring plan for the Jabuka/Pomo Pit fisheries restricted area (FRA) approved by the 20th SAC session and the 42nd GFCM session. The survey was carried out in collaboration with the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Split (Croatia), the University of Bologna- of Marine Biology Laboratory of Fano (Italy), and GFCM Secretariat. The sampling at sea was carried out by the R/V Bios Dva (Croatia) and the M/P Andrea (Italy). Twenty sampling stations (hauls) were performed according to the MEDITS protocol inside the FRA (no-take zone), and outside, in the buffer zone. Preliminary results were illustrated at the GFCM SubRegional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (April 2019 and April 2021). On the basis of the observed increased abundance and size of many priority species in the FRA during the surveys, the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee underlined that the establishment, implementation and monitoring of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA should be considered an example of best practice in Mediterranean. The report summarizing the three years of activities is being prepared.

Underwater TV survey: The Project is continuing to support scientific activities carried out in the Pomo/Jabuka Pits area on *Nephrops norvegicus* stocks. The Institute of Marine Biological Resources and Biotechnologies (CNR-IRBIM) of Ancona (Italy) in cooperation with the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Split (Croatia), organized an evaluation of the *N. norvegicus* stock in the Jabuka/Pomo pits area using the towed UnderWater TV (UWTV) methodology.

2019

The survey was carried out on 6-24 May 2019. The survey is one of the methods included in the GFCM *Monitoring plan (2018-2020) for the Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA* for the monitoring of the area. A video reading session was organized and held in Ancona (Italy) from the 9th to the 20th of September 2019 to joint analyse the data collected. In the session, as suggested by the ICES WGNEPS (ICES 2019), the Lin's Concordance Correlation Coefficient test (Lin's CCC; Leocádio et al. 2018⁴) was applied for the first time to carry out: i) training on Adriatic Reference set and test on readers' performances, ii) 2019 footage analysis and validation of stations during the readings, iii) revision and consolidation of the 2012-2017 time series (CC/21/info10).

2020/2021

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic the survey in spring 2020 was not performed. The autumn survey was performed in October 2020 and the spring summer in April 2021. The results of the 2019 and autumn 2020 surveys were presented at the ICES Working Group on *Nephrops* Surveys (WGNEPS) 17-19 November 2020, Online Meeting (Webex). A scientific article on the work of standardizing CPUE data on *Nephrops norvegicus* from UWTV surveys in the Pomo Pits area is being prepared. (CC/21/info10).

⁴ Leocádio, A., Weetman, A., and Wieland, K. (Eds). 2018. Using UWTV surveys to assess and advise on *Nephrops* stocks. ICES Cooperative Research Report No. 340. 49 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.4370>

Small pelagic fisheries resources

The Project put strong emphasis, during the intersessional period, on activities related to the small pelagic fish and fisheries. All the activities were aimed at supporting the improvement and further development of the GFCM Multiannual management plan in place in the Adriatic Sea targeting small pelagic fisheries (Rec. GFCM/37/2013/1). In particular, most of the Project efforts focused towards fulfilling the workplan proposed for the finalization of the benchmark session on the stock assessment of anchovy and sardine in the Adriatic Sea set by the national experts at the GFCM.

2019

In this context, with the support of the Project, Adriatic experts were called to cope with the GFCM and SAC requests. The benchmark session for the assessment of European anchovy and sardine in the Adriatic Sea was held at FAO headquarters (May 2019); it was preceded by two data preparation meetings (jointly organized by the GFCM and AdriaMed). Despite full data up to 2018 being provided by all countries, the basic analyses for standardisation and merging needed to develop and consolidate the combined data set, could not be completed before the benchmark; therefore time was devoted to this task during the benchmark meeting. To complete the benchmark process a further follow-up meeting was deemed necessary by experts that, agreed to provide advice on the state of both stocks by updating the 2018 assessments and postponing the benchmark process to the end of 2019.

To further support the process, the Project organized:

2019

Joint acoustic and ichthyoplankton survey in the South Adriatic Sea (GSA 18) June/July 2019;

Intercalibration exercise on otoliths readings (anchovy) July-October 2019;

AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea - 1st meeting: FAO-HQs, 14 -15 March 2019;

AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea- 2nd meeting: FAO-HQs, 16 -17 April 2019;

Follow up meeting on intercalibration exercise (anchovy): FAO-HQs, 11 December 2019;

1. Joint acoustic and ichthyoplankton survey in the South Adriatic Sea (GSA 18)

In June-July 2019, a joint acoustic and ichthyoplankton survey using the Research Vessel “Dallaporta” covering South Adriatic waters (GSA18) was organized. The survey was organised in cooperation with CNR-IRBIM Ancona (Italy), the University of Montenegro - Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor (Montenegro) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania. The survey in Albania in 2019 was covered by a bilateral project between Albania and Italy (MARITEC CNR-IAMB). In Montenegro, although everything organized, the survey was not performed due to vessel technical problems together with the limited number of days of ship-time of the R/V Dallaporta.

2. Intercalibration exercise on otoliths readings (anchovy) July-October 2019

With regards to the Anchovy Age Length Keys (ALK), an otolith ageing intercalibration exercise (anchovy) was launched in the framework of the Project in July

2019 and a common set of otoliths was created to progress in the reading exercise. The set was constituted by about 50 individuals by country (290 otoliths), covering as much as possible all the length classes present in the samples, with a particular attention to large individuals. The otoliths were from commercial and/or acoustic sampling. The reading exercise was concluded in October 2019 and an external expert was called to assist in the finalization of the intercalibration (Mr Andrés Uriarte from ATZI). Detailed analysis of the exercise are reported in the data preparation meeting reports (CC/21/info3).

3. *AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea - 1st meeting*: FAO-HQs, 14 -15 March 2019

4. *AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea- 2nd meeting*: FAO-HQs, 16 -17 April 2019

The two AdriaMed-GFCM Meetings on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics were jointly organized with the GFCM; the meetings were aimed at preparing the input data in view of the benchmark session on anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus*) and sardine (*Sardina pilchardus*) of the GFCM - Working Group of Stock Assessment of Small Pelagic Species (May 2019). The meetings: i) succeeded in the definition of some parameters and assumptions to be used for the benchmark assessment (ageing; growth parameters, potential models and time series); and ii) agreed on a time frame to solve possible pending or unsolved issues before the benchmark. The outcomes of the meeting were used as basis for the benchmark assessment (CC/21/info3).

5. *Follow-up meeting on intercalibration exercise (anchovy)*: FAO-HQs, 11 December 2019

The meeting was organized taking advantage of the concomitant GFCM Working Groups on Stock Assessment (WGAS-SP December 2019) and saw the participation of all the experts involved on the ageing of anchovy through otolith reading. The meeting saw also *via skype* the participation of Ms Leire Ibaibarriaga and Mr Andres Uriarte from ATZI respectively the stock external reviewer called by the GFCM in occasion of the benchmark session, and the international expert called by AdriaMed to facilitate the intercalibration exercise on anchovy otoliths. The meeting agreed on: 1) provide the whole set of otoliths (real otoliths and images) to Mr Uriarte with the length distribution from catches and from surveys; 2) explore the possibility to organize a tailored training on FLSAM to selected Adriatic expert/s; 3) organize on middle January 2020 a skype meeting to follow up on ageing and the use of possible alternative models; 4) Organize a third data preparation meeting aimed at conclude the discussion on ageing and at reviewing the remaining pending tasks before the benchmark. In terms of model to be used for the benchmark, for anchovy the first option would be FLSAM, with other options (SS3, two-stage, etc.) to be investigated if problems arise. All the assessment model settings should be defined before the benchmark planned at the beginning of 2020. The conclusions were reported at the GFCM WGAS-SP (CC/21/info3).

2020/2021

AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea-3rd meeting: FAO-HQs, 4-6 February 2020.

Skype meeting to progress towards the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea
(online meeting, 21 April 2020)

6. *AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea-3rd meeting: FAO-HQs, 4-6 February 2020*

The third data preparation meeting co-organized with the GFCM was attended by all the experts involved on the ageing and stock assessment of small pelagics in the Adriatic. The meeting: i) reached an overall agreement on ageing among the otoliths readers of about 80%; ii) reviewed the remaining pending tasks before the benchmark and related identifying actions to be completed before the benchmark; and iii) identified the experts to be trained on FLSAM in March 2020 (CC/21/info3).

AdriaMed Skype meeting to progress towards the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea (online meeting, 21 April 2020)

Due to the emergency situation of COVID-19, a virtual meeting on progresses towards the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea (on line, Skype, 21 April 2020) was carried out in view of the follow-up benchmark meeting (June 2020). The meeting identified actions to be completed before and after the benchmark and agreed on a roadmap towards the benchmark. As further follow up and technical backstopping, the Project participated in the GFCM “Online follow-up benchmark session for the assessment of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea”. The Project provided backstopping during the GFCM second benchmark session (Online sessions, June–December 2020) (CC/21/info3).

Small scale fisheries

AdriaMed Working Group on Small Scale Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea 2019

The annual WG-SSF was organized and held on 22-23 October 2019, FAO HQs, Rome. The meeting succeeded to: i) progress on the mapping exercise on small scale fisheries initiated in the framework of the AdriaMed Project in 2017/2018 and agreed to prepare a joint scientific article with the data collected so far; ii) progress on Recreational Fisheries with the identification of possible common criteria for the preparation of a joint contribution on the interactions between SSF and RFs (to be presented to the forthcoming GFCM WG RFs; iii) define a joint proposal to contribute to the SSF University; iv) follow up on the on-going activities on non indigenous species (NIS) with the LEK II protocol and on a specific tailored survey based on LEK for *Callinectes sapidus*; v) contribute to the assessment of vulnerability to climate of fisheries launched in the Adriatic; and vi) plan future activities (CC/21/info9).

2020/2021

The Project continued to foster discussions on (SSF) and is currently supporting the drafting of a scientific paper underlying the method used and the results achieved in terms of fishing grounds mapping in the Adriatic Sea and south-central Mediterranean. The paper will put the accent on the cooperative work carried out, and on the development and consolidation of a standard method for collecting SSF data directly from fishers.

SSF University DAY

2020/2021

As follow up of the indication of the WG SSF, the Project organized an event within the SSF University launched by the GFCM. The event was named *SSF University DAY*, held on 10 November 2020. The event was organized in cooperation with the other FAO Mediterranean Projects (CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed) and the GFCM BlackSea4Fish Project. The DAY, initially thought as a meeting in presence, was carried out virtually on ZOOM, to cope with the COVID-19 emergency, and took place simultaneously in the countries where the FAO Mediterranean Projects operate. The DAY foresaw a common initial moment followed by national workshops in local languages to address common regional SSF issues such as collaborative science (including participatory data collection, reporting and monitoring), local ecological knowledge (LEK), climate change and environmental impacts of fishing.

Over 200 participants from all over the Mediterranean and Black Sea participated to the DAY. Fourteen institutions were involved from 16 localities. To ensure visibility and contribute to the event one video was prepared with interviews to fishers/researchers, a dedicated page on the GFCM web site was published and some tweets were posted (in the same order, the links below).

<https://gfcmlive.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/SecPortal/EVnohYTrRYFErVN7UaM6xgBAYJfc00Nmk6V32mLwPOgtg?e=M2FqYX>

<http://www.fao.org/gfcm/news/detail/en/c/1329375/>

https://twitter.com/UN_FAO_GFCE/status/1326089577422065664?s=20

https://twitter.com/UN_FAO_GFCE/status/1326186863271538691

In addition, as outcome of this day, the projects have been included in the FAO SSF Technical Network and participated in the SSF Technical network meeting dedicated to Near East and North Africa (16 November 2020) (*CC/21/info14*).

Effects of climate change on fisheries

In the framework of the Mid-term strategy (2017–2020) for fisheries and for aquaculture in the Mediterranean, the development of an adaptation strategy to cope with the effects of non-indigenous species and climate change on fisheries was planned. In this line, an Expert meeting on Climate Change implications for Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries was held at FAO HQs, Rome in December 2017. On that occasion, a methodology and approach for the assessment of vulnerability of fisheries to climate change were agreed on. The same methodology was endorsed by the 42nd session of the GFCM (FAO HQs, Rome, November 2018). As follow up, the SAC (Cairo, Egypt, June 2019), endorsed a programme towards the development of an adaptation strategy for

climate change and non-indigenous species. AdriaMed, in cooperation with the other Mediterranean Projects (CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed) and the GFCM, initiated a study to evaluate the vulnerability assessment of Mediterranean fisheries to climate change at subregional level. The activity stems also from the conclusion emanating by the GFCM Fish Forum 2018.

2019

The Project initiated, with the cooperation of ISPRA (Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research), the compilation of the available information on the topic. The methodology for the implementation of the Vulnerability Assessment (VA) to climate change on the small pelagic and demersal fisheries in the Adriatic was presented at the AdriaMed Working group on Small Scale Fisheries (FAO HQs, October 2019) and the AdriaMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources (FAO HQs, October 2019) with the aim of engaging national experts in the assessment and receive feedback on the process. The consequences of climate change on fishing communities will be evaluated on the basis of their exposure to it, the sensitivity of target species and ecosystems to climate change and fishermen's ability to adapt to climate change. The VA consisted of two outputs: i) a table with the possible pathways of different climate impact drivers on different expected impacts and ii) a synthesis table (matrix) with the resulting vulnerability score.

2020/2021

The methodology and some preliminary results on the Adriatic and Mediterranean in general were presented at the *2020 International Forum on the Effects of Climate Change on Fisheries and Aquaculture* (FAO-HQs, 25-26 February 2020).

In March 2020, the Project facilitated the design and development of an online survey to involve Adriatic experts, in the expert judgement phase of the study on vulnerability. The online survey was launched in April 2020. Nineteen replies were received thus testing and validating the baseline document. The results of the experts' judgement were preliminary presented and discussed during the eighth session of the AdriaMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources (8 June 2020). A scientific document summarizing the results obtained in all the Mediterranean, including the Adriatic, with the same methodology was prepared "*Technical inputs to the regional adaptation strategy to cope with the effects of climate change on fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea*". The paper was presented at the various GFCM Sub Regional Committees meetings (between February and May 2021, including the SRC of the Adriatic Sea in April 2021) (*CC/21/info 11*).

Non Indigenous Species (NIS)

Following the indication received by the AdriaMed Working Group on Small Scale Fisheries, the Project is promoting a series of research activities addressing the emerging biotic changes of Adriatic diversity. The Adriatic research institutions are collecting information on Non Indigenous Species (NIS) by using the protocol agreed upon during the AdriaMed WG-SSF in January 2017 and now indicated as one of the methods for the

detection of invasive species by the GFCM. Synergies with the EC-INTERREG⁵ MPA-Adapt project were established and CIESM, for the adoption and use of the new protocol, based on the Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) methodology, for detecting fish diversity and exotic species occurrence in the Adriatic Sea by means of interviews. The list of target species to be covered on a routine basis was agreed upon during the AdriaMed WG SSF (October 2019) (*CC/21/info9*).

2020/2021

Considering the difficulties on field activities during the first phases of the pandemic emergency, and in order to reach a wider awareness of the NIS and LEK themes, the Project, organized an online webinar on LEK on 11 June 2020 through the Zoom platform. The webinar was organized in cooperation with the other Mediterranean Projects (CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed) and with the MPA-ENGAGE project ‘Engaging Mediterranean key actors in Ecosystem Approach to manage Marine Protected Areas (MPA) to face Climate change’. More than 80 participants attended the webinar on LEK. The webinar focused on approaches and methods to engage local experts, such as fishers and divers, and value their knowledge for scientific studies.

Fishery dependent data collection and analysis

The Project continued to provide technical support to the participating countries on the national fisheries statistics systems.

Biological sampling

2019-2021

The Project supported the collection of biological sampling in in the main fishing ports of Albania, (Durrës, Shëngjin and Vlorë). The biological sampling has been planned and carried out in line with the requirements of the GFCM-Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF), thus considering target species accordingly. Data on species of the DCRF Group 1 and selected species of DCRF Group 2 were collected, except in the acute phase of pandemic emergency when all the activities were forbidden in the country, and are now available for describing fisheries dynamics and stock assessment.

Socio-economic surveys in Albania and Montenegro

2019-2021

Montenegro: Following the request formulated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro, the Project supported the fisheries socio-economic data collection in the country. The data collection was completed in February 2019 according to standardised protocol as developed in the Project framework and adopted as standard procedure in the Mediterranean by the GFCM. In addition, the project supported the analysis of the data collected during the fisheries socio-economic data collection in 2020 in collaboration with the GFCM Secretariat.

⁵ INTERREG V – B MEDITERRANEAN (MED) COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2014-2020

Albania: Following the request formulated by the Fishery & Aquaculture Policies Sector of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania, the Project is supporting the collection of fisheries socio-economic data in the country. Two surveys were carried out in January-February 2019 and 2021. The surveys were carried out according to standardised protocol as developed in the Project framework and adopted as standard procedure in the Mediterranean by the GFCM.

Training sessions

The Project continued to improve national capacity at institutional level by organizing training activities according to the requests formulated by the participating countries. In this context:

2019

The FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, in close cooperation with the FAO Mediterranean Projects (including AdriaMed), the GFCM and the European Commission Joint Research Center (JRC), organized the third edition of the “Summer School in quantitative fisheries stock assessment”. The Summer School was held at IAS-CNR of Capo Granitola, Italy, in two consecutive modules, Module I from 8 to 12 July and Module II from 15 to 19 July 2019. Module I was planned as an introduction to the statistic environment R and on its use for basic data handling and statistical analysis in preparation of fisheries studies. Module II focused on the R libraries in FLR (Fisheries Libraries in R) and their use for stock assessment. The activity was preceded by a long preparatory phase that included the setting of school contents, dissemination of information, selection of lecturers and participants, a series of logistic and formal arrangements at IAS-CNR of Capo Granitola.

2020/2021

In 2020 the COVID Pandemic prevented the organisation of the Summer School in presence according to the consolidated formula. However, to cope both with the pandemic emergency, and with the need to continue the capacity development programme launched, the Project, in close cooperation with the FAO Fisheries Division and the other FAO Mediterranean Projects, organized a series of training courses on line focused on fisheries stock assessment and fisheries management:

- *Training workshop "Introduction to integrated stock assessment using Stock Synthesis" (co-organized with NOAA, 5-9 October 2020)*

The training was organized, in collaboration with the FAO-Fisheries Division and the USA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The course was delivered by a team of lecturers from FAO, NOAA and EU JRC, including the main developers of the Stock Synthesis model. It was attended by 15 participants and 8 observers from 8 countries in the Western-Central Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea, areas in which integrated assessment models are currently being used as part of the benchmark process. The course aimed at illustrating concepts of integrated assessment models as well as on getting trainees acquainted with the integrated assessment package Stock Synthesis. The first half of the workshop focused on the overview of the program and detailed setups of data and parameters. The second half, consisted on theoretical and practical sessions, during which students applied the model to datasets provided by

the trainers, and could examine model outputs, retrospective analysis and sensitivity tests for a full model diagnostics and provision of advice.

- *Online Course/Workshop on Empirical Indicators for Fisheries Management Advice (19-23 October 2020)*

The training was organized in collaboration with the FAO-Fisheries Division. The course was attended by 27 participants, mainly senior scientists from 13 Mediterranean countries involved in the project's activities. The course focused on Empirical Management Procedures and particularly on the development, selection, and use of empirical indicators to provide operational fisheries management advice. Its starting point was the set of basic requirements of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries applied to Fisheries Management Processes. During the training, most of the time was dedicated to discussing the process and criteria for selecting, validating, using and communicating empirical indicators, and also on how to run a peer-validation process for improving the credibility and legitimacy of the indicators and their use in management. A pool of indicators was selected and real data exercises on two stocks formally assessed respectively as over- and under- exploited in the Mediterranean were completed. The results were discussed to highlight properties of indicators and to compare the indicator findings with the outcomes of model-based assessment.

- *Training Workshop "Introduction to GADGET" (23-27 November 2020)*

The training was co-organised by the GFCM Technical Unit of Malaga and was aimed at improving the skills of participants to deal with multi-species, multi-fleet and multi-area stock assessment practices. GADGET is an integrated approach to account for issues such as migration, selectivity of different fleets, different life stages of the individuals in the stock and environmental variables all in a statistical framework. Delivered by Bjarki Elvarsson and Pamela Woods from the Icelandic Institute of Marine and freshwater Research who are the developers of the model, the course has been attended by twelve participants from five Mediterranean countries and tackles assessment of important species such as blackspot seabream, hake and mullets.

Overall, a total of 52 researchers participated to the trainings, ~15% from the Adriatic countries. The participants acquired the skills to initiate running two stock assessment models, like Stock Synthesis and GADGET, and an understanding of the use of empirical indicators for producing direct advice for fisheries management.

3. Identification of management schemes to be applied on a pilot scale in selected zones with the aim of strengthening international and regional cooperation

4. Supporting shared resource management decisions, including promotion of harmonized fisheries legislation

The Project continued in its pilot approach through multilevel consultations (fisheries administration and research institutions) towards the identification of possible management options for the Adriatic Sea fisheries. This approach follows the recommendations of the AdriaMed Coordination Committees and of the FAO Independent External Evaluation of the Project (June 2012), and pursues the objective

of providing technical advice for fisheries management decisions at national and sub-regional levels. This component of the Project is taking more and more importance considering also the implementation of the GFCM Recommendations aimed at establishing sub-regional multiannual management plans for fisheries, as per Resolution GFCM/36/2012⁶; GFCM/37/2013⁷ and GFCM/37/2013/2E⁸.

In the intersessional period, the attention was mainly dedicated to the a) Jabuka/Pomo area; b) small pelagic fisheries and c) identification of Essential Fish Habitats.

a) **Jabuka/Pomo Pit**

In the past years, the Project supported several activities aimed at exploring and collecting sound scientific evidences on the feasibility of creating a protected zone in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area, indicating different management measures and their possible benefits. On October 2017, following the scientific evidences collected through the years, the GFCM endorsed the Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/3 *on the establishment of a fisheries restricted area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in the Adriatic Sea*. In 2016, following the request of the AdriaMed Working Group of Demersal Fisheries Resources, endorsed by the Project Coordination Committee meeting in its 18th session (March 2017), the Project established a Study Group on Jabuka/Pomo Pit (SG-JP). The SG-JP is aimed at facilitating: the coordination of the scientific monitoring of demersal resources in the area; the debate on recording data on fishing activities; the coordination of stock assessment activities on hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) and Norway lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*); the informal debate among scientists, administrations and stakeholders to develop specific inputs for future management strategies in the area. On 22-23 February 2018, the Project organized the first meeting of the SG-JP. As follow up of the meeting, a draft monitoring plan for the Jabuka/Pomo pit area was prepared and illustrated at the GFCM SubRegional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (April 2018) and endorsed, by the 20th session of the SAC, as the *monitoring programme for the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area (2018-2020)*.

2019

To follow up on the monitoring plan, the Project organized a winter survey, carried out according to the MEDITS methodology, in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area in March 2019 (reported under Objective 2).

2020/2021

In March 2020 and March 2021 the Project supported the winter bottom trawl surveys in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area. Online thematic sessions on the FRA monitoring were organized within the AdriaMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources (sessions 1 to 4, May-June 2020).

In November 2020, during the WGDEM sessions, the Project advanced the work on Jabuka/Pomo Pit by planning a meeting of the SG-JP early 2021. The experts agreed

⁶ Guidelines on a general management framework and presentation of scientific information for multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in the GFCM area

⁷ Guidelines on precautionary conservation measures pending the development and adoption of GFCM multiannual management plans for relevant fisheries at sub-regional levels in the GFCM area

⁸ Guidelines on the management of fishing capacity in the GFCM area

and initiated to: i) prepare the table of contents of the document to be presented for inputs at the next GFCM-Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea and later on at the SAC; ii) assign with each other reporting responsibilities for each chapter; and iii) prepare an updated version of the monitoring programme. The elements for the new monitoring programme were drafted and presented, together with an overview of the monitoring plan implementation at the GFCM SubRegional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (20-23 April 2021) (CC/21/info4).

b) Multiannual management plan for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea

During the intersessional period, attention was dedicated to small pelagic fisheries, in the framework of the technical assistance to the countries, to cope with the *GFCM Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/3, GFCM/39/2015/1, GFCM/37/2013/1 and GFCM 38/2014/1*⁹. As reported under Objective 2, the following activities have been organized to contribute to the discussion on small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea (CC/21/info3):

Joint acoustic and ichthyoplankton survey in the South Adriatic Sea (GSA 18) June/July 2019;

Intercalibration exercise on otoliths readings (anchovy) July-October 2019;

AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea - 1st meeting: FAO-HQs, 14 -15 March 2019;

AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea- 2nd meeting: FAO-HQs, 16 -17 April 2019;

Follow up meeting on intercalibration exercise (anchovy): FAO-HQs, 11 December 2019;

AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea-3rd meeting: FAO-HQs, 4-6 February 2020.

Skype meeting to progress towards the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea (online meeting, 21 April 2020)

Strengthening the cooperation with the GFCM and other FAO Regional Projects

In order to strengthen international and regional cooperation, the Project interacted closely with the FAO Regional Project MedSudMed “*Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily*”, with support provided on administrative matters, information technology, as well as other technical issues. Several coordination meetings were held with the other regional projects, CopeMed II and EastMed throughout the year, in order to consolidate and plan common activities.

⁹ Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/3 establishing further emergency measures in 2017 and 2018 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (GSA 17 and GSA 18);

Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 on a multiannual management plan for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in the GFCM-GSA 17 (Northern Adriatic Sea) and on transitional conservation measures for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in GSA 18 (Southern Adriatic Sea);

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

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

The FAO/GFCM/JRC “Summer School in quantitative fisheries stock assessment” (Capo Granitola, Italy, 9 - 20 July 2019) described above is an example of successfully joint and coordinated activity. In this respect, the Project also participated in the Coordination Committee of CopeMed II (November 2019, February 2021); EastMed (November 2019, February 2021) and MedSudMed (February 2019).

Moreover, the following activities have been co-organized with all the Mediterranean Projects, reported above:

- *online webinar on LEK (11 June 2020)*
- *Training workshop "Introduction to integrated stock assessment using Stock Synthesis" (co-organized with NOAA, 5-9 October 2020)*
- *Online Course/Workshop on Empirical Indicators for Fisheries Management Advice (19-23 October 2020)*
- *SSF University DAY (10 November 2020) + video material on the event*
- *Training Workshop "Introduction to GADGET" (23-27 November 2020)*
-

The following material have been jointly produced:

- A box “*Enhancing the management and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture*”, contributing to the FAO + European Union Partnership Report was jointly prepared.
- A video with interviews to fishers/researchers “*Scientists and Small Scale fishers: stronger together for a sustainable future*” prepared in occasion of the SSF University DAY¹⁰;
- A brochure on the work carried out in the past twenty years by the AdriaMed and MedSudMed Projects.

In view of finding synergies and avoiding duplications, cooperative actions were carried out with the:

-EU Interreg funded Project *MPA-Adapt* on the use of a common protocol for collecting data on marine invasive species on routine basis as well as on data analysis;

-- EU funded Project MANTIS on the Adriatic stakeholder involvement and gather feedback on the simulations of spatial protection scenarios in the Adriatic (defined on the basis of scientific data and suggestions from fishers, as collected in the 2016-2017 questionnaires and meetings);

-- EU funded Project FAIRSEA (Fisheries in the Adriatic Region a Shared Ecosystem Approach);

--EU funded Project STREAM (STrengthening REgional cooperation in the Area of fisheries biological data collection in the Mediterranean and Black Sea);

GFCM

Cooperation was further sustained with the GFCM and its Subsidiary Bodies Joint activities have been organized together with several informal coordination meetings were held with the Commission Secretariat during the intersessional period, also back to back with Commission events, to strengthen the cooperation and find synergies (CC/21/info13).

¹⁰<https://gfcml.sharepoint.com/:v/g/SecPortal/EVnohYTrRYFErriVN7UaM6xgBAYJfc0ONmk6V32mLwPOgtg?e=M2FqYX>

2019

In March a joint mission in Montenegro was carried out with the GFCM Secretariat to discuss on planning of activities to be carried out in the country within the overall framework of the Mediterranean Mid-Term strategy (2017-2020) for fisheries and for aquaculture.

In March, the support to the bottom trawl survey in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit was jointly organized.

In July, the FAO/GFCM/JRC “Summer School in quantitative fisheries stock assessment” (Capo Granitola, Italy, 9 - 20 July 2019) was jointly organized.

In addition to the informal meetings, the following *ad-hoc* meetings were organized:

- Coordination meeting on the Summer School organization (FAO-HQs 7 May 2019);
- Coordination meeting on the GFCM data collection (16 May 2019);
- Coordination meeting on the Summer School organization (29 May 2019);
- Coordination meeting on the SAC workplan (3 June 2019; 23 June 2019);
- Preparatory meeting for Working Groups on Stock Assessment (19 July 2019);
- Coordination meeting on small pelagic workplan (12 July 2019);
- Coordination meeting on joint activities (27 September 2019)
- Coordination meeting for the workshop with farmers and farmers’ organization (28 October 2019);
- Coordination meeting on aquaculture activities (20 November 2019)

AdriaMed continued to support the activities of the GFCM by providing scientific contributions for discussion and by funding the participation of about 40 Adriatic experts in the following 9 GFCM events/meetings (both SAC and CAQ related) held in the intersessional period:

- Working Group on Small-Scale Fisheries (WGSSF) (6-7 March 2019, Podgorica, Montenegro);
- Benchmark session on small pelagic species in the Adriatic Sea (WGSASP-Session ANEPIL17-18) and Workshop on the assessment of management measures for small-pelagic species in the Adriatic Sea (WKMSE-AS) (13 - 18 May 2019, FAO HQ, Italy);
- SAC Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea (SRC-AS) (23-24 May 2019 Split, Croatia);
- SAC - 21th session (24-27 June 2019, Cairo, Egypt);
- Working group on VMS and related control systems (WGVMS); Working group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (WGIUU); Compliance Committee (CoC) - 13th session (16-19 July 2019, Tirana, Albania);
- CAQ - 11th session (10-12 September 2019, Malaga, Spain);
- 43rd session of the GFCM - 10th session of the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF) 4 - November 8 2019, Athens, Greece;
- Working Groups on stock assessment of demersal species (WGSAD) and small-pelagic species (WGSASP) 9 - 14 December 2019, FAO HQ, Rome, Italy;
- Workshop on Aquaculture Farmers and Farmer Organizations - Promoting Good Practices to Boost Responsible Aquaculture; 20 February 2020 Pordenone, Italy.

2020/2021

In November 2020, the SSF University DAY was jointly organized with the GFCM BlackSea4Fish Project

On 20 January 2020 before the pandemic last in person coordination meeting for joint activities was held. With the pandemic and the movement to digital platform numerous meetings were held, on average 4 per months of coordination.

The following GFCM meetings, in addition to the informal meetings were attended:

- Follow-up online sessions for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea – (multiple sessions, initiated on 15 June 2020; ended on 5 November 2020)
- Online Forum: Building fisheries and aquaculture resilience post COVID-19, 25 June 2020. The experience of international organizations response to the COVID-19 crisis
- CAQ webinar “COVID-19: Updated analysis of the impacts on fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and Black Sea” (30 June 2020)
- Online Forum: Building fisheries and aquaculture resilience post COVID-19, 1 July 2020. Experience of the aquaculture sector through best practices and mitigation measures facing the COVID-19 crisis
- Database on Sensitive Benthic Habitats and Species - Online Presentation, 17 July 2020
- Online Forum: Building fisheries and aquaculture resilience post COVID-19, 22 July 2020. The experience of small-scale fisheries in promoting social resilience and market innovation in response to the COVID-19 crisis
- BlackSea4Fish Online Presentation Series - Biological Reference Points (8 December 2020)
- BlackSea4Fish Online Presentation Series - Data limited stock assessment models” (22 December 2020).
- High-level meeting: Building together a new strategy for Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (3 November 2020)
- Presentation of the State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2020 (14 December 2020)
- Working Groups on stock assessment of demersal species (WGSAD) and small-pelagic species (WGSASP) (18-23 January 2021; 25-30 January 2021)
- Expert meeting on Stock Assessment Methodology (3-4 February 2021)
- Subregional Committee for the Western Mediterranean (17-19 February 2021)
- Working Group on Recreational Fisheries (24-25 February 2021)
- Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean (9-11 March 2021)
- Coordination Meeting - Building together a new strategy for Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture 29 March 2021
- Working Group on Fishing technology 8-9 April 2021)
- Benchmark for common sole in the Adriatic Sea (12-16 April 2021)
- Ad-hoc meeting of the GFCM Heads of Delegations (14 April 2021)
- Subregional Committee for the Adriatic Sea, including a session on the establishment of Adriatic FRAs (20-23 April 2021)

5. Supporting the development of responsible aquaculture, in particular for the enhancement of positive interaction between fisheries and aquaculture

The Project continued providing technical support to the countries on aquaculture related matters. The support is in line with the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Aquaculture (EAF/EAA) in the sustainable development of aquaculture. In this context, the Project also actively collaborated on technical issues with the CAQ activities, in line with the Resolution GFCM/41/2017/1 *on a strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture* (Strategy on Aquaculture).

Following the request of the MiPAAF, the Project planned a series of activities devoted to further support the development of aquaculture in the Adriatic region in line with the Strategy on Aquaculture. These include among other things: (i) enhance the potential of water resources for aquaculture development; (ii) lay the ground for the use of aquaculture for restocking purposes; (iii) provide technical assistance to recipient countries and national capacity building on fundamental aspects of responsible aquaculture; (iv) strengthen aquaculture farmers' organizations (AFOs) in their role of support to farmers; (v) enhance aquaculture data collection; (vi) ensure the coordination and synergy with other relevant aquaculture initiatives in the Adriatic region.

2019

The project continued to provide technical support to Albania on aquaculture related matters.

Aquaculture data collection: AdriaMed is continuing the support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to produce aquaculture production statistics in line with the guidelines set by the FAO Coordinating Working Party on Aquaculture Statistics (CWP), and the specific GFCM recommendations on reporting aquaculture data and information, namely Rec. GFCM/33/2009/4 and its subsequent amendments to Rec. GFCM/35/2011/6 and Rec. GFCM/41/2017/1.

Development and management of sustainable aquaculture in the Shkodra/Skadar Lake: Preliminary meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro and Albania were organized and held in October 2019, back to back with the AdriaMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources. The meetings purpose was to discuss and plan specific activities on the Shkodra/Skadar Lake. Among these, the compilation of the main environmental parameters and aquatic species, and on the socio-economic activities available in the area were already initiated, as well the identification of the main stakeholders related to aquaculture in the area. A plan for establishing a hatchery to secure a reliable and sufficient supply of good quality fingerlings in Shkodra/Skadar Lake for restocking purposes was discussed and planned with Albanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The plan foresaw the preparation of a demonstrative event early 2020. The plan identified several options and some suitable sites.

Strengthen aquaculture farmers' organizations (AFOs): In support of the exchange of technical information and knowledge sharing with CAQ to enhance the impact of

planned activities, the Project participated in the *Meeting with API on the GFCM workshop with farmers and farmer organizations at AquaFarm exhibition* (GFCM HQs, Rome, 28 October 2019). On that occasion, the plan of the AquaFarm exhibition (Italy, 2020) was presented by API and the contribution by FAO FIAA, FIAM, AdriaMed and MedSudMed was preliminary defined.

Moreover, activities to foster cooperation with the aquaculture farmer organizations (AFOs) and farmers and to organize training and capacity development for aquaculture farmers on best practices in shellfish and finfish aquaculture were identified with the purpose to launch them in the future months.

Technical Assistance: AdriaMed is supporting the Centre for Marine Biodiversity and Conservation “BOKAAQUARIUM” established at the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor (Montenegro). In spring 2019, technical advice was provided for the further development of the aquaria that the Centre will host. The BOKAAQUARIUM is the first public aquarium and conservation advocacy center of Montenegro and will accommodate three main aquaria representing the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Montenegro marine fauna. The main aim is to be a catalyst for global sustainability through promoting and practicing effective conservation on behalf of the Adriatic Sea’s wildlife.

2020/2021

Aquaculture data collection: The project is continuing the support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania to the profiling of the aquaculture sector to provide an in-depth knowledge of aquaculture industry. In this context the project supported the data collection to produce aquaculture production statistics in line with the guidelines set by the FAO CWP, and the specific GFCM recommendations on reporting aquaculture data and information, namely Rec. GFCM/33/2009/4 and its subsequent amendments to Rec. GFCM/35/2011/6 and Rec. GFCM/41/2017/1.

In addition, the project supported the collection on socio-economic data of aquaculture enterprises in selected areas of Albania to analyse the sector and the technical and economic analysis of the aquaculture enterprises in target countries. The data collected will be the base of an analysis to determine the factors affecting sustainability in the sector, considering the enterprise scale and farmed species difference in the aquaculture production, and to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Development and management of sustainable aquaculture in the Shkodra/Skadar Lake: Online meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania were held. The discussions were aimed at planning activities and actions to cope with the pandemic emergency and to overcome the already planned activities specific for the Shkodra/Skadar Lake. A workplan was shared with the Albania fisheries administration for inputs and discussion. Some activities were identified aiming at revitalizing the food production in the Shkodra/Skadar Lake system. This will be done, among others, by enhancing its potential in terms of finfish production (e.g. common carp) through the use of aquaculture-based fisheries. The feasibility to implement the activities as pilot

action was discussed with the fisheries administration and the local stakeholders. The pilot action took advantage of the reproduction season of common carp (therefore of spawners availability in the lake) in spring time and was launched early May 2021. This included: i) Capturing and handle broodstock of native common carp; ii) Preparation of areas for carps, equipped for induced breeding (net enclosures set-up in the lake shores for the natural spawning); iii) Reproduction of common carp broodstock.

Strengthen aquaculture farmers' organizations (AFOs): Activities to foster cooperation with the aquaculture farmer organizations (AFOs) and farmers and to organize training and capacity development for aquaculture farmers on best practices in shellfish and finfish aquaculture were identified. Preliminary meetings with some stakeholders were held during AquaFarm Exhibition in Pordenone (Italy) in February 2020 and discussion with the Italian Fish Farmer Association (API) was initiated to identify a series of training activities to address some of the training needs proposed by Albanian farmers during consultations.

The project progressed on the development of training or mentoring programmes to support small- and medium-sized aquaculture enterprises and/or AFOs to assess and manage the financial impact of unexpected global events like it was for the crisis related to the Pandemic COVID-19, as well as to find new market strategies and opportunities and improve the linkages to capture fisheries and other uses of the coastal areas. A series of virtual meetings with API were organized to progress in the implementation of the workplan which include: i) identification of the topics to be covered by the trainings; ii) virtual platform and methodology for the organization of the virtual meeting identified and tested; and iii) organization of a beta version of a pilot training.

The project in its aim of fostering responsible aquaculture development in the Adriatic, envisaged a series of training activities instrumental to improve the cooperation and to ensure the coordinated and responsible expansion of the sector based on a Blue Transformation perspective and taking into consideration the main governance, economic, social and environmental aspects of aquaculture development. In this context, after the formal agreement with API, the project designed a capacity-development programme for farmers on aquaculture best management practices (e.g. use of risk analysis in aquaculture, traceability, biosecurity and disease control, etc.), which includes: i) virtual meetings to perform training needs assessment for aquaculture farmers; and ii) training courses on aquaculture better management practices. Several virtual meetings were held with counterparts to identify training needs for aquaculture farmers. Considering the ongoing pandemic situation, discussions and the way forward to modify the training courses in virtual training is being under investigation.

Within the cooperation with API, three information sheets targeting farmers were prepared namely: (i) Prototype Sheet on Biosecurity; (ii) Safety of Chemical Substances; (iii) Labeling of Chemical Substances.

Contribution to the CAQ activities: The Project supported the participation of national counterparts dealing with aquaculture to the GFCM *WorkShop with fish farmers and fisheries organisations: promoting good practices to boost responsible aquaculture* that was held on 20 February 2020 during the AquaFarm exhibition.

List of Documents

FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/01	Provisional Annotated Agenda
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/02	Report on the intersessional activities of the Project
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 1	Provisional list of participants
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 2	Report of the Twentieth Meeting of the AdriaMed Coordination Committee. <i>AdriaMed Technical Documents N. 44</i>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 3	<p>AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea - 1st meeting: FAO-HQs, 14 -15 March 2019. <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 232</i>;</p> <p>AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea- 2nd meeting: FAO-HQs, 16 -17 April 2019. <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 233</i>;</p> <p>AdriaMed-GFCM Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea-3rd meeting: FAO-HQs, 4-6 February 2020 <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 237</i>;</p> <p>AdriaMed meeting on progresses towards the benchmark of small pelagics in the Adriatic Sea (Skype, 21 April 2020) <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 238</i></p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 4	<p>Report of the AdriaMed Working Group on Demersal Fisheries Resources in the Adriatic Sea: --annual meeting. FAO-HQs, Rome, Italy on 24-25 October 2019 <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 235</i></p> <p>--on line, multiple sessions, 18 May – 8 June 2020 <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 239</i></p> <p>-<i>Elements on the monitoring plan of Jabuka/Pomo Pit</i> as presented at the GFCM Subregional Committee of the Adriatic Sea (April 2021)</p>

FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 5	<p>Stock Assessment Forms on Demersal Fisheries Resources namely:</p> <p><i>Solea solea</i> (GSA 17), <i>Sepia officinalis</i> (GSA 17), <i>Squilla mantis</i> (GSA 17 and GSA 18) <i>Merluccius merluccius</i> (GSA17+18). Data presented at the GFCM - SAC - SCSA Working Group on Stock Assessment on Demersal Species (November 2019)</p> <p><i>M. merluccius</i> (GSA 17 and 18), <i>Squilla mantis</i> (GSA 17), <i>Sepia officinalis</i> (GSA 17), <i>Aristeomorpha foliacea</i> (GSA 18-19). Data presented at the GFCM - SAC - SCSA Working Group on Stock Assessment on Demersal Species (January 2021)</p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 6	<p>Report of the AdriaMed Study Group on intercalibration of demersal fish otolith reading (<i>Solea solea</i>) --28 September 2020 <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 241</i> --14 January 2021 <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 242</i></p> <p>Report of the AdriaMed Meeting on data preparation for the benchmark of <i>Solea solea</i> in GSA17 (1 April 2021) <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 244</i></p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 7	<p>Report of the AdriaMed Study Group on <i>Mullus barbatus</i> (Skype, 15 January 2021) <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 243</i></p> <p>Towards the benchmark assessment of <i>Mullus barbatus</i> in Adriatic Sea. Contribution presented at the WGSAD (January 2021)</p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 8	<p>Report of the bottom trawl survey carried out in South eastern Adriatic Sea (GFCM GSA 18) in summer 2019</p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 9	<p>Report of the AdriaMed Working Group on Small Scale Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea. 22-23 October 2019, FAO HQs, Rome, Italy. <i>AdriaMed Meeting Memorandum 234</i></p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 10	<p>Report of the Underwater Television survey (UWTV) activities in 2019 in Central Adriatic Sea</p> <p>Results of the Adriatic UWTV surveys and Jabuka/Pomo Pit monitoring activity as presented at the ICES Working Group on <i>Nephrops</i> Surveys (WGNEPS) 17-19 November 2020</p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 11	<p><i>Technical inputs to the regional adaptation strategy to cope with the effects of climate change on fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea.</i></p> <p>Paper presented at the GFCM SubRegional Committees</p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 12	<p>Report on the AdriaMed ASFA activities presented at the ASFA Board meeting (on line via ZOOM, 10-14 August 2020)</p>

FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 13	Major activities of the FAO Regional Projects. Document presented at the 21 st Scientific Advisory Committee of the GFCM (GFCM:SAC21/2019/Inf.23) Cairo, Egypt, 24-27 June 2019
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 14	<p>i) FAO Project Highlights: <i>“Promoting Sustainable Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea through Stronger Scientific Cooperation”</i>. Leaflet</p> <p>ii) <i>Enhancing the management and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture</i>, page 34. In: FAO. 2021. FAO + European Union. Investing in a sustainable and food secure future. Rome.</p> <p>iii) <i>Scientists and Small Scale fishers: stronger together for a sustainable future</i>. Video</p> <p>iv) <i>Box 26. The case of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit fisheries restricted area</i>. page 125. In: FAO. 2020. The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2020. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Rome.</p>
FAO AdriaMed: CC/21/info 15	List of documents