

MEDAC opinion on the MAP for Small Pelagic resources in the Adriatic

In acknowledging the fact that

the European Commission has decided to withdraw the proposal for a multiannual management plan for small pelagic resources in the Adriatic Sea (COM/2017/097 final - 2017/043 (COD));

the European Commission plans to present a proposal for a GFCM recommendation in the spring of 2021 in order to include Montenegro and Albania in the management measures, otherwise the measures would not apply to them;

the European Commission has asked the MEDAC to provide an opinion by 9th September 2020, so as to be in a position to consider the proposals made by the stakeholders that are represented in the framework of this Advisory Council;

during the WG1 meeting held by videoconference on 8th July 2020 this subject was put on the agenda and a series of issues was given further consideration (further to the extensive discussions held since 2014), such as the best resource management strategy between quota systems (TACs) and fishing effort management systems; joint or separate management of the two stocks (Sardine and Anchovy); the impact on marine resources and ecosystems of other forces, such as pollution or climate change; socio-economic aspects; the possible duration of the multiannual plan and the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries.

The sector has repeatedly emphasised the difficulty in preparing an opinion in the absence of up-to-date scientific data on the state of the resources affected by the imminent MAP, especially following the application of emergency measures which have already led to a reduction in fishing effort relative to the two species in question, with the associated socio-economic impact on the sector.

The MEDAC upholds the view that:

first and foremost, the future MAP for small pelagic resources in GSAs 17 and 18 must be based on a socioeconomic assessment that is up-to-date, robust and corroborated by the best scientific advice available, this analysis should be capable of highlighting the impact of the MAP year after year, not only on the resources but also on the economic sustainability of fisheries enterprises and on safeguarding jobs at adequate levels of remuneration.

Disclaimer - This opinion reflects only the MEDAC's view and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information that it contains

Before adopting a new MAP at GFCM level, the effects in biological and economic terms of all the emergency measures applied so far must be carefully assessed from a scientific perspective, at EC level and beyond, from 2013 onwards, because in some cases these measures have already caused fisheries enterprises to close bringing about a further reduction in effort, taking into due account the encouraging signs on the state of resources that are emerging from many sources.

The quota system does not adapt well to the area nor to the type of resource and it could create conflict between maritime districts and different *métiers* (pelagic trawl and purse seine) both within the Member States in question and between MS, especially considering the difficulty operators would have in implementing a quota for each single species; the two species cannot be managed separately.

The fishing effort management system, which has been implemented so far through the various emergency measures, is more manageable and sustainable for the sector once some data collection methodologies have been perfected and the benchmarks have been defined.

It needs to be formally confirmed that the measures imposed through recommendations issued by of international supra-European bodies (RFMOs) will be eligible for support in the new EMFF, currently the subject of trilogues, which has not happened up to now;

The duration of the MAPs needs to be long enough to allow for medium-term planning where possible investments by fisheries enterprises are concerned.

A common, shared position must be found for scientific research by the MS involved and procedures must be established to ensure real-time resource assessment, so that the management decisions that are made reflect the real situation as closely as possible.

The MAP will also have to take the fight against IUU fishing into due consideration, and adequate measures should be included to prevent by-catch of vulnerable species, such as sea turtles and sea birds.

The MEDAC'S opinion greatly matches with the European Economic and Social Committee: *“Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multi-annual plan for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks [COM(2017) 97 final - 2017/0043 (COD)]”* (attached).