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**MED RAC**  
**Report of the Working Group (WG3) on GFCM related issues**  
**Marseille, 18 April 2012**

The list of participants is attached to this report.

Attached documents: Agenda, slides presented by Maria Teresa Spedicato, Beatriz Guijarro.

1. The working group 3 on GFCM related issues met for the first time in Marseille on 18 April 2012. The objective of the meeting was to share with the participants the current system on the evaluation of shared stocks by the GFCM Scientific Committee (SAC) and the EC STECF and the following elaboration of management recommendations. For this purpose, two scientists participating in the processes were invited as speakers: Maria Teresa Spedicato (COIPSA) and Beatriz Guijarro (IEO-COB). After the presentations of the mentioned speakers, the last point in the agenda was a presentation and a later debate on the discard ban laid down in the CFP reform proposal. This last presentation, "Monitoring discards and data collection", was made by Maria Teresa Spedicato (COISPA).
2. The RAC MED Executive Secretary opened the working group and thanked the participants, the associations for participating and President Mourad Kahoul for hosting it. The Agenda was approved, and the representative of WWF, Susana Sainz-Trapaga, was appointed as coordinator of the WG3.
3. **A specific case study on the assessment of the European hake shared stock in the South Adriatic sea as part of the activities of the STECF-EWG group on fish stock evaluation in the Mediterranean and of the Sub-Committee of Stock Assessment (SCSA-SAC) of GFCM by Maria Teresa Spedicato (COISPA)** Dr. Spedicato explained first the mechanism behind the elaboration of stock assessments and its later endorsement by the STECF and GFCM SCSA. Then, she presented a stock evaluation of hake in the South Adriatic (GFCM GSA 18), a shared stock among the EC (Italy), Albania and Montenegro, carried out under the frame of the AdriaMed project and later endorsed by the STECF and the SCSA. The analysis shows that a remarkable reduction of Fishing Mortality "F" is necessary. The study analyzed two scenarios: a first scenario considers a reduction of F to Fmsy until 2015, with a gradual annual decrease of F of 30%; and the second one considers a reduction of F to Fmsy until 2020, with a gradual annual decrease of F of 15%. In both cases there is an initial loss largely compensated in the long term. The recovery objective of the stock to the MSY level can be gradually achieved through a multiannual plan that will require sharper reduction of F in the short term than in the medium term. Reduction of F will be achieved by the limitation of fishing



activity and likely by decreasing also the fishing capacity. The fishery is currently based on immature fish and thus an increase of selectivity and therefore of minimum landing size should be also considered

4. The round of questions started with the intervention of Mr. Giampaolo Buonfiglio, (AGCI Agrital) who, after asking for clarification on the data used in the assessment, expressed his concern due to the existing time lag between the results of the stock assessment and the period assessed. The same conclusion has been identified during the STECF Working Group on the assessment of the Mediterranean stocks, attended by him as observer. In fact, the time frame in which the stock assessments, forecasts and subsequent management proposals carried out in 2011 are produced on the basis of the data provided by the Member States for 2010, and that the forecasts and therefore the proposals arising from them will emerge – all being well – in the second half of 2012, about two years after the period of observation and evaluation. This can lead to the often significant differences between the reality observed at sea day after day by fishers on the abundance (or lack of) certain stocks, and the situation described in the scientific findings which are based on official data from the Member States on sales of fisheries products. This time lag would not allow to detect the impact of recently adopted management measures on the status of the stock (as the 40mm square mesh/50mm diamond mesh). The answer from the scientist was that some time lag is unavoidable, but in this specific case was less than one year (results including 2010 data was presented in October 2011). In this regard, Buonfiglio proposed to draft a letter addressed to DG MARE, in order to point out the effect of the time lag between the available data collection and the correlated implementation of the policies.

5. Mr. Antoni Garau Coll (FBCP) asked for clarification of the mesh size used in both margins of the Adriatic Sea, oriental and occidental. Dr. Spedicato explained that the data period do not include the implementation of the 50mm mesh size but the scenarios considered in the model do so for the following years.

6. Mr. Alain Rico (Amop) addressed the need to consider environmental variables, such as temperature, and pointed out that 2006 and 2007 had optimal climate conditions. He also asked about the consideration of the number of vessels and increase of mesh size in the presented model, arguing that with less vessels and bigger mesh size the total catch would have been decreased. Dr. Spedicato explained that she didn't show all the data used due to its amount. She also said that in fact the two picks of recruitment shown were due to environmental factors. She added that although it is true that the number of vessels decrease we need to consider the technological improvement of the new vessels. She acknowledged that a more dynamic interchange of information with the sector to implement and adaptive management system is needed.

7. Mr. Dimitri Taoultzis (Pepma) insisted on the previous issue of data not taken into the account in the model and the need of more collaboration with fishermen. As examples he mentioned: climate change producing emigration of species, unregistered fisheries data, impact of other species, presence of plankton, etc. He complained that the EC had never listened to them in the Aegean Sea. Dr. Spedicato explained that the environmental factors could act in favor or against recruitment and thus productivity. Once a positive impact is detected (as the two mentioned recruitment picks) we need to try to optimize its effect.

8. Mr. Mario Ferretti (Federcoopesca) pointed out the problem of the mesh size to protect immature hake. He said that an effective mesh size for hake would be at least 70mm and likely 100mm and this would be the end of the fishery. A 50mm mesh size might be effective for other species, but surely not for hake. He suggested that the mono-species analysis might be a mistake, and that alternative, with an ecosystem approach we could expect better results. The problem of



capacity reduction and that of measuring capacity was also highlighted, since, as Dr. Spedicato mentioned, we might be reducing capacity in HP (Horse Power) or KW but not the catchability. Dr. Spedicato completely agreed that even a mesh size of 60mm would not protect immature hake and, at the same time, we would be losing other species. But pointed out that a species as resilient as hake, even the increase of length to 16cm would imply an improvement reflected also in productivity. She explained that other measures are also foreseen to protect immature fish, as the protection of nursery areas. An ecosystem approach is needed but we also need to know the situation of the individual stocks.

9. The representative from Oceana expressed her surprise to hear from the different participants that the EC considers only the scientific advice and no other stakeholders views. Since scientific advice from the STECF and SAC used to be ignored by decision makers. Oceana added that actually there was not even a single scientifically based management plan in place for the Mediterranean Sea.

10. The representative of WWF pointed out the potentially important role of RACs in the design of management plans for shared stocks by involving all stakeholders participating in a given fishery. For this purpose she highlighted the need of participation of national administrations, as key stakeholders, in the RAC *ad hoc* meetings addressing the management of shared fisheries.

**11. Stock assessment of hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) in GSA07 – Gulf of Lions by Beatriz Guijarro (IEO-COB)** Ms. Guijarro, presented the stock assessment of hake in GFCM GSA 7, an EC stock shared by France and Spain, already endorsed by the STECF and SCSA. Fisheries dependent data (landing data of the 4 different active fleets) and fisheries independent data (MEDITS surveys from 1998 to 2008) were used. Results of the analysis show that the stock is overfished (growth overexploitation) and its abundance is low. The outcome recommendations presented to target growth overfishing are the improvement of the fishing pattern of trawlers in order to match minimum length of catches with the minimum legal landing size, closure of nursery areas, and reducing trawling fishing effort by reducing time at sea, number of vessels, engine power, “Bollard pull”, and/or trawl net size. Recommendations to avoid recruitment overfishing are the reduction of longline and gillnet effort to increase or at least maintain the SSB (Spawning Stock Biomass), to establish temporal closures for longline and gillnet during the spawning season, and effectively freeze the fishing effort in the GFCM FRA (Fishery restricted Areas).

12. Mr. Mario Ferretti (Federcoopesca) started the debate with the clarification of “Bollard pull” interpreted as the capacity of the fishing vessel to pull.

13. Mr. Dimitri Taoultzis (Pepma) highlighted the importance of the “door of the trawling net”.

14. Mr. Alain Rico (Amop) asked about the length of the closure of the nursery area if temporal and emphasized the need to include external effects as pollution.

15. Mr. Rafael Mas (EMPA) also highlighted the need to consider other factors into the study. He also pointed out the need of mutual trust between scientists and fishermen.

16. Mr. Eusebi Esgleas Pares (FNCCP) raised the importance of the economic viability of the sector since under the future reform subsidies for vessel scrapping is faced out. Furthermore, he informed that in Catalonia longliners observe a closure period.

**17. The global debate after the two previous presentations brought to light the need to increase cooperation between scientist and the fishing sector. There was a general agreement on that scientific recommendations, as well as other input from stakeholders, should be considered for the design of multiannual management plans.**



18. **Monitoring discards and data collection, by Maria Teresa Spedicato (COISPA).** The speaker started with the different definitions of “discards” adopted by ICES and the GFCM. She reminded the specific objective stated in Article 3 of the CFP reform regulation proposal: “*eliminate unwanted catches of commercial stocks and gradually ensure that all catches of such stocks are landed*”. In the case of the Mediterranean it would refer mainly to “undersized” fish. The data collection regulation from 2002 and the new Data Collection Framework (2009) introduced and later improved the obligation of collecting discard data. Those data are obtained during fishing trips. Thus, there is still a problem to obtain data from small fishing vessels without enough space to carry an observer on board. Therefore, the collaboration with fishermen is extremely important.

19. Mr Mario Ferretti (Federcooesca) opens the discussion by clarifying the difference of wording in the ICES and GFCM definitions and the CFP proposal, which refers only to “commercial stocks”.

20. Mr. Dimitri Taoultzis (Pepma) expresses his concern on the EC wish to guaranty biological feed for aquaculture. If the fish had not been caught would have been used to feed the fish at sea. He wondered what “commercial species” means. He expressed the huge concern of Greek fishermen who believe that there are enormous economic interests behind this proposal.

21. Mr Giampaolo Buonfiglio (AGCI Agrital) said that the MED RAC has already expressed its position on discards and the objective of this debate is to discuss on the available information on discards. He acknowledges that the problem is totally different in the North Sea, which very low discards levels in fisheries targeting very few species, than in the Mediterranean. He proposed a “philosophical” reflection on the way to proceed from now on to make MED RAC message listened in Brussels. He believes that although the main lines of the reform are already decided a consensus position of all RAC members would have a greater impact on decision makers, in contrast with our current recommendations with individual positions which in the end only weaken the message. Mr. Buonfiglio asked the participants to make an effort to reach consensus on positions.

22. The representative of WWF expressed its full support to Mr. Buonfiglio’s words and highlighted the importance on agreeing on the key elements of the reform needed for the Mediterranean.

23. Mr. Philippe Maraval (French administration) expressed that the negotiations are not already pre-established. He agrees with emphasizing the regionalization of the policy, a common policy but considering regional specificities.

24. The representative from Oceana fully agreed with Mr. Buonfiglio’s reflection. She shared with the group an example of a common position agreed in the LDRAC among all stakeholders on the use of FADs. The process has been transparent and everybody has participated. She believes that in order to reach a similar situation in the MED RAC we need to improve the consultation processes.

25. Mr. Marco Rinaldi (ETF) said that the recommendations from scientist should be also previously discussed with fishery’s sector representatives, in order to be more effective.

26. The representative from Oceana expressed its support to the discard ban, but not the way is presented in the Commission proposal.

27. The representative of WWF explained that her organization gives priority to the minimization of by-catch at fishery level by improving fishing practices through better selectivity, time/area closures, etc. A by-catch minimization strategy with clear targets and timeframes should be among the elements of the specific management plan for the fishery. A discard ban would be only supported if the fishery failed to reach the targeted by-catch level within a specific timeframe.

28. The coordinator thanked the participants, and as agreed during the debate, will draft a letter to be addressed to DG MARE services.

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