

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Organisation des
Nations Unies pour
l'alimentation et
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la
Agricultura

EastMed

Report of the Ninth Coordination Committee Meeting

FAO HQs - Rome, Italy, 13-14 November 2018

The conclusions and recommendations given in this and in other documents in the *Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean* series are those considered appropriate at the time of preparation. They may be modified in the light of further knowledge gained in subsequent stages of the Project. The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of FAO or donors concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or concerning the determination of its frontiers or boundaries.

Preface

The Project “Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean- EastMed is executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and funded by Italy and the EC DG MARE.

The Eastern Mediterranean countries have for long lacked a cooperation framework as created for other areas of the Mediterranean, namely the FAO sub-regional projects AdriaMed, MedSudMed and CopeMed II. This made it more difficult for some countries in the region to participate fully in international and regional initiatives for cooperation on fishery research and management. Following the very encouraging experience of technical and institutional assistance provided to countries by the other FAO sub-regional Projects,

EastMed

The project was born to support the development of regional cooperation and the further development of multidisciplinary expertise necessary to formulate appropriate management measures under the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the principles of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) to ensure rational, responsible and participative fisheries management

The project’s **longer-term objective** is to contribute to the sustainable management of marine fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean, and thereby to contribute to supporting national economies and protecting the livelihoods of those involved in the fisheries sector.

The project’s **immediate objective** is to support and improve the capacity of national fishery departments in the sub-region to increase their scientific and technical information base for fisheries management and to develop coordinated and participative fisheries management plans in the Eastern Mediterranean sub-region.

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Publications

EastMed publications are issued as series of Technical Documents (GCP/INT/318/EC – 041/ITA/TD-00) and Occasional Papers (GCP/INT/318/EC –041ITA/OP-00) related to meetings, missions and research organized by or conducted within the framework of the Project.

Occasionally, relevant documents may be translated into national languages as EastMed Translations (GCP/INT/318/EC– 041/ITA/ET-00)

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

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EastMed, 2018. Report of the 9th Meeting of the EastMed Coordination Committee. Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean. GCP/INT/318/EC–041/ITA/TD-25. Rome 2018: 39 pp.

ABSTRACT

The ninth coordination meeting of the EastMed project was held at FAO HQs in Rome, Italy, from 13 to 14 November 2018. The meeting was attended by delegations from Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Turkey, by staff of the FAO Regional Projects EastMed and AdriaMed, the GFCM Secretariat, the European Commission and staff of the EastMed project. After the opening of the meeting and election of the chairperson, the activities during the 8th year of the project were presented, followed by the proposals of activities for the 9th year from each Country. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the project and thanked both the staff of the project and the donors for their contribution. The agreed work plan for the 9th year includes training and support in data collection, data analyses, activities aiming in strengthening stakeholders' awareness and activities in promoting regional participation and cooperation. EastMed finally, will continue to support the participation of experts from the project's area at the meetings of the FAO-GFCM and other relevant regional/international organizations. The EastMed project, in close cooperation with the other Mediterranean sub-regional projects, will continue to find synergies among the various activities in the region.

**REPORT OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE EASTMED
CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE**

**FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy
13 – 14 November 2018**

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

1. The ninth meeting of the Co-ordination Committee of the FAO EastMed sub-regional Project “Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean” was held in FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy from 13 to 14 of November 2018.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives from Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Turkey, by staff from the FAO Regional Projects EastMed and AdriaMed, the GFCM Secretariat and a representative from the EU DGMARE. The list of participants is given in Annex I.
3. The meeting was opened by the FAO Fishery Resources Officer and Acting Coordinator of EastMed, Mr Marcelo Vasconcellos, who welcomed the participants on behalf of FAO. He specially welcomed the representative of Syria noting that this was the first time the country participated in the Coordination Committee meeting. He highlighted the role of FAO Regional Projects in general, and of EastMed in particular, in strengthening capacities and fostering scientific cooperation for sustainable fisheries management in the Mediterranean. He noted the progress achieved in past years in terms of availability of data, scientific capacity and improved management advice in the Eastern Mediterranean, which is helping create the basis for sub-regional cooperation for fisheries management under the framework of the GFCM. He finally thanked the donors for the support to the project and expressed his hope for the continuation of the project in order to consolidate the achievements made and to strengthen capacities to address issues of sub-regional importance.
4. The Executive Secretary of GFCM, Mr Abdellah Srour, welcomed participants and congratulated the project for the progress made and the continuous interest in working towards the sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. He noted the strong collaboration established between GFCM and EastMed in recent years and encouraged the project to seek ways to further strengthen collaboration with the Secretariat, taking advantage of the subregional approach adopted by the GFCM. He stressed that the GFCM stands ready to work together with EastMed in providing the needed assistance for countries to meet the objectives of the MedFish4Ever Declaration and the targets of the GFCM Mid-Term Strategy (2017-2020).
5. Mr Christos Maravellias, representative of the EU DG Mare, reaffirmed the commitment of DG Mare in continuing supporting the FAO Regional Projects. He noted that the Eastern

Mediterranean is an area of attention regionally and that it was the intention of DG Mare to continue supporting EastMed in order to bring the sub-region to at least the same level of technical and scientific capacity of other Mediterranean sub-regions. He congratulated the countries for the progress made and hoped for the continued pace in order to meet the goals of the MedFish4Ever Declaration, GFCM Mid-Term Strategy and the EU CFP goals

6. Mr. Alaa Eldin El Haweet from Egypt was elected as chairperson of the meeting.

Adoption of the Agenda (Agenda Item n. 2)

7. The Agenda (Annex II) was presented to the Coordination Committee. The Chair invited the participants to offer any comments, but all agreed that the draft agenda reflected their expectations of the meeting. The Agenda was adopted with no changes.

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

8. The project staff introduced this agenda item and the document "Report on the Intersessional Activities of the Project" EastMed CC9_02 (Annex III) in which the main activities carried out by EastMed from November 2017 to October 2018 were described. The activities carried out correspond to the prioritized work programme and recommendations of the 8th Meeting of the EastMed Coordination Committee. The presentation highlighted the achievements in relation to EAF pilot studies, the continuous support to training and data collection and the increasing number of stocks being assessed in the sub-region through the years. It was also noted the many activities being carried out in close collaboration with the GFCM and other FAO projects, including the summer school, the training in discards/bycatch monitoring, and the data preparatory meetings for the assessment of sardinella and deep water red shrimp stocks in the sub-region. The Committee was also informed of the synergies established with other FAO projects and units working in the Mediterranean, including with the Interregional Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) on "Blue Hope in the Mediterranean" and the TCPs launched by FAO Lebanon to evaluate fisheries value chain and to progress in the design of new vessels for small-scale fisheries.
9. The Committee members thanked the project for the activities which were carried out in the intersessional period, and highlighted the importance of all the achievements of the project. The Committee recognized the importance of the work carried out in Lebanon and Egypt for the modernization and diversification of fishing fleets by warned of the need to take a precautionary approach when promoting such initiatives to avoid increasing pressure on overfished stocks and expanding fishing capacity without control. To avoid such outcomes, the Committee emphasized the importance of working in parallel to strengthen fisheries management capacity. The representative from Syria remarked that, similarly to Lebanon, fisheries in the country are predominantly small-scale and restricted

to areas close to shore and that initiatives such as the ones supported by the project in Lebanon would be very welcomed also by Syria.

10. The Committee discussed the merits of the work done on testing alternative sampling schemes for the collection of catch and effort data in Egypt and Lebanon and welcomed further support of the project in seeking ways to improve the quality of the data collected and the estimates of fisheries catch and effort from the two countries. The representatives from Palestine and Syria requested the support of the project to implement fisheries information systems similar to those in use in Egypt and Lebanon in their respective countries, building on the experience acquired by the project in Egypt and Lebanon.
11. Referring to the list of stocks assessed in the Eastern Mediterranean, the representative from Egypt noted that despite the importance of *Pagellus erythrinus* to coastal small-scale and recreational fisheries in the subregion and the availability of biological data, the species is not being regularly assessed throughout the eastern Mediterranean. He expressed the interest of Egypt to include the species in the list of stocks to be addressed in the next EastMed Working Group on Fisheries Data Analysis. Ms Elisabetta Morello, Fisheries Officer from GFCM, welcomed the proposal to assess the stock in the subregion and recommended countries to bring this proposal to the attention of the Subregional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean. She also remarked the importance of the support of the project to advance in the preparation of data and preliminary assessment of stock in view of the busy program of work of the SAC Working Groups on Stock Assessment.
12. Regarding the collection of socioeconomic and discards and bycatch data, the Committee was informed by the project that from 2018 these activities are to be supported by the GFCM as part of the Mid-Term Strategy. The Committee requested the project to liaise with GFCM to ensure that the estimation of fisheries socioeconomic indicators, until now carried within the EastMed WG on Fisheries Data Analysis, is continued in the future.
13. The representative from Syria, Mr Abdellatif Ali, delivered a presentation on the present situation of fisheries and aquaculture in Syria and the priority areas for technical assistance. He informed the Committee that fisheries and aquaculture are important activities in the country, involving directly and indirectly 160,000 people. Total production fell from 13,000 tonnes in 2010 to 3,392 tonnes in 2017, due mostly to the impacts of the war on the operation of inland fish farms. Most of the production is from freshwater farmed fish, with marine capture fisheries making a relatively small contribution to national fisheries production (about 19% of the total). Among the issues affecting fisheries, it was highlighted the role of natural causes, such as the narrow shelf and limited river outflows, and human-made causes, including the effects of dams, overfishing, pollution and the use of explosives. He noted that fisheries in Syria is mostly small-scale, with about 1,850 vessels with less than 15 m of length and only 14 vessels with more than 15 meters. Among the priorities for the country it was highlighted the expansion of small family-based fish farming, the establishment of hatcheries, the assessment of fish stocks, and the improvement of laboratories for the analysis of fish disease. It was also noted the country's

interest in promoting the expansion of small-scale fishing activities towards offshore areas and establishing marine protected areas for the conservation of stocks. EastMed thanked the Syrian delegate for the presentation and reiterated the commitment of the project to address as much as possible the priorities identified by the country, specifically those concerning fishing activities, stock assessment and management measures. It was noted that aquaculture is not an area of activity of the project but that the project can bring the specific requests made by Syria to the attention of relevant technical units of FAO working with aquaculture, including the GFCM.

GFCM activities of relevance to Eastern Mediterranean for the next intersessional period (Agenda item 4)

14. Ms Elisabetta Betulla Morello, GFCM fishery consultant, provided an overview of the GFCM activities of relevance to the eastern Mediterranean based on the approved plan of the SAC for 2018-2019 and the GFCM mid-term strategy (2017 – 2020). With regards to the SAC regular activities, she highlighted the work plan of the Working Groups on Stock Assessment of small pelagics and demersal stocks of relevance to the eastern Mediterranean. For small pelagics, the plan is to advance on i) the assessment of round sardinella within a data limited context in view of a benchmark in 2019, and ii) the assessments of sardine and anchovy stocks in view of a benchmark in 2020. For demersal species, she highlighted the need to advance towards 1) benchmark assessments for *Saurida lessepsianusi* in GSAs 24, 26 and 27 (2019), European hake in GSAs 22 and 26 (2019) and red mullet in GSAs 22 – 26 (2021), and 2) a quantitative assessment of deep water red shrimp species in a data limited context in view of a benchmark in 2020. She also reminded participants of the newly adopted recommendations on multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Ionian Sea (geographical subareas 20 and 21) and Levant Sea (geographical subareas 24, 25, 26 and 27). Ms Morello then reminded the group of the activities, meetings and recommendations concerning red coral, European eel, small-scale fisheries and fishing technology, relevant for the eastern Mediterranean.
15. In relation to the GFCM Mid-Term Strategy (2017-2020), Ms Morello noted that within the framework of adaptation to Non-indigenous Species (NIS), discussions were held on the establishment of a NIS monitoring network in the Mediterranean and pilot a monitoring plan for NIS in the eastern Mediterranean, as well as the need to launch a research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean as defined by the newly adopted Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/7 on a regional research programme on blue crab in the Mediterranean. She further remarked that the methodology for assessing the vulnerability of fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to the effects of climate change had been adopted. In relation to bycatch and discards, she informed participants that discard surveys with observers onboard had been launched in Lebanon and Turkey and that a programme with observers onboard to monitor incidental catches of vulnerable species in selected fisheries (gillnet, longline, trawlers) had been initiated in Turkey. With reference

to surveys at sea, she noted that comprehensive GFCM protocols on both demersal and acoustic pelagic surveys were available, that the GFCM was in the process of supporting an exploratory trawl survey in 2019 in Lebanon and that discussions were ongoing with Egypt to carry out a trawl survey in 2020. Regarding recreational fisheries, she noted that a draft handbook for data collection on recreational fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea had been produced and that a pilot study was being launched in Lebanon to test and update the handbook. Ms Morello remarked that data collection within the framework of the socioeconomic surveys was underway in Lebanon and Egypt and contacts are being made to launch similar activities in Turkey. She underlined the fact that requests for technical assistance could be addressed to the GFCM secretariat and/or Eastmed. Ms Morello reminded participants that the implementation of the first three activities of the IUU work plan had been endorsed, including the survey. She concluded reminding the Committee of the upcoming Forum on Fisheries Science in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, which would be held in FAO HQ, Rome in December 2018.

16. She presented the calendar of meetings and activities during the intersessional period 2019-2020 and encouraged fruitful future collaboration between the GFCM and EastMed towards reaching the common goals set out by the workplan.

EastMed Work Plan for the next period (Agenda Items 5)

17. The EastMed Acting Coordinator presented the document "Tentative Work plan for the 10th Year of the Project" (Document FAO EastMed: CC09/03). The draft proposal was based on the previous years' work plans and the priorities identified by the GFCM for the sub-region. The Committee revised the draft work plan and the final proposal is reported in Annex IV. A summary of the planned activities and meetings is reported in the Table 1. The Committee was reminded that the full implementation of the planned activities will depend on the availability of funds for next year.
18. With regards to the planned activities in support of a regional strategy for climate change, the Committee was informed of the outcomes of the "Expert meeting on the implication of climate change to fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea", held in GFCM, Rome, from 4 to 6 December 2017 and the agreed roadmap to assess the vulnerability of fisheries to climate change. The roadmap includes the implementation of subregional case studies for the vulnerability assessments, which will entail the preparation of desk studies and the organization of a validation meeting with the participation of national experts. The Committee recommended the possibility of holding the validation meeting back to back to Sub-regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, planned for 19 – 20 March 2019.
19. Specific training requests were made by countries on topics related to basic R programming, bycatch and discards monitoring and age reading for additional demersal species. With regards to surveys at sea, in view of the planned GFCM trawl surveys in the sub-region in 2019/2020, it was noted that the project could organize a training activity on trawl survey methodology or facilitate the participation of national experts in available

training activities organized by regional partners. In this regard, the delegate from Cyprus informed the Committee that requests for the participation in MEDITS surveys should be received by the MEDITS Committee Coordination before their planned meeting in March 2019.

20. The representative of Lebanon, Mr Imad Lahoud, apologized for not being able to participate to the 9th Meeting of the Coordination Committee and transmitted his words to the Committee in written notes to EastMed. First, he expressed the renewed commitment of Lebanon to the EastMed project and trusted that the activities being planned for the future are essential for the sustainability of fisheries in the Mediterranean. In terms of priorities for Lebanon in the next period, he highlighted the following activities: i) the upgrade of the Fisheries Licensing System (FLS) in order to include and respond to vessel register requirements and other socioeconomic features to be imbedded in the system especially the direct printing-out of the new license with maintenance and support contract with the developer; ii) the provision of hardware & software equipment for the needs of data collection and data security; iii) a study on biodiversity and biological parameters of resources in the area covered by the pilot study on the “assessment of illegal fishing gears in Lebanon” to be implemented in the framework of the GFCM Mid-term Strategy; iv) a pilot study on the value added of catch in the piloted area of the IUU study referred to above, including the consideration of options for product branding, transportation tools, materials and equipment; v) the support to Flouka data collection system, including the implementation of vessel activity survey; vi) capacity building on: new fishing gears and practices for MOA rangers and small-scale fishers; and fisheries Monitoring and Control for MoA staff, if possible in one the EU countries (e.g. Greece); and vii) review the results of the on-going biological data collection program in order to evaluate progress made and the need for future adjustments. The Committee took note of the requests by Lebanon, which were in line with the project objectives. The implementation of the proposed activities will depend on the availability of funds for the next period.
21. The representative of EU DG Mare informed the Committee about the EASME-funded stock identification studies which are planning to examine the genetic structure of priority species such as hake, red mullet, deep water rose shrimp, deep water red shrimps and Norway lobster in the different Mediterranean subregions. He noted the importance of the participation of non-EU countries in the study in order to have a comprehensive evaluation of the genetic structure of stocks in the Mediterranean. The Committee agreed with the possibility of supporting the participation on non-EU countries in such studies (e.g. through the provision of samples), building on the planned work on stock structure of round sardinella and according to the availability of funds. To facilitate the identification of synergies between the two projects, the representative from DG Mare agreed to share the protocol of genetic analysis planned to be carried out by the EASME-funded studies. The delegates from Egypt and Turkey noted the difficulties involved in obtaining permission to send genetic samples abroad for analysis and recommended EastMed to investigate alternative solutions to enable the implementation of the proposed studies on genetic structure of priority species.

22. The representative of EU DG Mare also stressed the importance of maintaining the project website updated with detailed information on meetings and activities implemented by the project.
23. In relation to the assessment of the stocks of deep water red shrimp, the Committee was reminded by the GFCM of the roadmap agreed by SAC for the assessment of the species, which includes a benchmark assessment in 2020. In order to contribute to the roadmap, the Committee agreed with the organization of a data preparatory meeting in 2019, jointly with MedSudMed and GFCM, following the positive experience in 2018. The representative from Egypt remarked the importance of obtaining complementary biological data on the species through onboard observations in order to assess the status of the stock in the sub-region. He noted that at present in Egypt data is collected only through biological sampling at landing point. Turkey indicated that a national research project is ongoing on the stocks of deep water red shrimps using the MEDITS survey protocol. The Committee suggested countries to consider the possibility of taking advantage of the ongoing GFCM program of onboard observers to collect data also on deep water red shrimps from relevant fleet segments. In case this is not possible, support could be provided by EastMed, upon request of countries.
24. With regards to Non-Indigenous Species, the Committee recalled the ongoing GFCM and UN Environment/MAP pilot monitoring programme on non-indigenous species in relation to fisheries in the eastern Mediterranean. After analysing the list of priority NIS to be monitored by the programme (see Annex IV), the Committee noted that in some countries the species are already covered by ongoing research projects and fisheries data collection programs. The representatives from Palestine and Egypt noted that not all NIS species are recorded in ongoing national programs and that additional approaches, such as the application of the LEK protocol, could be applied on a pilot basis to cover the remaining species. The representative from GFCM also suggested the possibility of incorporation the NIS in ongoing onboard observer programs implemented in the countries with the support of the GFCM.

Adoption of the report

25. The Committee adopted the work plan. The report, including its annexes, will be edited and finalized by project and published as EastMed document before the end of 2018.

Date and venue of the next Coordination Committee meeting (Agenda Item 8)

26. The Committee agreed to organize the tenth Coordination Committee meeting in the fourth quarter of 2019. The meeting could be held in FAO HQ in Rome, Italy.

Closure of the meeting

Table 1. Proposed plan of activities for 2019.

ACTIVITIES	Priority	Quarter
1. Support to Palestine for: i) the implementation of a fisheries information system similar to Flouca; ii) implementation of a pilot study on EAF. – Mission to Palestine to evaluate needs and elaborate plan of work	High	1 st
2. Support to Syria for: i) establishment of data collection on catch, effort and biological parameters; ii) the implementation of a fisheries information system similar to Flouca; iii) implementation of a pilot study on EAF; and iv) the implementation of trials with experimental fishing gears for SSF. - Mission to Syria to evaluate needs and elaborate plan of work	High	1 st
3. Support the implementation of draft management plans prepared for EAF pilot studies in Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey	High	
4. Support to Lebanon for the upgrade and maintenance of fisheries information systems, including FLS and Flouca	High	
5. Support the assessment of the vulnerability of fisheries to climate change and the identification of potential adaptation options for selected fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean, in close collaboration with GFCM – Desk studies – Validation meeting	High	1 st 1 st , if possible by SRC-EM
6. Summer School on quantitative fisheries stock assessment, jointly organized with other FAO Regional projects, GFCM and JRC	High	3 rd
7. Basic training course in R, upon request of countries	Medium	4 th (TBD)
8. Sub-regional training in the sampling and identification of by-catches, discards and incidental catches of vulnerable species in collaboration with GFCM	High	2 nd
9. EastMed Study Group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading – Second meeting for further training and standardization of age reading	High	2 nd
10. Support on-the-job training activities for the design of scientific surveys and the analysis of survey data – Exchange program with MEDITS	High	1 st deadline to request participation 3 rd training/survey
11. EastMed WG on Fisheries Data Analysis, including data preparatory sessions on sardinella and deep water red shrimps jointly organized with GFCM and MedsudMed.	High	3 rd
12. Identification of stock units of round sardinella in the Eastern Mediterranean – Training	High	1 st 4 th

ACTIVITIES	Priority	Quarter
– Intermediate workshop		
13. Support activities (data collection, data analysis and participation in meetings) in relation to an EU-funded stock identification study for priority species in the Mediterranean	Medium	
14. Support the collection of catch and effort, biological, socioeconomic and discards/bycatch data in Palestine, including a value chain and fish market analysis	High	
15. Support the collection of catch and effort and biological data in Egypt	High	
16. Support the collection of biological data on priority species in Turkey	High	
17. Support the collection of fisheries and biological data on deep water red shrimps in Eastern Mediterranean countries with a view to contribute to the assessment of stocks and management of fisheries in the Levant and Ionian Seas.	High	
18. Support further experimental trials using artisanal fishing gears in Lebanon	High	
19. Support the organization of exploratory egg and larvae surveys at sea in Egypt and Lebanon	High	2 nd
20. Support the pilot testing of LEK protocol for the monitoring of non-indigenous species in relation to fisheries in the eastern Mediterranean, upon request of countries	Medium	
21. Facilitate attendance of national experts to the relevant meetings of GFCM and its subsidiary bodies	High	
22. Improve the dissemination of project events, results and achievements through the enhancement of project website, the preparation of technical report and publications and the production of other promotional material (e.g, videos)	High	
23. 10 th Coordination Committee meeting	High	4 th

Annex I List of Participants

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Annex II Final Agenda

**Ninth Meeting of the EastMed Coordination Committee
Rome, Italy, 13 – 14 November 2018**

Annotated Draft Agenda

Room: QUEEN JULIANA ROOM

Day 1: Tuesday 13th November, 9:00-17:00

1. Opening of the meeting and election of the Chairperson

- Welcome and introduction of the participating countries international organisations and other participants and designation of the chairperson

2. Adoption of the agenda

3. Report on the Project's progress

- Presentation of the EastMed Project's 8th year activities
Information will be given on the progress and achievements of the project since the last Coordination Committee Meeting.

4. The fisheries sector in Syria: needs and possibilities

- Presentation delivered by the newly established EastMed focal point for Syria.

5. GFCM activities for the next intersessional period

- Presentation of the GFCM planned scientific and technical activities of relevance to the Eastern Mediterranean sub-region.

6. Project's Programme for the next period

- Presentation of the work plan for the next period
Following the current activities of the project, and taking into account national and sub-regional priorities, the work plan for the next intersessional period will be discussed and finalised.

7. Any other matters

8. Date and venue of the next Coordination Committee meeting

Day 2: Wednesday 14th November, 10:00-12.00

9. Adoption of the report

Coffee breaks: 11:00 - 11:15 and 15:30 - 15:45

Lunch breaks: 13:00 - 14:00

Annex III Report on the Intersessional Activities of the Project
(November 2017 – October 2018)

FAO EastMed Working Document

Introduction

This document summarizes the main activities carried out by the Project EastMed from November 2017 – October 2018, including workshops, training, research activities and the technical assistance provided to the countries; as well as the cooperation established with the GFCM, the SAC and Sub-Committees and other relevant institutions.

The activities carried out during the inter-committee period comply with the methodological framework of the project and its mandate for this phase and follows the recommendations of the 8th Coordination Committee meeting of the project (Cairo, Egypt 8 – 9 November 2017). This report details main outputs of the activities of the project and the results achieved with direct reference to the following project components:

- 1) Institutional strengthening.
- 2) Staff training and development.
- 3) Data collection and analysis.
- 4) Increased participation and Cooperation.

Component 1 - Institutional Strengthening

The objective of this component is to strengthen the capacity of the fisheries departments/agencies in the Eastern Mediterranean countries to undertake the basic elements of fisheries monitoring and management. Particular attention is given to the development and strengthening of fisheries information systems in selected countries and to support actions for mainstreaming the ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Through this component the project has also supported the identification of options for the diversification of fisheries activities in selected countries. The activities under this component contribute to Targets 1 and 5 of the GFCM Mid-term Strategy and to action (b) of the Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration.

- ***Support the development and implementation of fisheries management plans according to EAF framework (GFCM Strategy Target 5, Output 5.1)***

In an effort to mainstream the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, since 2016 EastMed has been supporting three EAF pilot studies in Eastern Mediterranean countries. The

pilots were: i) the small-scale fisheries in Gökova Bay, Turkey; ii) the small-scale purse seine fisheries for small pelagics in Lebanon; and iii) the demersal fisheries of Egypt. The pilots followed the overall FAO methodology for EAF implementation including the compilation of available knowledge on the fisheries and ecosystem interactions, the organization of a series of stakeholder consultations aimed at reaching agreement on management priorities, identifying mid-term strategies and management systems for addressing these priorities and the drafting of full-fledged fisheries management plans for the selected fisheries. During the intersessional period the following developments took place in each of the pilot sites:

a) *Turkey*: a draft management plan for the small-scale fisheries in Gokova Bay, prepared through a series of stakeholder consultations carried out in 2017, was sent to the General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DG Fisheries) for comments and review in November 2017. Upon request of the DG Fisheries, the project travelled to Ankara in December 2017, together with national focal points, to present the draft management plan to the Director General and staff of the DG Fisheries. During the meeting agreement was reached to further pursue the endorsement and formalization of the management plan. Following the review of the plan by the DG Fisheries, the project travelled to Gökova (16 March 2018) to co-organize the final stakeholder meeting of the pilot study. The meeting revised and unanimously adopted the management plan for small-scale fisheries in Gökova Bay. Once endorsed by the authorities, the plan is expected to be implemented with guidance from an advisory committee of stakeholders under the leadership of the MFAL. With a view to support actions to address some of the priority areas identified in the draft management plan, the project facilitated the engagement of Turkey in the FAO Interregional Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) on “Blue Hope Initiative in the Mediterranean Sea”. The objective of the TCP (involving Turkey, Algeria and Tunisia) is to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to develop integrated, multi-sectoral investment plans using the FAO Blue Growth (BGI) framework. In the first inception meeting, held in Tunis, 4-5 October 2018, stakeholders from Gökova Bay started to discuss potential areas for investment to enable improvements in the value chain and community income, in line with priorities identified in the draft management plan.

b) *Lebanon*: after the approval by stakeholders of the final draft management plan for the purse seine fisheries (stakeholder meeting held in 29 September 2017), the draft plan was translated into Arabic in February 2018 and sent to the Lebanese MoA for review and further considerations towards its formal adoption. While awaiting the adoption of the plan, the project has been supporting actions to address some of the priority issues identified in the draft management plan, including improvements in the assessment of the status of the stocks (see section on Data collection and analysis), the identification of options to enhance social protection of small-scale fishers and the feasibility of controlling access through license limitation. Regarding social protection, the role of the project has been to facilitate/intermediate the inclusion of fisheries in Lebanon in ongoing studies and projects by FAO that are looking into the social protection of small-scale fishers in the region (FAO-GFCM study on social protection in small-scale fisheries; FAO support to the design and development of farmer’s registry in Lebanon). The project also supported a legal study to assess the technical and legal feasibility of establishing license limits to the purse seine fishery. The legal study was carried out throughout 2017, with the technical support of FAO LEGN and GFCM, and the final report made available to the MoA in January 2018.

c) *Egypt*: the draft management plan for demersal fisheries was sent to all stakeholders for review and approval in September 2017. The final management plan was presented at the GAFRD Board meeting and was endorsed on November 2017. The Board's report, which includes the management plan, was Endorsed by the Minister of Agriculture in December 2017. As a next step in the process of implementation of the plan, an advisory committee composed of key stakeholders needs to be established. A Letter of Agreement between FAO-EastMed and GAFRD was signed in July 2018 providing support to the setup of the advisory committee and the organization of regular meetings of the committee to guide actions towards the implementation of the management plan. The first meeting of the advisory committee took place on 16th October 2018.

The experiences with the pilot studies were presented at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Regional Stakeholder Conference on Blue Economy, Naples, Italy, 29-30 November 2017 and the Gökova Bay experience in the 3rd International Congress on Applied Ichthyology and Aquatic Environment (HydroMedit), in Volos, Greece, 8-11 November 2018. It is also worth noting that the experience with the co-management of fisheries in Gökova Bay received an award as best practice in the High Level Conference on Sustainable Small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (Malta, 25 – 26 September 2018).

➤ ***Evaluate options for the modernization and diversification of small scale fisheries in Lebanon (GFCM Strategy Target 2, Output 2.2)***

In past co-ordination committee meetings, a request was made from Lebanon to determine the possibility to design and construct a new prototype of fishing vessel. The request came up since the existing fishing fleet is old and not properly equipped to fish beyond 3 nautical miles from the coast. The issue also came out as a priority in the draft management plan for the purse seine fisheries in view of the need to improve safety conditions and fuel efficiency of the small-scale purse seiners. Without a suitable design for fishing vessels and the associated equipment, the Lebanese fishing fleet could never efficiently exploit offshore fisheries resource, maintain healthy fishing grounds, preserve the catch in good quality and work in the appropriate health and safety conditions. During the past years the project supported preliminary studies on vessel design and exploratory fishing in offshore areas (*see section on Support surveys using artisanal fishing gears in Lebanon*). A feasibility study for new fishing vessel designs and/or new vessel building materials in Lebanon was commissioned by EastMed in 2012. The preliminary conclusions of the study recommended the use of steel as construction material for new vessels. These conclusions were not endorsed by the fisheries technology branch of FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, in view of the limited range of options explored in the study. A new FAO Technical Cooperation Programme with Lebanon is currently being developed by FAO Lebanon, in close consultation with EastMed, to attend to diverse demands of the MoA, including the need to take further steps to identify new vessel designs for the local fisheries. The TCP will analyse critical factors, challenges and opportunities for the replacement of the old fishing vessels with a new fishing vessel model, building on and completing the feasibility study prepared by EastMed. The TCP will take into consideration the inputs of the Lebanese

Stakeholders, the situation of the fisheries sector in Lebanon as well as the market sector.

➤ ***Further developments and implementation of a roadmap for the development of a clam fishery in Egypt (GFCM Strategy Target 1, Output 1.3)***

During the past years the project has been supporting different actions to investigate the feasibility of exploiting clams off the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. In Egypt fishing for clams is mostly conducted with a hand rake at depths shallower than 1 m. A preliminary survey conducted in 2013, with the support of EastMed, showed that unexploited clam resources (including *C. gallina*) exist in waters up to 10 m deep. These resources could support a potential small size fishery based on the reconversion of trawlers smaller than 18 m that operate in shallow coastal waters. The idea of reconverting trawlers to fish for clams was particularly welcomed by Egypt in view of the situation of overcapacity of the trawl fleet and the overfishing status of demersal fish resources. To further explore this alternative, a roadmap was developed by EastMed, in close consultation with GAFRD, to guide the sustainable development of the clam fishery in accordance with the precautionary approach. In July 2017, the project organized a meeting at the FAO office in Cairo, Egypt, to illustrate the roadmap for the development of the clam fishery. The meeting was attended by the FAO RNE Senior Fisheries officer, the FAO representative in Egypt, the General Director of Fisheries, the Vice-chair and the director for international affairs from GAFRD. During the meeting, participants from GAFRD emphasized the importance of the proposal and agreed to formally issue a request to the FAO representation for technical assistance and donor sourcing in order to continue with the development of the project according to the roadmap. A draft concept note was prepared by EastMed to serve as a basis for a potential technical cooperation program with FAO to further pursue the project. Given the considerable amount of resources needed for the implementation of the roadmap, the project is currently on hold until suitable funding opportunities are identified. More recently the project supported a market chain analysis to understand the current situation of the bivalve market in Egypt and the potential to introduce successfully the new products in the local markets. The study (*Assessment of the commercial chain of bivalves in Egypt*) was concluded in 2017 and is currently being prepared for publication. Among other things the study showed that at present the demand for bivalves far exceeds the supply, providing several opportunities for the introduction of *C. gallina* in the local market, in case a new fishery is developed for clams.

➤ ***Support for the IT infrastructure in Gaza Strip***

As part of this component, the project has been also providing IT and laboratory equipment following specific request from the participating countries and based on the availability of resources. In the intersession period the project supported the procurement of two laptop computers to instrument the fisheries laboratory in Gaza for the analysis of fisheries, socio-economic and biological data collected with the support of the project.

Project Component 2 - Staff Training and Development

The objective of this component is to develop technical capacities of national experts on different aspects related to fisheries monitoring, assessment and management. Through this component the project organizes or facilitates the participation to training courses, on-the-job training, and technical workshops on issues of relevance to the fisheries departments.

➤ ***Summer School in Summer School in Quantitative Fisheries Stock Assessment***

The Project organised, together with the other FAO Mediterranean Projects (AdriaMed, MedSudMed and CopeMed II), the GFCM and the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the second Summer School in Quantitative Fisheries Stock Assessment (Summer School). The Summer School was held at the IAMC-CNR of Capo Granitola, Italy, in two consecutive modules from 9 to 21 July 2018. 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 the IAMC-CNR of Capo Granitola. A total 49 trainees from all around the Mediterranean region enrolled in the summer school, including 23 participants from the Eastern Mediterranean. Three participants from Egypt enrolled in the school could not participate because of problem in obtaining Visa to Italy.

➤ ***Training workshop on stock assessment for experts from Palestine***

A training course on stock assessment to the experts from Palestine (Gaza Strip) was organized in the College of Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology, Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (Alexandria, Egypt), from 7 to 12 August, 2018. The five-day training, run by Dr Hatem Hanafy (Arab Academy) and his team with the support of EastMed, was directed to four experts from Gaza Strip, Palestine. The workshop covered the background, objectives and concept of fish stock assessment and its role in fisheries management plans and theoretical and hands-on practical training on different themes, including: sampling design; data preparation/collation for stock assessment; estimation of growth parameters; estimation of mortality parameters; and the use of simple stock assessment methods such virtual populations analysis and yield per recruit analysis. Participants focused the practical training to prepare data and run preliminary assessments of *Sardinella aurita* and *Saurida undosquamis*. The work done during the training workshop served as a basis for the assessment of these stocks, in the case of sardinella, prepared jointly with other eastern Mediterranean countries during the EastMed WG on Fisheries Data Analysis.

➤ ***EastMed Study Group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading (Pagellus erythrinus and Sardinella aurita)***

The EastMed Study Group meeting on inter-calibration of fish otolith reading was held at the COISPA Tecnologia & Ricerca – Stazione Sperimentale per lo Studio delle Risorse del Mare (Torre a Mare, Bari, Italy) on 24-27 July 2018. The meeting was attended by researchers from Cyprus, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt and Italy and was chaired by Dr Pierluigi Carbonara, co-chair of the ICES Workshop on ageing validation methodology of *Mullus* species (WKVALMU) and of the ICES Working Group on Biological Parameters (WGBIOP). Age data has been recognized as one of the fundamental data-input to obtain reliable stock assessment. Therefore, a Study Group was established aiming at carrying out, on a regular basis, training and inter-calibration exercises for age determination by otolith reading of demersal and small pelagic fish of the eastern Mediterranean. The end goal of the study group is to enhance the quality of the biological data used in stock assessment, including the preparation of reliable age/length keys for the priority species in the sub-region. The first day of the study group was dedicated to an activity that EastMed is about to launch on the discrimination of stock boundaries of round sardinella. The session was attended by international experts and representatives of the CopeMed II project that is starting a similar action on the Alboran Sea. The following four days of study group were dedicated to practical exercises on otolith preparation methods, definition of common methodologies for otolith reading and reading intercalibration of *Pagellus erythrinus* and *Sardinella aurita*. It was aimed at identifying: i) the nature of the different interpretation of otoliths of these two species; ii) common steps to improve the precision of the readers and consequently the level of agreement; iii) common ageing criteria and ageing scheme and agree on them; iv) a roadmap for otoliths exchange in the eastern Mediterranean area for both the species. The agreed otolith exchange program is currently in course.

➤ ***Joint EastMed-GFCM training course on data collection on fishing discards.***

The EastMed project in collaboration with the GFCM and in the framework of the GFCM mid-term strategy, provided two training courses on data collection on fishing discard in Turkey and Lebanon. The first one took place in Istanbul, Turkey, and was designed for representatives of Turkish academia, international NGOs and local experts that will monitor fishing discard according to GFCM requirements. The training aimed at improving the understanding of the importance of monitoring discards and bycatches especially for species in which stock assessments are currently conducted and vulnerable groups such as elasmobranchs. As highlighted in The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries (SoMFI) (FAO, 2016), studies on discards only cover a small portion of the total fishing activities in the Mediterranean and Black sea. Discarding rates are often poorly estimated or totally unknown, and most of existing studies only cover relatively short periods and small areas. On October 10th and 11th 2018, a similar training course held in Beirut, Lebanon, provided hands-on training on bycatch/discards sampling and species identification to field officers and researchers from Lebanon, namely rangers of the Ministry of Agriculture and CNRS researchers, fishers collaborating in scientific surveys, ministry officers. Through the two training courses, appropriate discard sampling approaches and methods (e.g. data sources, selection of vessels, species, stratification, mandatory and optional variables) to collect fisheries data which meet

requirements related both to stock assessments and to the ecosystem approach were provided the Countries' experts.

Project Component 3 - Data Collection and Analyses

The objective of this component was to assist eastern Mediterranean countries to improve/develop national fishery data collection programs, including catch, effort, biological and socioeconomic data, fishery-independent surveys and to support the analysis and use of the data collected for scientific advice to fisheries management. The component also aimed at supporting coordinated and cooperative activities in fisheries research, which, in their turn, would support fisheries processes at sub-regional level under the framework of the GFCM.

➤ ***Support to fisheries data collection in Egypt***

During the 8th EastMed Coordination Committee (Cairo, November 2017) Egypt requested the continued support of the project for data collection activities on catch, effort, biological and socio-economic variables. At the moment sampling for biological parameters has been conducted in five ports including Maadia, Port Said, El-Arish, Damietta and Kafr el Sheikh, in which the Administration has port offices. Five labs for the processing of biological samples were also set up in these ports with the support of the Project. The first pilot study was completed at the end of 2012, with subsequent routine monitoring and sampling which covered the period from 2013-2017. A Letter of Agreement was signed between FAO and GAFRD to cover the sampling of biological parameters of the stocks and catch and effort data in 2018. A scheme for the collection of biological data was agreed between the project and the GAFRD. The sampling covers a total of 10 species of demersal and small pelagic species and includes for the first time the biological sampling of deep water red shrimps, *Aristomorpha foliacea* and *Aristeus antennatus*. The partnerships that have been concluded between the scientific community and the administration in Egypt with the support of the Project, will facilitate the implementation of the fisheries dependent data collection.

➤ ***Monitoring of European eel in Egypt in support of the regional assessment of the stock***

The sharp decline in the European eel population (*Anguilla anguilla*) since the 1980s justified its inclusion in CITES Appendix II, which should strengthen the framework of its legal trade. In addition, in order to ensure the sustainable exploitation of the species, a European regulation, adopted in 2007, institutes measures to rebuild the eel stock and imposes a national management plan (EMP) to each member state. At the GFCM level, a workshop on European eel was held in Salammbou, Tunisia, from 23-25 September 2010, which recommended the development of management plans for eel covering all countries in the Mediterranean area. In this regard, meetings of the joint WGEEL ICES/EIFAAC/GFCM eel working group in Rome, in 2014, in Antalya in 2015, in Cordoba in 2016 and in Kavala in 2017, were conducted to allow countries in the area to collect the baseline data needed for a preliminary assessment of their national stocks for an overall assessment of the European eel stock. Egypt is among the top producers of European eel in the Mediterranean and the participation of the country in the joint regional efforts to assess and manage this shared stock will be key for sustainable use of

this resource. During the 8th EastMed Coordination Committee (Cairo, November 2017), Egypt requested the support of the project to monitor the status of European eel in Egypt. Therefore, a study was launched in 2018, under the framework of the LoA with GAFRD, to support the collection of baseline data for a preliminary assessment of the national stock of European eel and therefore to contribute to a Mediterranean-wide assessment of the stock.

➤ ***Analysis of catch and effort data collection systems in Lebanon and Egypt***

With the objective to enhance the quality of catch and effort data collection systems in place in Lebanon and Egypt, the Project organized two training courses in 2017 (Egypt January 2017 and Lebanon February 2017) to introduce a probabilistic sampling approach to fisheries data collection. As a follow up to the training courses, the Project supported the application of the approach to two pilot fisheries: purse seine fishery in Lebanon and trawl fisheries in Egypt. Data collected throughout 2017 obtained with the probabilistic approach and the established systems of data collection (Flouca in Lebanon and Samac in Egypt) are being used in the identification of critical issues with the current system and the elaboration of recommendations for improving data quality. The analysis of the data collected in Lebanon indicated, for instance, that production of purse seiners was being overestimated by the Flouca system due to an overestimation of the number of vessels in activity. The results of the study are being taken into account to adjust the data collection framework for Lebanon supported by EastMed in 2018. The analysis of the data collected in Egypt is in progress.

➤ ***Support on fisheries data collection in Lebanon***

The EastMed project has been providing technical and financial assistance to Lebanon since 2012 to improve the fisheries data collection system, including catch and effort data collection system, biological sampling and socio-economic surveys, in line with GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF). In 2015, the project supported the development of a sampling strategy and design for the collection of catch and effort data by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). Financial support was then provided for the collection of data in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Apart from this, biological sampling and socio-economic data have also been supported by the project in the past years. During the 8th Coordination Committee meeting of EastMed (Cairo, Egypt, 8–9 November 2017), Lebanon requested the support of the Project for the continuation of the ongoing data collection activities on catch, effort, biological and socio-economic variables. Since then agreement was reached with the GFCM that the collection of socio-economic variables in Lebanon will be carried out with the support of the GFCM grant for the Mid-term strategy. Therefore, for 2018, the Project is supporting the biological sampling of priority species through a Letter of Agreement with the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS-L) and the collection of catch and effort data through an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). The support being provided by the project will assist Lebanon in continuing the data collection, so that it could assess better the status of the fisheries resources and monitor the situation of fisheries.

➤ ***Support to fisheries data collection in Turkey***

Since data on the biological characteristics of the stocks is currently lacking in the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts of Turkey, during the FAO EastMed Working Group on Fisheries Data Analysis, held in Antalya Turkey on 28-30 July 2015, a plan for the collection of biological fisheries data in Turkey was drawn up. Subsequently, during the 8th Coordination Committee meeting of EastMed (November 2017 in Cairo) participants agreed to prepare a preliminary list of priority species to be taken into consideration by the Sub-regional committee for the Eastern Mediterranean. The list was constructed based on the importance of the species to each country both in terms of volume of landing and value. In line with these decisions taken in the mentioned meetings, a Letter of Agreement was signed between FAO EastMed and Mediterranean Fisheries Research Production and Training Institute (MEDFRI) to launch a pilot biological sampling program for the priority species in the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts of Turkey, in line with the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF). Based on the advice of national scientists from universities and experts from Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock (MoFAL) a scheme for the biological data collection was agreed for this pilot project. The Ministry will facilitate the implementation of the fisheries dependent data collection with the assistance of the officers in provincial directories and in Mediterranean Fisheries Research Production and Training Institute (MEDFRI). The implementation of this pilot study in Turkey would be the first step to evaluate refined stock assessments if a large-scale data collection system in the country will be feasible and higher quality data will be available in the future.

➤ ***Support to fisheries data collection in Palestine***

During the 8th EastMed Coordination Committee meeting it was agreed to continue supporting ongoing data collection activities on catch, effort, biological and socio-economic variables in Palestine (Gaza Strip). Data has been collected along the coast of the Gaza Strip in four landing sites (Gaza City, Dar al Balah, Khan Yunes and Rafah). The first pilot study was completed at the end of 2013, and continued on a regular basis from 2014 to 2017. The support of the project to the fisheries data collection continues in 2018 covering the sampling of biological parameters of the stocks, the socio-economic aspects of the fisheries and onboard sampling of discards and bycatch species. The partnerships that have been concluded between the scientific community and the experts in Palestine with the support of the project, will facilitate the implementation of the fisheries dependent data collection.

➤ ***Support surveys using artisanal commercial fishing gears in Lebanon***

Lebanon has a restricted continental shelf and fishing activities are concentrated close to the shore. In 2012, EastMed in collaboration with the CANA project "Establishing monitoring and sustainable development of the Lebanese sea" conducted a study to evaluate the potentiality of offshore fishing grounds for the local artisanal fishery. A preliminary survey was carried out in the area between Tyre and Naqoura (South Lebanon), using both monofilament gillnets to

target hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) and Spanish traps designed to catch the striped soldier shrimp (*Plesionika edwardsii*). The results of the survey, showed the occurrence of potentially exploitable resources on the Lebanese upper slope. During 2017 the EastMed project supported fishing trials using experimental deep water-resistant trammel nets along with Spanish traps to target *Plesionika edwardsii*. Trammel nets were used to assess abundance and distribution of demersal species in the deeper shelf and upper slope, which represents a potential area of expansion of fishing activities in Lebanese waters. Building upon the results of these trials, another set of trials with nets and traps specifically designed for the Lebanese situation is being conducted in 2018 with the immediate objective of testing the feasibility and efficacy of some commercial fishing gears in targeting commercially relevant species over the continental shelf and upper slope while minimizing unwanted by-catch (especially of sharks). The general long-term objective is to increase the array of métiers available for small-scale fisheries in Lebanon. This is fully consistent with the “Ministerial declaration on a regional plan of action for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” signed in Malta, on 26 September 2018, paragraphs 25, 26, 30, 31 and with the actions 2, 3 and 5 of the “Regional plan of action for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” (RPOA-SSF) in the section “Scientific research”. So far three types of cages (two targeting demersal fish species and one targeting Norway lobsters) were tested and technical specs for a new set of nets were defined and submitted for procurement by FAO. Operations started on September 25 in Tyre (South Lebanon) where 21 baited cages were lowered at 150 meters depth. Biological and socio-economic data were collected in each fishing operation by observers onboard with a view to assess the economic performance and ecological impacts of the gears. Further trials will continue in the following months.

➤ ***Organization of the EastMed Working Group on Fisheries Data Analysis and Joint EastMed/GFCM Data preparation meeting on round sardinella in the eastern Mediterranean Sea***

The EastMed Working Group on Fisheries Data Analysis was held in FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, from 10 to 14 September 2018. The WG was attended by experts from Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Cyprus and Italy. The objectives of the working group were to facilitate and support the analysis of fisheries biological and socioeconomic data collected in the Eastern Mediterranean countries, with a view to assess the status of priority stocks in the subregion and estimate socioeconomic indicators about the status of the main fishing fleets. The WG was organized in two sub-groups that run in parallel: a Sub-Group on Stock Assessment and a Sub-Group on Socioeconomics. As agreed during the GFCM Subregional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (SRC-EM), a joint session was also organized with the GFCM for a Data Preparatory Meeting on round sardinella. The joint session was run on the 10 and 11 September inside the Sub-Group on Stock Assessment. During the data preparatory meeting, the group analyzed the available data from Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon, Gaza and Egypt and agreed on a work plan to assess the stock, testing different length-based methods and scenarios reflecting the hypotheses of single and multiple stocks. Data prepared during the WG and the preliminary analysis conducted will be presented in the GFCM WG on Stock Assessment in

November 2018. During the Sub-Group on stock assessment experts advanced in the preparation of data and preliminary assessments of demersal stocks, including *Mullus barbatus*, *Mullus surmuletus*, *Metapenaeus stebbingi*, *Saurida undosquamis*, *Pagellus erythrinus* and *Lithognathus mormyrus*. The Sub-Group on Socioeconomics focused the analysis on three main technical areas that included the fleet structure and output ('technical component'); employment ('social component'); and the economic performance ('economic component') for the main fleet segments in Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey. The indicators were calculated and analyzed for 2016 data and compared to the results from 2015.

➤ ***Organization of the joint MedSudMed/EastMed/GFCM data preparation meeting on deep water red shrimp in the central-eastern Mediterranean Sea***

The MedSudMed/EastMed/GFCM data preparation meeting on deep water red shrimp in the central-eastern Mediterranean Sea was held in GFCM headquarters, Rome, 17 – 21 September 2018. The meeting was attended by experts from Italy, Malta, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon and Egypt. Following the ToRs agreed during the Subregional Committees for the Eastern and Central subregions and endorsed by the 20th session of the SAC, the meeting worked towards the determination of fishing footprint of the deep water red shrimp fishery in the eastern-central Mediterranean, reviewed the available data for the assessment of deep water red shrimps, including the definition of the most appropriate assessment /management units, and elaborated a roadmap for the assessment of the stock. In preparation to the meeting, the project supported the elaboration of templates for data compilation and a preliminary evaluation of options for the assessment of the stocks, which will be taken into consideration in the next steps of the roadmap. The key outcomes of the meeting included the production of preliminary maps of fishing grounds combining LEK, AIS and other georeferenced data, the review of biological parameters for the species and the compilations of available length frequency distributions from catch and fishery-independent surveys. The compiled data will be made available for the WGSAD for further analysis. The meeting also identified the main data gaps for the assessment of the stock and prepared a roadmap for the assessment, in view of planned assessment for scientific advice in 2019. The meeting recommended the organization of second joint data preparation meeting before the 2019 WGSAD and to work in the intersession to improve the data, taking into consideration the outcomes of the 2018 WGSAD.

➤ ***Market Value Chain Analysis in Lebanon***

Within the FAO Country Programming Framework (2016- 2019) for Lebanon, which sets out government priority areas to guide the FAO partnership and support the Government of Lebanon, innovative actions were promoted to increase the efficiency of fishery value chains. In this regard, a study was launched in 2017 with the objective to better understand the existing fisheries market in Lebanon, to map the flows of products throughout the different stages of the value chain, from the production to marketing and to identify critical factors, challenges and opportunities to improve the efficiency of the fishery value chain. The study was supported by EastMed, FAO Lebanon and the MoA. Eight critical factors were identified: high prices,

limited local production, product spoilage, high energy costs, political, bureaucratic and logistical barriers, employment low levels of attractiveness, unregulated street-vendors and inadequate skills and facilities. The report of the study, being prepared for publication by FAO, provided a number of recommendations to improve the efficiency of the chain in Lebanon, including technical, regulatory and capacity building. In addition to the value chain analysis, a consumer behavior study was also considered necessary to understand demand and supply issues as well as assess response to the proposed concepts to enhance the value of small-scale fish and fishery products. The consumer behavior study was conducted under a Technical Cooperation Program with FAO and benefited from the technical advice of EastMed.

➤ ***Study of transboundary population structure of round sardinella in the Eastern Mediterranean***

The Project organized a five-day workshop with two objectives. First to establish a Study Group for otoliths preparation methods, ageing criteria and ageing scheme for round sardinella and common pandora. Secondly, a full day was dedicated to the discussion and elaboration of a plan of work for the study of the transboundary population structure of round sardinella in the Levantine Basin. The objectives, methodologies and roles & responsibilities of the latter study were defined during the meeting. The workshop was attended by 14 participants from Cyprus, Egypt, Italy, Lebanon and Turkey, including representatives of the CopeMed II project that is starting off a similar action, and was hosted by Coispa Tecnologia & Ricerca. It was recognized that there is the need to adopt a holistic approach with multiple perspectives to improve information on stock structure for resource management that capture different ecological and structuring processes acting at contrasting scales. The Group agreed on basing this study on four major pillars: i) a general review of environmental information already available, ii) the analysis of genetic markers, iii) the analysis of otolith shape and iv) the analysis of body morphometry and meristics, demographic indices and life history traits. Where data is not available, sampling sites were selected to provide a representative coverage of the populations. Three task coordinators (tasks ii, iii and iv) were appointed during the meeting and the following calendar was agreed:

Tasks	Year	2019				2020			
	Quarter	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
Detailed protocols									
Selection of personnel									
Training									
Sampling									
Fisheries data compilation									
Genetic analysis									
Intermediate Workshop									
Statistical analysis									
Populations simulations									
Final workshop									
Final report									

Project Component 4 - Increased Participation and Cooperation

The objective of this component is to promote sub-regional cooperation and collaboration for fishery research, monitoring and management and will support Government staff to attend and fully participating in GFCM (and other) regional meetings

➤ ***Organization of the 8th EastMed Coordination Committee Meeting.***

The eight meeting of the Coordination Committee of the FAO EastMed project was held in Cairo, Egypt, from 8 to 9 November 2017, and hosted by the General Authority for Fish Resources Development (GAFRD). The meeting was attended by delegations from Greece, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Turkey, the European Commission and staff of the EastMed project. Mr. Samir Majdalani, from Lebanon and outgoing Chair of the Compliance Committee of GFCM, represented the GFCM in the meeting. The meeting was opened by the FAOR in Egypt, Mr. Hussein Gadain, on behalf of FAO. Ms. Mona Mehrez, the Deputy-Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, welcomed participants to Egypt. After the opening of the meeting and election of the chairperson, the activities during the 7th year of the project were presented, followed by the workplan of activities for the next period. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the project and thanked both the staff of the project and the donors for their contribution. The agreed work plan included follow up actions to activities which had started in previous years as well as new areas of work in support of the GFCM Mid-term strategy. The need for strong coordination between the project and GFCM were stressed by participants.

➤ ***Participation at the GFCM WG on Stock Assessment***

The project participated in the GFCM Working Group on stock assessment for Demersal and Small pelagic species (November 13 - 18, 2017 FAO, Rome) and supported the participation of experts from the Eastern Mediterranean to present stock assessments from the region. Six out of ten stock assessments from the Eastern Mediterranean countries presented in the WG were prepared with some level of technical and financial support from EastMed, including support for data collection, preparation and preliminary assessments carried out within EastMed WG on Fisheries Data Analysis (May 2017, FAO HQ, Rome). The stocks were *Mullus surmuletus* (GSA 25 and GSA 26), *Boops boops* (GSA 25), *Metapenaeus stebbingi* (GSA 26), *Upeneus moluccensis* (GSA 27) and *Sardinella* spp. (GSA 27). All of the stock assessments showed that the stocks are in overexploitation.

➤ ***Participation at 20th session of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).***

The project participated and supported experts from the Eastern Mediterranean countries to participate in 20th session of the GFCM SAC (26-29 June 2018, Tangier, Morocco). During the meeting the main activities carried out by the FAO regional Projects operating in the Mediterranean Sea (AdriaMed, CopeMed II, EastMed and MedSudMed) were presented. The

projects also contributed to the technical discussion for the development of multi-annual fisheries management plans and to the definition of the annual work plan for the SAC and its subsidiary bodies. The SAC acknowledged the support received from the FAO Projects, in particular in relation to the progress in the implementation of the GFCM Mid-term strategy. The SAC meeting was also an occasion for the project to hold meetings with the participating countries aimed at strengthening cooperation and planning future activities.

➤ ***Participation at 41th and 42nd sessions of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)***

The project attended the 41th and 42nd sessions of the FAO General Fishery Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), held respectively in Budva, Montenegro, 15-20 October 2017 and Rome, Italy, 22 – 26 October 2018. During the sessions of GFCM, proposals for specific fisheries management measures were endorsed as binding recommendations, as well as some important resolutions were taken. Some of them focused on the areas covered by AdriaMed (Adriatic Sea), MedSudMed (Strait of Sicily) CopeMed II (Western Mediterranean) and Eastmed (Eastern Mediterranean). The importance of the projects and their fundamental role in the Mediterranean for the development of national capacity, fostering cooperation and supporting the development of fisheries management was widely acknowledged by national delegations. The GFCM approved the Programme of work of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and of the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) for the intersessional periods, which were taken into account in the elaboration of the plan of work of the FAO Regional Projects.

➤ ***Participation at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Regional Stakeholder Conference on Blue Economy***

The Project participated at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Regional Stakeholder Conference on Blue Economy, which took place in Naples on the 29-30 November 2017. The EastMed project was invited to deliver a talk at the Workshop 5 of the conference: Promoting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean, on the experience of EAF fisheries management planning in the Mediterranean. The conference consisted of a two-day international and multi-stakeholder event gathering approximately 300 participants, including governments' representatives, regional/local authorities, business sector, universities/training and education centres, international development agencies, international organizations, and civil society organizations dealing with marine and maritime issues linked to blue economy. On the first day, a number of technical workshops were organized in parallel to showcase most relevant sectors of Mediterranean blue economy, including fisheries and aquaculture. The FAO EastMed project joined the GFCM workshop with a view to present in particular progress being achieved to support national efforts by Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey. The workshop, which was introduced by a presentation made by the GFCM Secretariat, proved of great interest to attendants (roughly 80 participants), as shown by the interactions that followed presentations through a dedicated Qs&As session. The relevance of fisheries and aquaculture against the

background of the blue growth initiative of FAO was highlighted.

➤ ***Participation at the GFCM SAC Sub-regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (SRC-EM) and the Sub-regional Committee for the Central Mediterranean (SRC-CM)***

The project participated and supported the participation of experts from the eastern Mediterranean in the GFCM Sub-regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (SRC-EM, Chania, Greece 06 - 08 March 2018). The aims of the SRC-EM were to: i) conduct technical sessions on deep water red shrimps and data limited stocks, ii) outline and discuss the new decisions adopted at the 41st Commission, with a special focus on the newly adopted recommendation on the submission of data on fishing activities, iii) compile and discuss the state of eastern Mediterranean stocks as emanating from the Working Group on Stock Assessment of Demersal and of Small Pelagic Species; iv) evaluate the outcomes of the SAC technical activities relevant to the management of eastern Mediterranean fisheries; v) take stock of relevant sub-regional initiatives and provide advice towards fisheries management; and vi) propose a list of activities of relevance to the sub-region to be considered for the 2018–2019 SAC work plan, including a detailed work plan for the assessment of priority species. The meeting acknowledged the role of the FAO Mediterranean projects to coordinate joint fishery research activities and to support the collection of scientific data the provision of technical inputs to address issues of priority to the sub-region. In particular, the meeting agreed on a joint action between the FAO Mediterranean projects EastMed and MedsudMed and GFCM for the preparation of data for the assessment of deep water red shrimps in the central-eastern Mediterranean. In connection to this particular issue (deep water red shrimps), the project travelled to Tunis, Tunisia, to participate in the Sub-regional Committee for the Central Mediterranean (SRC-CM) from 17 to 20 April 2018. The SRC-CM discussed and endorsed the proposed plan of work and terms of reference of a data preparatory meeting for the assessment of deep water red shrimp, to be organized in collaboration with FAO Mediterranean Projects EastMed and MedsudMed and the GFCM.

➤ ***Participation at the “Expert Meeting on Climate Change Implications for Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries”, GFCM, Rome, 4–6 December 2017***

The Expert Meeting on Climate Change Implications for Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries, was held at the GFCM, Rome, 4–6 December 2017, with the objective to provide technical support the development of an adaptation strategy to cope with the potential effects of climate change on fisheries, in the framework of the GFCM Mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea Fisheries. The meeting was attended by experts working on Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and experts engaged in the assessment of projected impacts of climate change to the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The meeting reviewed the existing information on the observed and expected impacts of climate change on Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, as well as the most relevant elements on vulnerability and the existing and potential adaptation measures. Agreement was reached on the need to enhance the knowledge on the implications of climate change to fisheries in the

region and to identify options to cope with the expected impacts. In this regard, the meeting elaborated elements of a methodology to assess risks and vulnerabilities of fisheries to climate change. A roadmap for the review, endorsement and application of the methodology was elaborated aiming at contributing to the elaboration of regional climate change adaptation strategy in the mid-term.

➤ ***Coordination among the sub-regional projects, with the GFCM and the donors including Italy and the EU***

In order to strengthen international and regional cooperation the project is interacting closely with the FAO sub-Regional Projects, AdriaMed, MedsudMed and CopeMed II throughout the year with several co-ordination meetings. These meetings were held in order to consolidate and envisage common activities. In this respect the project also participated to in the Coordination Committee of AdriaMed, MedsudMed and CopeMed II where synergies were identified. Training activities were coordinated among all the Projects, in order to avoid duplication or overlapping of activities. In order to improve the visibility of the regional projects in the Mediterranean, a promotional video was prepared highlighting some of the achievements of the projects in past years.

Cooperation was further sustained with the GFCM Secretariat and the GFCM subsidiary bodies. EastMed continued to support the activities of the GFCM by providing scientific contributions for discussion and by funding the participation of several experts from the Eastern Mediterranean countries to GFCM and other international activities. During the intersessional period, EastMed supported the participation of experts from the sub-region in the following meetings:

- Final FAO workshop on creation of farmers register in Lebanon. Beirut, Lebanon 16 February 2018.
- GFCM Working group on VMEs, including session on Essential Fish Habitats. Rome, Italy, 26 February – 1 March 2018.
- GFCM working group on vulnerable marine ecosystem, expert meeting on the formulation of advice on fisheries, meeting for the preparation of the High-level meeting on small-scale fisheries. Rome, Italy 2 March 2018.
- GFCM Sub-regional Committee for Eastern Mediterranean (SRC-EM). Chania Greece, 5-8 March 2018.
- Meeting organized by DG Fisheries (Turkey) to launch the fisheries management plan for Gokova Bay. Gokova Bay, Turkey 16 March 2018.
- GFCM WG on fishing technologies. Tunis, Tunisia, 17-19 April 2018.
- Participation in the WG on IUU and VMS and related control systems in the GFCM area of application. Beirut, Lebanon 26 - 27 April 2018.
- Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) - 20th session. Tangiers, Morocco 26 to 29 June 2018.

- 42nd session of the GFCM and 9th session of the Committee on Administration and Finance. FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 22 – 26 October 2018.

Technical documents have been prepared and the ones published are available online through the website. Hard copies have also been distributed to participating countries. Posters were prepared, and presentations were given to several meetings, in which the publications were distributed. In addition, a video about the FAO Mediterranean regional projects was elaborated to enhance the visibility of the project activities in past years to a wider audience.

The project web site (www.faoeastmed.org) has been improved and active links have been created with the websites of the other sub-regional projects and GFCM. It is continuously updated with new information, and on the home page a new section on upcoming events was developed.

Annex IV Work plan for the 10th Year of the Project

FAO EastMed Working Document

Introduction

The aim of this document is to offer to the members of the Coordination Committee (CC) elements for discussion on the draft proposal for the Work Plan of the EastMed project for the upcoming year.

The project has been operative since September 2009 with a mandate of five years which was further extended after the end date of the project. The activities proposed in this document are based on the priorities indicated by the countries, taking into account the objectives of the project, the recommendations received during the previous Coordination Committee Meetings and the outputs of the activities carried out during the previous years. The activities proposed are aligned with GFCM work plan, including the outcomes of the 42nd Plenary Session of the GFCM (Rome October 2018), with the SAC work plan for 2018/20 and are consistent with the GFCM mid-term strategy (2017-2020) for the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries (Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2). They also pursue the goals defined by the Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration and includes collaboration with the GFCM. Moreover, efforts have been made, in coordination with the other Mediterranean Regional Projects, to identify tentative common activities in order to avoid any overlap as well as to find synergies and strengthen the coordination among the activities of the Regional Projects.

The final work plan will take into account the recommendations of the 9th Coordination Committee meeting, in accordance with the priority expressed by the countries on each activity and directly linked to the available budget of the project.

WORKPLAN

In order to facilitate the presentation of the work plan for the next period, all the proposed activities were organized into the 4 components of the Project:

- **Institutional Strengthening**
- **Training Staff and Development**
- **Data Collection and Analyses**
- **Increased Participation and Cooperation**

Institutional Strengthening

1. Support to national fisheries information systems and databases

The project will continue to follow up on the catch and effort database and software

applications in Egypt (SAMAC) and in Lebanon (FLOUKA) and it will provide technical assistance, if required, to adjust and upgrade the existing systems to integrate other sources of fisheries data being collected on a routine basis by countries, such as socioeconomic data. In Lebanon, the project will also continue to support the maintenance of the web licensing system. The project will also continue to provide IT and laboratory equipment, following specific request from the participating countries and depending on the availability of funds. The project also agreed to support Syria and Palestine in setting up databases and information systems to store and analyze catch and effort data. Limited support will be also provided to enhance the needed IT infrastructure (e.g. tablets) to make the databases and information systems functional.

2. Support the development and implementation of the fisheries management plans in the Eastern Mediterranean

In the past years the project supported the practical application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries in selected case studies in Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt. The case studies resulted in draft management plans, two of them awaiting endorsement of national authorities and one already in process of implementation. In the next intersession the project could support implementation of activities to facilitate the operationalization of the adopted management plans and also initiate new pilot studies responding to national and sub-regional priorities. In this regard, the project agreed to support Syria and Palestine in the implementation of new EAF pilot studies.

3. Support the assessment of the vulnerability of fisheries to climate change and the identification of potential adaptation options for selected fisheries.

Following the recommendations of the “Expert meeting on climate change implications for Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, Rome, 4–6 December 2017”, and with the endorsement of the GFCM, the vulnerability of fisheries to the effects of climate change will be assessed in specific case studies in each sub-region of the Mediterranean and Black Sea. The assessment, to be based on the agreed methodology developed by the Expert Meeting, will contribute to the identification of options for coping with climate change in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. With a view to contribute to this regional initiative, the project will support the assessment of the vulnerability of fisheries to climate change in specific case studies in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Staff Training and Development

4. Support training in stock assessment and other fisheries data analysis methods

A general need for training on stock assessment has been indicated in several cases by the countries participating in the project. The project will support training sessions organised in collaboration with other FAO Regional Projects, such as the Summer School in Quantitative

Fisheries Stock Assessment. The project could also support ad-hoc trainings on methodologies for stock assessment, socioeconomic data analysis, the evaluation of management strategies, basic knowledge of R upon request of countries and complementary to the objectives of the Summer School. In this particular regard, it was noted that Lebanon requested the project to organize a basic training in R. The project was informed of the availability of different online training courses for basic training in R (e.g., Harvard University; Coursera; eDX, etc.) which could be attempted by Lebanon and other interested countries. However in view of possible language limitations of participants, the project will also consider the possibility of organizing a basic training in R, upon request and depending on availability of funds.

5. Support training in the sampling and identification of by-catches, discards and incidental catches of vulnerable species

In the past years, the EastMed project in collaboration with the GFCM organized three training activities on data collection on by-catches and discards. The training aimed at improving the understanding of the importance of monitoring discards and bycatches especially for species in which stock assessments are currently conducted and vulnerable groups such as elasmobranchs. The project can support further training activities in the sampling and identification of by-catches, discards and incidental catches of vulnerable species, upon request of the countries. In view of the several requests received during the meeting, the Committee requested that the project organize another sub-regional training activity on bycatch/discards monitoring, in close collaboration with the GFCM. In addition to the training course, the project also agreed to support visit of scientists to exchange experiences in discards monitoring.

6. Organization of EastMed Study Group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading for further training and standardization of age reading for priority species in Eastern Mediterranean

The EastMed Study Group on intercalibration of fish otolith reading was established in 2018 aiming at carrying out, on a regular basis, training and inter-calibration exercises for age determination by otolith reading of demersal and small pelagic fish of the eastern Mediterranean. The end goal of the study group is to enhance the quality of the biological data used in stock assessment, including the preparation of reliable age/length keys for the priority species in the sub-region. The project can support the organization of the Study Group in 2019 to follow up on the ongoing otolith exchange program. The project was requested to include additional species, such as hake and red mullet, in the program of work of the study group. Considering the extended experience of other Mediterranean countries with the aging of these species, the Committee suggested for the project to first identify ongoing experiences with these species at Mediterranean level and to facilitate participation of eastern Mediterranean experts in any ongoing working/study groups. Upon the identification of opportunities for enhancing age inter-calibration at sub-regional level, the project could consider the inclusion of the species in the EastMed study group.

7. Support the execution and data analysis of surveys at sea with standardized methodologies

The project can support the organization of training courses and on-the-job training activities for the design of scientific surveys and the analysis of survey data. Such activities, to be organized in collaboration with the GFCM, will prepare scientists in the Eastern Mediterranean countries to implement the GFCM demersal and acoustic surveys according to the Mid-Term strategy (2017-2020). The Committee was informed of the GFCM plan to organize a trawl survey in Lebanon in 2019 and of the ongoing discussion with Egypt for a trawl survey in 2020. Upon request of countries, EastMed can support training activities, together with GFCM and other regional partners (EU MEDITS), to facilitate the execution of these surveys and to enhance the capacities of national experts also through exchange programs.

Data Collection and Analyses

8. Support the continuation of fishery and biological data collection programs for priority species in Eastern Mediterranean countries

The project can continue to support ongoing data collection activities on catch, effort, biological and socio economic variables in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Turkey. For 2019 the project will also support for the first time the collection of catch, effort and biological data in Syria. In terms of biological data collection, particular attention will be given to the priority species identified by the GFCM for the eastern Mediterranean region, including round sardinella and deep water red shrimps (*Aristeomorpha foliacea* and *Aristeus antennatus*). In Palestine, the collection of discard and bycatch data will also continue and be expanded to collect also data on other vulnerable species, such as marine turtles.

9. Organization of an EastMed WG on fisheries data analysis

The project could support the organization of the EastMed Working Group on fisheries data analysis in order to undertake stock assessment for species that have been assessed on a regular basis and new species for which the time series is being collected. The WG could also conduct the analysis of socioeconomic data with a view to support eastern Mediterranean countries in the monitoring socioeconomic indicators of main fleet segments. In view of the ongoing GFCM action on socioeconomic surveys and analysis for socioeconomic indicators, the project will liaise with GFCM to define how best to facilitate the analysis of socioeconomic indicators, either through a joint session within the EastMed WG or through different means.

10. Progress towards the assessment of the population structure of round sardinella in the Eastern Mediterranean

During the EastMed Study Group meeting on inter-calibration of fish otolith reading, held in Bari, Italy, 24 – 27 July 2018 a roadmap for the assessment of the population structure of the

round sardinella in the Eastern Mediterranean was developed by experts from the region. Inspired by the ongoing work on stock boundaries in the Alboran Sea supported by the CopeMed II project, the group recognized the need to adopt a holistic approach with multiple perspectives to improve information on stock structure for resource management that capture different ecological and structuring processes acting at contrasting scales. On this basis, the group agreed to focus the analysis of stock boundaries of sardinella on four major pillars: i) a general review of environmental information already available, ii) the analysis of genetic markers, iii) the analysis of otolith shape and iv) the analysis of body morphometry and meristics, demographic indices and life history traits. Where data is not available, sampling sites were selected to provide a representative coverage of the populations. The meeting appointed three task coordinators (tasks ii, iii and iv) and elaborated a calendar of activities for 2019-2020 (reproduced below). The project will support the implementation of the agreed activities for 2019 and will also include Syria and Palestine in the initiative. In addition to the work plan on sardinella, the Committee agreed in supporting Eastern Mediterranean countries to participate in the EASME-funded study on stock identification of priority species such as red mullet, deep water rose shrimp, hake, deep water red shrimps and Norway lobster.

Year	2019				2020				
	Quarter	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
Tasks									
Detailed protocols									
Selection of personnel									
Training									
Sampling									
Fisheries data compilation									
Genetic analysis									
Intermediate Workshop									
Statistical analysis									
Populations simulations									
Final workshop									
Final report									

11. Continue to support experimental trials using artisanal fishing gears in Lebanon with a view to identify alternative fishing opportunities for small-scale fisheries

In 2017 the project supported for the first time exploratory fishing trials using deep water-resistant experimental trammel nets along with Spanish traps for *Plesionika edwardsii*. The number of trials were limited and the nets were not specifically designed for commercial use but instead for a first evaluation of available resources in offshore areas of Lebanon. In 2018 different designs of traps and deep-water trammel nets are being tested to evaluate their technical-economic performance. For 2019 the project can support one additional year of data collection with the designed gears to evaluate their performance and discuss the opportunities for using them on a commercial scale by fishers. The Committee also agreed to support similar activities in Syria in the near future. As a first step, it was agreed to support the visit of experts from Syria to Lebanon to share experiences with the trials and to elaborate a detailed plan of work to be initiated in 2020, depending on the availability of funds.

12. Support activities on the identification of spawning and nursery areas of round sardinella in the Eastern Mediterranean by conducting egg and larvae surveys at Sea

There are important gaps in knowledge of the spawning and nursery areas of sardinella stocks in the Eastern Mediterranean. Identifying spawning, nursery and feeding areas, as well as understanding the migratory and dispersal patterns, provides important information for effective evaluation of the resources and effective fisheries management. The project received in 2018 preliminary proposals to conduct eggs and larvae surveys from Egypt and Lebanon, but no consensus was reached on the propose methods. With a view to conduct a first exploratory survey, the Committee agreed to support the collection of eggs and larvae data in 2019 using a reliable, standardized and cost-effective methodology. The outcomes of this study could contribute to the proposed activity on stock boundaries of sardinella in the Eastern Mediterranean.

13. Organization of a joint EastMed/MedSudMed Working Group on deep water red shrimp in the Central-Eastern Mediterranean

The deep water red shrimps (*Aristeus antennatus* and *Aristomorpha foliacea*) are priority species for the eastern and central Mediterranean. A benchmark assessment for the species is planned for 2020. Specific management plans were recently adopted by GFCM for the fisheries targeting the species in the Ionian and Levant Seas. With a view to support the ongoing assessment and management efforts for the species, a working group is planned to be organized in 2019 to support the data preparation and preliminary assessment of the species. Following the positive experience with the organization of a data preparation meeting for the species in 2018, the project can support the organization of the working group jointly with MedSudMed and GFCM in 2019.

14. Support activities in the collection and analysis of data on European eel

The European eel is a priority species at the Mediterranean basin level due to its wide distribution, critical conservation status and importance in international trade (CITES Appendix II species). A Joint EIFAAC/ICES/GFCM Working Group on Eel [WGEEL] has been collecting and analysing data on eel for the assessment and management of the stock. During the 42nd session of the GFCM a multi-annual management plan for fishing activities catching European eel in the Mediterranean Sea was adopted. The management plan foresees among other things the submission of data on eels by CPCs, the implementation of a scientific research program on the species and the organization of a working group on eels in 2019. While the scientific research program is not operational, working in close collaboration with the GFCM, the project could continue supporting the collection of data on European eel in the main areas where the species is harvested in the eastern Mediterranean, including in Egypt, and also support technically the countries in fulfilling the requirements of the recently adopted recommendation.

15. Support to activities on Non Indigenous Species (NIS) to compile information on invasive species in the project area according to the Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) methodology

Considering the significant role and impact of NIS in the Mediterranean, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean, the GFCM and UN Environment/MAP agreed to launch a pilot monitoring programme on non-indigenous species in relation to fisheries in the eastern Mediterranean. The objective of the programme is to gather information on NIS using standardized methods and indicators to evaluate the status of the most invasive species in relation to fisheries, to assess their temporal and spatial trends and to provide scientific advice and recommendations on how to manage ecological and socio-economical related impacts. The programme will focus on seven priority fish species: *Saurida lessepsianus*, *Lagocephalus sceleratus*, *Pterois miles*, *Siganus rivulatus*, *Siganus luridus*, *Fistularia commersonii* and *Plotosus lineatus*. The monitoring programme could include one or a combination of approaches, including GFCM/DCRF related data collection mechanisms, scientific surveys at sea, and surveys of local ecological knowledge of fishers (LEK). Different LEK protocols have been proposed, including the survey protocol that has been applied by the AdriaMed and MedSudMed regional projects in the Adriatic Sea and Tunisia. In order to contribute to the ongoing monitoring programme, EastMed could support the compilation of data on the priority list of NIS species, based on ongoing fisheries data collection programs and through the application of LEK survey protocols.

16. Support the identification and implementation of pilot case studies to test the proposed GFCM/SAC methodology for the assessment of Recreational Fisheries (RFs)

One of the objectives of the Target 2 of the GFCM Mid-term strategy is to obtain robust and timely information on the impact of small-scale and recreational fisheries on coastal communities. In regard to recreational fisheries, at the 20th session of SAC in 2018, the GFCM Secretariat presented a draft “Manual for data collection on recreational fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” to serve as a harmonized framework for data collection about the sector. The SAC agreed that the draft manual be tested through pilot studies and that, on the basis of these outcomes, the next meeting of the Working Group on Recreational Fisheries (WGRF, planned for 2020) should consolidate this experience, together with comments on its application, into a revised version of the manual. The Committee agreed to wait for the results of the pilot study to be launched by GFCM in Lebanon before supporting further pilot studies in the sub-region.

Increased Participation and Cooperation

17. Strengthening the cooperation with the other FAO Regional Projects

The existing cooperation with the other FAO sub-regional projects AdriaMed, MedSudMed

and CopeMed II will be further strengthened. In this context, synergies are foreseen with the projects. Training activities will be coordinated among all the projects, in order to avoid duplication or overlapping of activities. The participation of other experts from the projects in training courses organized by EastMed and vice versa will be foreseen. The preparation of common informative material that can improve the visibility of the projects is foreseen.

18. Support Government staff to attend and fully participating in GFCM meetings

The Project will continue to strengthen the international and regional cooperation at Mediterranean level with the GFCM and its related bodies (SAC, Sub-Committees, Working Groups), according to budget availability, through the support to the preparation of scientific contributions for GFCM events, the participation of experts from the EastMed countries in GFCM events and through support to the countries to be compliant with the GFCM requirements.

19. Support the organization of the Co-ordination Committee meeting

The project should organize the meeting of the Co-ordination Committee, where lessons learned and possible recommendations regarding requirements and priorities will be discussed, also in the light of a possible follow-up project supporting the development of national and regional capacity for fisheries management in the Mediterranean

20. Disseminate Project's results and develop fishery information systems through the use/development of databases, web pages and technical papers

The contents, and consequently the EastMed portal (www.faoeastmed.org), will continue to be updated and further developed in order to make it always easily accessible in areas of interest to website users. The Project will continue to disseminate the project's results through the preparation of technical documents, meeting reports, brochures and posters.