




# MID-TERM STRATEGY (2017-2020)

## TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA FISHERIES

Five targets  
Selected outputs  
Proposed actions







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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## THE NEED FOR A STRATEGY

Fishing has a tremendous cultural, social and economic importance in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, providing an important source of food and livelihood for riparian countries and sustaining the traditions and the way of life of many coastal communities. However, Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries are currently facing serious challenges, with roughly 90 percent of the scientifically assessed stocks considered to be fished outside safe biological limits, and with decreasing catches and shrinking fleets at the regional scale.

Against the backdrop of international commitments towards the sustainability of fisheries as a means to support the livelihood of coastal communities in a Blue Growth perspective, existing challenges in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea necessitated the development of tailor-made actions that take into account the specificities of the region and the capacities of all actors involved.

The mid-term strategy is therefore in line with the mandate of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) with competence over the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and intends to capitalize on recent accomplishments in the region in fields such as stock assessment, fisheries management, marine environment, control and more, while also seeking to promote regional cooperation and capacity building.

To this end, the mid-term strategy has been discussed with relevant organizations having interest in different aspects of fisheries and marine ecosystems, including organizations that have a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the GFCM (currently adding up to 14 international organizations). Therefore, the implementation of the mid-term strategy is based on a unique interdisciplinary partnership that provides for a perfect opportunity to enhance cooperation in the region and maximize the probability of success.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The challenges facing fisheries management have evolved over the years and, as such, the GFCM has also had to be adept at evolving. Since its establishment, the GFCM has undergone a series of amendments to its constitutive Agreement, including transforming it from a Council to a Commission, reinforcing its Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), creating new subsidiary bodies, such as the Compliance Committee (CoC) and the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS), shifting to a subregional approach to fisheries management and developing a strong network of partner organizations based on MoUs.

Indeed, as a result of the reforms undergone, the GFCM is now a modern RFMO with the capability and expertise to take appropriate decisions based on the best available scientific advice and ensure their implementation. The positive impacts of the resolute actions stemming from the GFCM reform are therefore becoming increasingly evident. Since 2004 alone, some 50 decisions have been taken within the GFCM including binding recommendations underpinning a regional management system consisting of data collection and reporting schemes, assessments and evaluations of commercially exploited stocks, elaboration of management measures, area-based management tools, monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) instruments and periodical discussions on the implementation of decisions in place.

## INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (New York, September 2015), world leaders put forth a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. The SDG 14 – entitled “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” – is of particular relevance to the management of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and sets forth ambitious targets that advocate for healthy and resilient marine ecosystems. Additional SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth and SDG 13 on climate action, are also highly relevant in this context. Similarly, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABT), in particular Target 6, also lays out specific objectives for the sustainable management of fisheries. Taken together, the relevant SDGs and ABT 6 can therefore be regarded as embodying comprehensive strategies calling for phased action at all levels of governance, including at the regional level.



### **PROTECT MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS**

**END OVERFISHING, ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING**

**CONSERVE AT LEAST 10 PERCENT OF COASTAL AND MARINE AREAS**

**INCREASE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE**

**DEVELOP RESEARCH CAPACITY AND TRANSFER MARINE TECHNOLOGY**

**PROVIDE ACCESS FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERS**

**ENHANCE THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF OCEANS AND THEIR RESOURCES**



As a UN specialized agency, FAO already contributes to the global implementation of the SDGs through a strategic framework, of which Strategic Objective 2 specifically aims to increase and improve the provision of goods and services from fisheries in a sustainable manner, addressing in particular multi-sectoral approaches for ecosystem management, capacity building, governance frameworks and the like.

The mid-term strategy has therefore been developed as a comprehensive tool to support the achievement of UN targets, as well as the international obligations stemming therefrom, including the FAO Strategic Objectives, while also addressing the specific needs and pressing issues facing fisheries management in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

The geopolitical situation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is currently complex. As of late, the Mediterranean has been experiencing significant instability due to ongoing conflicts and political turmoil in the region which, in turn, has exacerbated the problem of migration across the sea. At the same time, the existing gap in the level of development between the different subregions of the Mediterranean remains a top priority on the regional agenda. Similar considerations apply to the case of the Black Sea although different issues are at stake. In light of the special characteristics of the Mediterranean and Black Sea, it is all the more imperative to ensure the implementation of a sound strategy promoting sustainable development in the region.

The fisheries sector, in particular, has an important role to play in such a strategy, as it is crucial to livelihood protection, food security and sustainable long-term development in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Indeed, 80 percent of the region's fisheries are small-scale fisheries, underlining their role in sustaining the region's coastal communities. Although the value generated from the first sale of fish products from Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries may seem relatively small compared with other sectors (representing less than 1 percent of regional gross domestic product [GDP]), the sector targets some of the most economically vulnerable communities in the region, making it a key player for sustainable development. In fact, the value at first sale as a percentage of GDP is six times greater in the developing countries of the southern Mediterranean than in the wealthier northern Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, around 60 percent of employment in the region's fishing sector is found in the developing countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, meaning that the majority of the jobs provided by this sector are located precisely where jobs are needed. Taken together, these factors endorse the potential of the fishing sector to play an instrumental role in the sustainable development of the Mediterranean and Black Sea region and, in particular, its most vulnerable coastal communities.



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## 2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The implementation of the proposed mid-term strategy will be guided by the following principles which are in place at the FAO level:

**Best available knowledge:** The provision of advice, including on the status and trends of stocks and fisheries, should be based on the best available knowledge, including scientific advice and relevant information emanating from a variety of sources and stakeholders;

**Objectivity and transparency:** The collection, analysis and dissemination of information should contribute to the transparent provision of the best scientific evidence available, while respecting any confidentiality requirements. Uncertainty associated with information on status and trends should be expressed, without detracting from the application of the precautionary approach, when data and information are incomplete;

**Timeliness:** The collection, analysis and dissemination of information should be provided in as timely a manner as possible;

**Participation and cooperation:** The collection, analysis and dissemination of information should account for all relevant participants in the preparation, analysis and presentation of scientific advice and conclusions;

**Adaptability:** The collection, analysis and dissemination of information should be adaptive enough to permit adjustments, as necessary, to ensure their effective support of fisheries management based on the most recent scientific advice available.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

The capacity of each country will be duly taken into account in implementing the mid-term strategy in order to level the playing field and bridge existing gaps. Technical assistance will be provided where there is a need to build national capacities so that existing commitments can be fulfilled equally. The effective implementation of existing and future fisheries management-related decisions by contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties will be instrumental in reaching the objectives of the mid-term strategy.







# 4. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

The overall objective of the mid-term strategy is to improve, by 2020, the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, by achieving five targets and related outputs and activities.

## **TARGET 1: REVERSE THE DECLINING TREND OF FISH STOCKS THROUGH STRENGTHENED SCIENTIFIC ADVICE IN SUPPORT OF MANAGEMENT**

It is recognized that, with only 40 percent of the landings in the GFCM area of application coming from stocks for which scientific advice is provided to the Commission, and with an even smaller percentage of the landings coming from fisheries that are subject to comprehensive management plans, there is a need to improve the coverage of advice on the status of stocks and to increase the percentage of landings coming from fisheries regulated by specific multiannual management plans.

It is also recognized that, whenever possible, the advice provided to the GFCM as the international body in charge of adopting binding recommendations for the region should address all relevant aspects needed for decision making, including past and current socio-economic characteristics of the fisheries, as well as the potential socio-economic impacts of alternative management measures. Furthermore, when this information is lacking or scarce, precautionary measures should be advised so that, based on the precautionary approach, the Commission can still efficiently take decisions to regulate fisheries.

It is agreed that, consistently with SDG Targets 14.2, 14.4 and 14.7, commitment is needed to implement, by 2020, actions to increase the existing scientific and socio-economic knowledge in support of fisheries management, and to adopt necessary decisions to reverse the current overexploitation rates, reducing the percentage of stocks outside biologically safe limits, through the achievement of the following:

### **Output 1.1: Enhanced knowledge and expertise on Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries**

This output reinforces existing systems in place for the submission of data and the creation of advice by addressing gaps and weaknesses in available information. It requires the compilation of data and information on different fisheries-related issues, including through the implementation of the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF). The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The creation of a **GFCM Forum on Fisheries Science (GFCM FishForum)**, expected to act as a hub for collecting, in a more comprehensive manner, experiences and scientific information/data on aspects related to fisheries, from stock assessment to socio-economic issues and anthropogenic effects on fisheries and ecosystems. Among other results, the GFCM FishForum should support stock assessment-related work, the compilation of existing knowledge on the status of stocks and discussions on harmonized ways to provide advice on stocks and fisheries, the creation of a database with comprehensive and reliable fisheries data and the establishment of a network of experts and research institutions covering different domains of fisheries science.

- b. The realization of **regional surveys at sea**, including acoustic surveys for pelagic species as well as trawl surveys for demersal fisheries. These joint surveys, carried out in the context of FAO, are expected to provide information on a large number of species over large areas and serve as tuning indices for assessment purposes, as well as provide validation on the advice on the status of the main commercial stocks.
- c. The compilation of **catalogues of fishing activities** by geographical subarea, also for small-scale and recreational fisheries, and including information on fishing gear and fishing operations, description of fishing areas as well as target and bycatch species. This catalogue is expected to provide a comprehensive summary of fishing activities in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, as well as updated estimates of fishing capacity by fleet segment and subregion.

**Output 1.2: Socio-economic information and analysis incorporated into scientific and management advice**

This output supports work carried out in recent years by the GFCM subsidiary bodies to integrate available socio-economic analysis and bioeconomic assessment of management measures into the advice provided to the Commission. It seeks to improve the quantity and quality of available socio-economic data. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

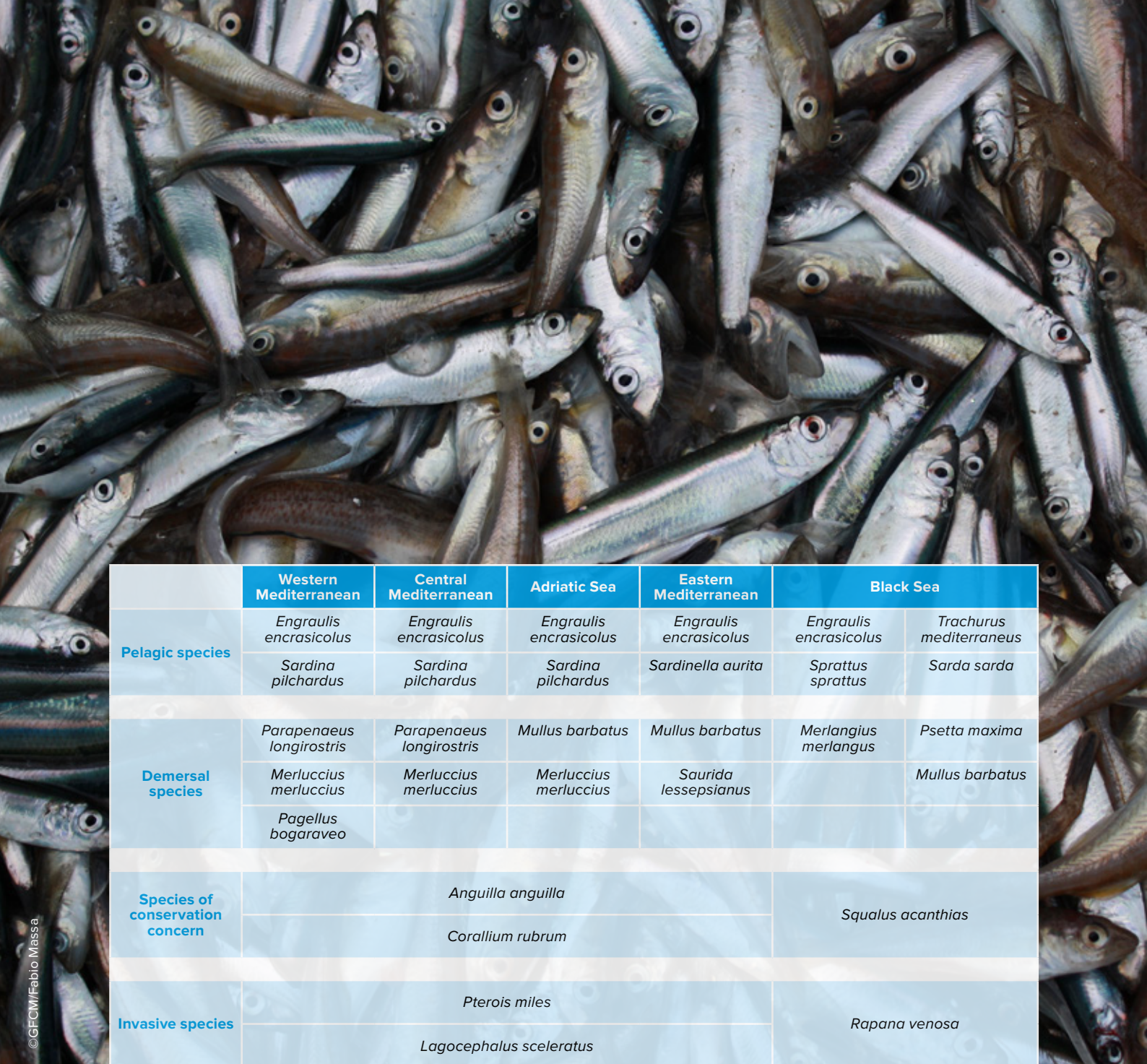
- a. The definition of socio-economic indicators and the completion of **a comprehensive regional survey on the socio-economic characteristics of fisheries** in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. This survey is expected to help overcome a main barrier to the integration of socio-economic data in management advice by providing accurate, timely and complete socio-economic baseline data on fisheries in the region.
- b. The **incorporation of socio-economic information** into the assessment of the state of main commercial fisheries and the provision of advice on the comparative impacts of alternative management scenarios.

**Output 1.3: Enhanced science-based GFCM regulations on fisheries management**

This output supports work carried out in recent years by GFCM subsidiary bodies to improve their advice, both in terms of scope and coverage, and establish comprehensive management plans for certain fisheries. It seeks to augment the advice provided by enhancing the percentage of exploited stocks, marine populations, ecosystems and areas addressed. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The implementation of a dedicated **approach for the provision of advice to the GFCM by its subsidiary bodies**. Such an approach envisions action for stocks/fisheries where information on stocks/fisheries is either fragmented or not made available, and stocks/fisheries for which a validated scientific advice exists. In the former situation, immediate actions to collect the required information and make it available should be launched, while at the same time precautionary advice should be issued. On the other hand, when a validated scientific advice exists, the advice should include indications on the effect of alternative management measures on both the stocks and the fisheries, including on socio-economic aspects. Within this approach, and without prejudice to addressing additional species, the GFCM agreed on a list of priority commercial species by subregion for which an advice should be produced:





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	Western Mediterranean	Central Mediterranean	Adriatic Sea	Eastern Mediterranean	Black Sea	
Pelagic species	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	<i>Trachurus mediterraneus</i>
	<i>Sardina pilchardus</i>	<i>Sardina pilchardus</i>	<i>Sardina pilchardus</i>	<i>Sardinella aurita</i>	<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>	<i>Sarda sarda</i>
Demersal species	<i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i>	<i>Parapenaeus longirostris</i>	<i>Mullus barbatus</i>	<i>Mullus barbatus</i>	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>	<i>Psetta maxima</i>
	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	<i>Saurida lessepsianus</i>		<i>Mullus barbatus</i>
	<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>					
Species of conservation concern	<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>				<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	
	<i>Corallium rubrum</i>					
Invasive species	<i>Pterois miles</i>				<i>Rapana venosa</i>	
	<i>Lagocephalus sceleratus</i>					

- b. The **operationalization of the Review Panel**, as established by GFCM (Rule XVI of the GFCM Rules of Procedure) to review the scientific advice formulated by its subsidiary bodies and provide conclusions to support the decision-making process.
- c. The **revision of existing management plans / development of new management plans**, based on the technical advice provided by the subsidiary bodies, with the objective of addressing the main commercial fisheries as well as those fisheries that rely on or show a strong interaction with resources in need of urgent action.





**TARGET 2: SUPPORT LIVELIHOODS FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES**

It is recognized that small-scale fisheries play an important role in providing income and ensuring food security, particularly within economically vulnerable coastal communities. Therefore concerted action should be taken to support this sector.

It is recognized that the data available to measure the extent and impact of small-scale fishing activity are limited and can vary widely from country to country. Due to these data limitations, small-scale fisheries tend to be undervalued, potentially leading to their marginalisation in the decision-making process. It is also recognized that states should be responsible for collecting complete, timely and accurate socio-economic data on the impact of small-scale fishing and for developing coherent policies to ensure resource and market access for small-scale fishers. Support will be provided within the mid-term strategy to enhance the coordination of efforts and to harmonize existing measures to support the small-scale fishing sector. It is agreed that commitment is needed, by 2020, to support livelihoods within sustainable small-scale fisheries, consistent with SDG Targets 14.b and 14.7, through the realization of the following:

**Output 2.1: Robust and timely information on the impacts of small-scale fisheries and recreational fisheries on living marine resources and on their interactions with other human activities in coastal communities**

This output addresses the importance of producing an accurate, timely and comprehensive socio-economic description of small-scale fisheries, and their interactions with other sectors such as recreational fisheries,



in order to mitigate potential detrimental socio-economic impacts of management measures. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The implementation of a **regional survey on small-scale fisheries**. This survey is expected to provide a snapshot of the ecological, social and economic impacts of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea and at the same time improve the capacity to collect relevant data on small-scale fisheries as requested through the DCRF. Information on the different gear used in small-scale fisheries will be collected as part of the catalogue of fishing activities (Target 1) with a view to better linking small-scale fisheries to the different fishing activities in coastal areas.
- b. The establishment of a **permanent Working Group on Small-Scale and Recreational Fisheries**. This working group is expected to foster knowledge-sharing platforms among small-scale and recreational fishers in region for the dissemination of best practices and the sharing of information, to oversee the completion of the regional survey on small-scale fisheries and to coordinate efforts among contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties and relevant organizations.
- c. The assessment of the impacts of **recreational fisheries** and the consideration of best management measures to regulate these activities.

The information gathered through these activities should result in an estimate of the economic impact of small-scale fisheries on coastal communities and their interactions with related sectors, as well as inform the development of indicators to monitor the socio-economic status of small-scale fisheries and the management of recreational fisheries.

#### **Output 2.2: FAO Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines tailored to the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea**

This output supports the implementation of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) within the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The development of **national plans of action for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines** is expected to provide roadmaps for bolstering valorization, commercialization and livelihoods in small-scale fisheries and coastal communities in a way that adapts to the specific needs at the regional, subregional and national levels.
- b. The establishment of a **regional platform to engage and promote dialogue among small-scale fishing associations** in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. This platform is expected to build on and reinforce existing subregional and national platforms in order to provide a participatory mechanism for knowledge-sharing, collaboration, stakeholder involvement, and the dissemination of best practices.
- c. The **endorsement of the principle of decent work**, as defined by the Work in Fishing Convention (C188) of the International Labour Organization, so as to promote, without compromising environmental sustainability, the improvement of socio-economic conditions within small-scale fisheries and the promotion of livelihood diversification.
- d. The organization of a **high-level meeting** in collaboration with strategic partners, including the Mediterranean Initiative of the World Wildlife Fund, to generate political will in small-scale fisheries within a Blue Growth context.



**TARGET 3: CURB ILLEGAL UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING, THROUGH A REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION**

It is recognized that better management of fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is undermined by IUU fishing activities and the disregard of common rules. Although the impacts of IUU fishing are currently not assessed and therefore under-represented in the current status of fisheries and trends information, they must be adequately considered in the development of scientific advice for management. It is stressed that CPCs, in their capacity as flag states, coastal states, port states and market states, have the primary responsibility to ensure respect of common rules by fishing vessels. Support will be provided within the mid-term strategy to enhance coordination of efforts and harmonize existing measures aimed at improving MCS.

It is acknowledged that, while the implementation of the two roadmaps to fight IUU fishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea adopted by the GFCM has been positive thus far, there is an important need to set political and operational objectives to counter illegal activities, building upon the elements of these roadmaps and reflecting relevant elements in the FAO International Plan of Action against IUU, which is already voluntarily applied in the region. It is also acknowledged that support will be provided for the organization and celebration of an international day for the fight against IUU fishing, to be imminently declared by FAO upon the request of the GFCM.

It is agreed that there is a need to commit to effectively reducing IUU fishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea by 2020, consistent with SDG Target 14.4, by developing a holistic regional plan of action to fight IUU fishing, to eventually be transposed at the national level and that would among others achieve the following:



### **Output 3.1: Regular quantification of IUU fishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and harmonization of existing measures to fight against IUU fishing**

This output seeks to reinforce ongoing efforts to combat IUU fishing by improving knowledge of IUU activity and harmonizing, at the regional level, existing measures used to counter illegal activities. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The realization of an assessment of the **quantity, magnitude and characteristics of IUU fishing** in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Whereas work is ongoing within FAO to bring about a common methodology to assess IUU fishing, a tailored approach for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is needed with a view to supporting the scientific work of the SAC and WGBS.
- b. The evaluation of the adequateness of **national legislations** relating to IUU fishing adopted by CPCs as contained in the GFCM database of national legislations. As appropriate, this evaluation should lead to the revision of national legislations in view of the harmonization of measures to fight IUU fishing which will be facilitated by the Regional Plan of Action to fight IUU fishing.

### **Output 3.2: Reinforced inspection procedures in the framework of port state control**

This output supports the correct implementation of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) by both supporting the ratification of the FAO PSMA by states and by making sure appropriate conditions are in place to strengthen port state measures (both political, legal and technical). The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The promotion of **training of national inspectors** and, as appropriate, relevant officers, including jointly with other partners and by developing specific online instruments, with a view to launch national actions to better take stock of the needs of each recipient country relating to efficient port controls.
- b. The establishment of a **mutual assistance system** will facilitate exchange of information between flag states and port states via the GFCM Secretariat and that of a **regional information system to exchange port state measures-related data** will operationalize port state measures in the GFCM area of application, consistent with the provisions of the FAO PSMA, complementing the ongoing establishment of a regional monitoring and control system.

### **Output 3.3: Enhanced modular monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) at the regional level**

This output will complement activities already underway within the GFCM to enhance MCS capabilities in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, including through harmonized control standards. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The continuation of the operationalization of a **regional vessel monitoring system (VMS) and control system**, in order to help monitor adherence to fisheries restricted areas and to underpin GFCM data collection systems by progressively incorporating electronic tools, such as the e-logbook, which could be developed at the regional level. Effort and catches information deriving from this system would support the enhanced assessment of fisheries stocks, identification of fishing grounds and fishing activities, contributing to the achievement of Target 1.



## TARGET 4: MINIMIZE AND MITIGATE UNWANTED INTERACTIONS BETWEEN FISHERIES AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS AND ENVIRONMENT

It is underlined that healthy and productive marine ecosystems are an important means to supporting maximum sustainable yield and facilitating blue growth.

It is recognized that fisheries, as well as other anthropogenic-driven phenomena, such as climate change or the introduction of non-indigenous species, can have potentially negative effects on the marine environment and marine ecosystems.

It is agreed that, by 2020, consistent with SDG Targets 14.1, 14.2 and 14.5, necessary measures will be taken to minimize and mitigate negative impacts of fisheries on marine biodiversity and ecosystems, especially in relation to vulnerable species and ecosystems, as well as to mitigate negative anthropogenic effects on fisheries, in close coordination with partner organizations. These measures should be implemented by achieving the following outputs:

### Output 4.1: Reduced bycatch rates in Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries

This output seeks to better understand bycatch activity in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and propose measures to reduce the threat it poses to the profitability and sustainability of fisheries. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The implementation of a **bycatch monitoring programme**, including through the use of observers onboard commercial fishing vessels. This programme is expected to obtain



representative data on the discard component of total bycatch in Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, as well as information on the incidental catch of vulnerable species that could occur during sampled fishing operations, with a view to facilitating the adoption of required management measures towards the reduction of bycatch rates.

- b. The development and launch of a fully encompassing **communication mechanism** to educate fishers on the negative impacts of bycatch on fisheries productivity and on marine ecosystems. This activity entails, among others, the publication of infographics, cards and posters. Ecolabelling and certificates for fishers who ensure their commitment in fishing according to sustainable practices in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea should also be envisaged.
- c. The implementation of **effective management measures to improve the selectivity of fisheries** and **mitigate negative interactions between fisheries and ecosystems**, including the reduction of catches of vulnerable species, the use of artificial reefs to protect essential fish habitats and the mitigation of interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities.

#### **Output 4.2: Healthier marine ecosystems and more productive fisheries**

This output seeks to reinforce ongoing GFCM activities to establish area-based management tools, to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, and to combat the combined effects of climate change and other direct and indirect anthropogenic impacts on the marine environment. The following activities are being implemented, in coordination with relevant regional organizations, to achieve this output:

- a. The promotion of the **identification and establishment of new FRAs** to protect priority areas within ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), VMEs, etc. from harmful fishing activities, and the implementation of monitoring and control systems to ensure the efficiency of these spatial measures, also in relation to Target 3. This action should aim to achieve at least the protection of 10% of the coastal and marine areas, as expressed in Aichi Target 11. The CPCs should be closely involved in the definition of new FRAs.
- b. The adoption of a comprehensive **regional management plan for red coral**, based on previous technical work carried out in the context of the GFCM subsidiary bodies, including relevant GFCM guidelines, and updated advice as provided within Output 1.3.
- c. The creation of an **adaptation strategy to cope with potential effects of invasive species and climate change on fisheries**. Such a strategy should be based on the results of an evaluation of the potential ecological and socio-economic effects of climate change and of the introduction of non-indigenous species on Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries.
- d. The creation of an **adaptation strategy to cope with potential effect of marine litter on fisheries**, as well as the implementation of fisheries management measures aimed to minimize the production of litter from fishing activities (e.g. abandoned fish gear), in line with existing Mediterranean regional management plan on marine litter.



**TARGET 5: ENHANCE CAPACITY BUILDING AND COOPERATION**

It is urged that CPCs, relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and concerned stakeholders enhance cooperation to promote sustainable development and blue growth in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

It is acknowledged that fulfilling the objective of the mid-term strategy through the proposed activities both requires and promotes increased scientific and technical cooperation throughout the region. Particular efforts will be needed for the Black Sea, given that not all riparian countries are currently contracting parties to the GFCM.

It is agreed that commitment is needed, by 2020, in line with SDG Target 14.7, to help level the playing field for developing countries and to ensure the accrual of socio-economic benefits from the sustainable management of fisheries, by achieving the following:

**Output 5.1: Improved national capacity for the management of fisheries resources**

This output seeks to address the difficulties experienced by certain CPCs in meeting their obligations stemming from GFCM decisions, despite strong political willingness, by enhancing capacity-building efforts. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:



- a. The provision of **capacity building for CPCs**, as obliged by the Commission, when necessary, to assist CPCs in meeting their obligations stemming from relevant GFCM decisions. The provision of technical assistance by the GFCM has been sparse up to now as no clear mechanism existed to govern the provision of technical assistance, including from the identification of needs to the actual support on the ground.
- b. The implementation of a **technical assistance mechanism** to support CPCs in bridging existing gaps. Such a mechanism should be based on recent work carried out by the CoC to thoroughly address the link between national gaps/shortcomings and the implementation of GFCM recommendations. Based on requests for technical assistance received by the GFCM thus far, the main following areas would be, among others, covered by the technical assistance mechanism: i) stock assessment and management plans; ii) data collection, analysis and transmission; iii) elaboration and amendment of national legislations; iv) assessment and development of national VMS and control systems in accordance with GFCM standards; v) the strengthening of port controls and vi) the elaboration and development of case studies on small-scale fisheries.
- c. The launch of a **regional programme for education and training** to lay down the foundation for a new generation of fisheries experts through mid- and long-term specialization curricula, in collaboration with regional and national research/training institutions, which would essentially cover domains such as population dynamics, including stock assessment, fishing technology, socio-economic analysis and fisheries legislation.

#### **Output 5.2: Strengthened fisheries governance in the Black Sea**

This output endeavours to capitalize on present momentum to build upon ongoing cooperation and further strengthen fisheries governance in the Black Sea, with a view to bringing about a concerted approach to the issues and challenges faced in this subregion. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The organization of a **high-level conference on fisheries governance** in order to examine existing institutional hurdles and provide a forum for riparian countries to provide inputs to the ongoing process of cooperation in the Black Sea. Discussions are needed in particular to ensure full membership of the six riparian countries to the GFCM, in due course.
- b. The launch of the start-up phase of a **regional, scientific and technical cooperation project for the Black Sea**, the BlackSea4Fish project, carried out in the remit of the WGBS. It is expected that this project would operate under the umbrella of the GFCM, with the aim to support the activities of the WGBS, and would contribute to further bridging gaps at the regional level, endowing the WGBS with the necessary support to make sure that its work programme is efficiently implemented.

#### **Output 5.3: Increased cooperation with relevant actors**

This output aims to bolster existing cooperation in the GFCM area of application, not only with the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department and its regional projects for the Mediterranean, but also with partner organizations with which the GFCM has an MoU. Further cooperation, within the framework of the mid-term strategy, is being pursued with a view to fostering synergies, avoiding duplications and taking advantage of each organization's comparative advantages. The following activities are being implemented to achieve this output:

- a. The **operationalization of existing MoU**, including the launching of joint activities, with a view to avoiding duplications. Where new possibilities arise for new MoU, these should be submitted to the Commission for its consideration and adoption.
- b. In line with the FAO Strategic Objective 2, the **strengthened coordination with the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department and FAO regional projects**, taking into account current challenges and recent changes within the GFCM, including the focus on a subregional approach and the launch of this strategy.

*This strategy is dedicated to the late Mohamed HadjAli Salem, an important member of the GFCM family having twice served as GFCM Chairperson and also as the long-standing coordinator of the SIPAM network. His experience and commitment intelligently led the Commission through delicate times of change.*





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# THE MID-TERM STRATEGY (2017-2020) IN BRIEF

Thirteen years after the adoption of the Declaration of the Ministerial Conference for the Sustainable Development of Fisheries in the Mediterranean (2003 Venice Declaration), great strides have been made in promoting responsible fisheries practices. In particular, the role of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been crucial in promoting common rules and strengthening regional cooperation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

However, fisheries in the area still face serious challenges, as roughly 90 percent of the region's scientifically assessed stocks are considered to be fished outside safe biological limits. Such alarming trends not only negatively impact the fisheries sector itself, but they also hinder attempts to ensure secure livelihoods and food

security, through blue growth initiatives, for the coastal communities in the region.

As a response to these challenges, the GFCM has launched the “mid-term strategy (2017-2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries” in order to define a course of decisive action aimed at reverting the alarming trend in the status of commercially exploited stocks. Aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the mid-term strategy seeks to improve Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and contribute to the sustainable development of coastal States.

Through the implementation of five targets, the mid-term strategy is expected to ensure that, by 2020, the alarming trend in the status of commercially exploited stocks is reversed.

- 🎯 **TARGET 1:** Reverse the declining trend of fish stocks through strengthened scientific advice in support of management
- 🎯 **TARGET 2:** Support livelihoods for coastal communities through sustainable small-scale fisheries
- 🎯 **TARGET 3:** Curb illegal unreported and unregulated fishing, through a regional plan of action
- 🎯 **TARGET 4:** Minimize and mitigate unwanted interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems and environment
- 🎯 **TARGET 5:** Enhance capacity-building and cooperation