



MEDAC – General Assembly

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Going beyond simple management of fishing days.
How fishing mortality can be reduced through other measures

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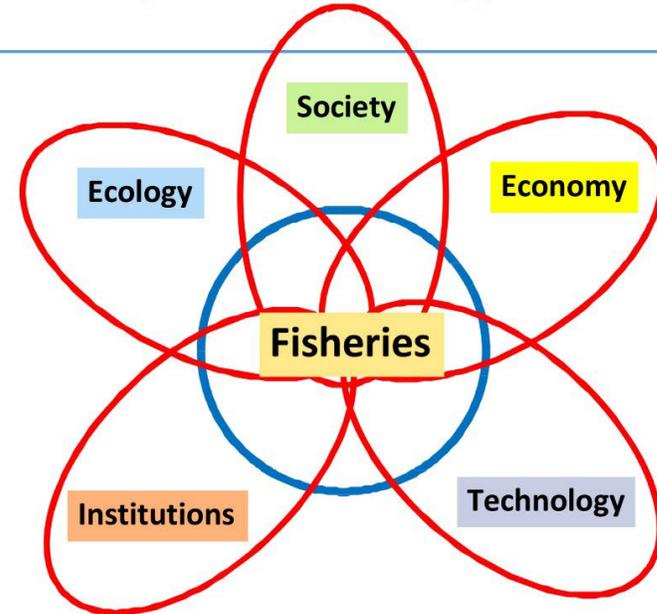
The shared objectives of CFP and GFCM 2030 strategy

Shared objective...

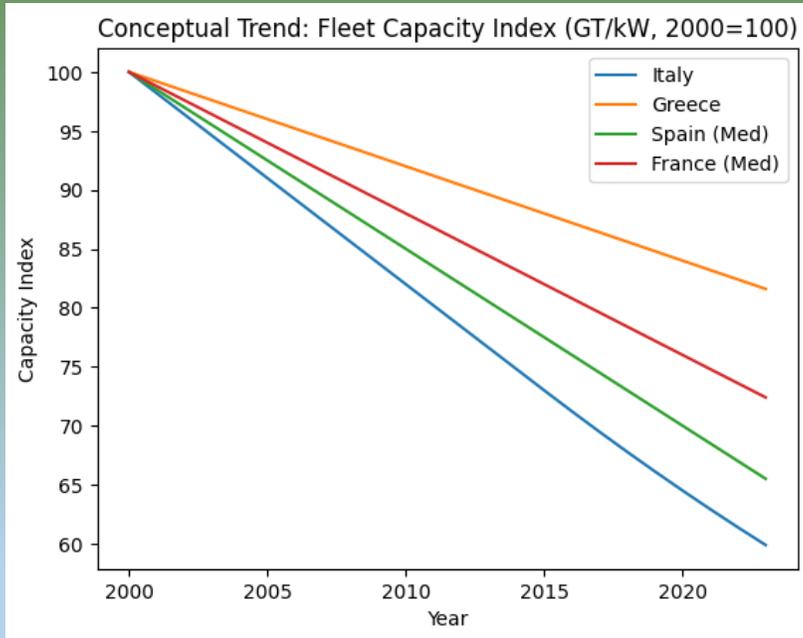
- stock recovery
- F_{MSY}
- long-term sustainability
- viable fisheries

But... the path to F_{MSY} should be realistic and effective considering the **multidimensionality of fisheries.**

The five dimensions of fisheries



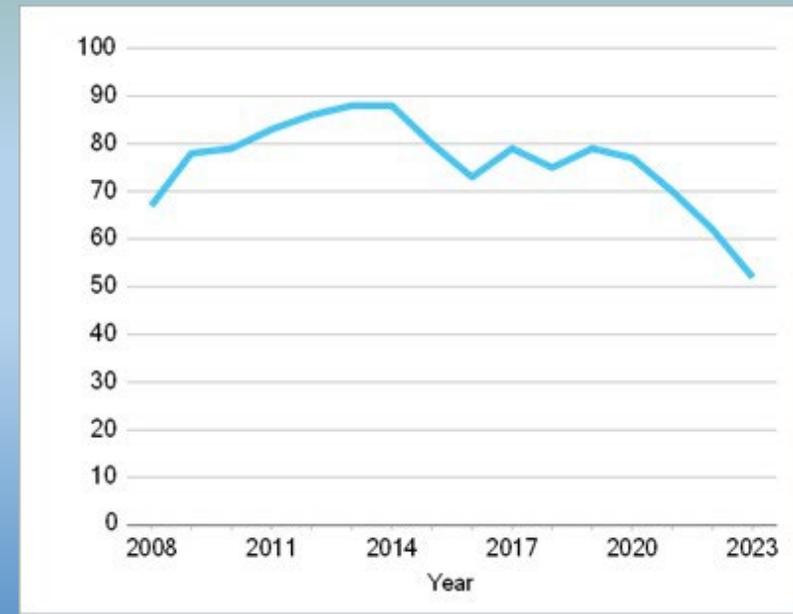
The reduction of fishing mortality to sustainable level



- sharp decline in capacity 2000-2010
- Slowing decrease after 2015
- growth in SSCF weight in Greece
- reduction in trawlers in Italy and Spain
- increase in average power per vessel

In the last 20 years a strong reduction of fishing capacity and effort of European fleets was achieved...with high socio-economic pressure and limited margins for further cuts

Yet...several stocks are still above F_{MSY} and a further reduction of fishing mortality needs to be implemented.



Percentage of stocks in overexploitation in the GFCM area of application, 2008–2023

The relation between fishing effort and fishing mortality is often weak

Fishing Effort \neq Fishing mortality

Reducing days at sea does not always reduce Fishing mortality:

- efficiency increases
- effort concentration
- technological creep
- vulnerability of different life phase of species
- gear selectivity

Therefore....

Further effort cuts alone may not deliver FMSY and other tool need to be used.

*The objectives of WestMed MAP
targets F_{MSY} — not only effort*

The MAP targets F_{MSY} ... not only effort...

- sets fishing mortality and catch targets
- does not prescribe only effort reductions
- allows adaptive and alternative measures

...therefore ...the Reg.UE 266/2026 creates space for complementary approaches which should be adequately implemented to move the current F towards the F_{MSY}

The objectives of WestMed MAP targets FMSY — not only effort

We are reaching the limits of effort-only management

Further uniform effort cuts:

- risk fleet viability
- reduce compliance
- create strong resistance
- may deliver limited biological gains

The effect of **fishing effort** in terms of **fishing mortality** depends by:

- **Population density.**
- **Size of the fish.**
- **The spatial/temporal structure of the population.**

Therefore, a proper combination of the compensative measures included in the EU Reg 266/2026 should be looked for.

Smarter management

From uniform cuts to targeted measures

Possible tools:

- adaptive seasonal measures
- real-time closures
- pilot projects
- regional technical measures

These tools imply **less socio-economic damage**

Sustainability requires fleet viability

Without viable fleets:

- no compliance
- no transition
- no long-term sustainability

Biological and socio-economic sustainability must go together.

Regulating the exploitation pattern to reduce mortality without reducing activity

Improve gear selectivity

- reduce juvenile catch
- improve exploitation pattern
- gear innovation with fishers

The main benefits:

- Immediate mortality reduction
- faster biomass recovery
- higher long-term yields

(a) the vessel uses a trawl net with a square mesh codend of at **least 45 mm** when fishing in the **continental shelf and upper slope**;

(b) the vessel uses a trawl net with a square mesh codend of at **least 50 mm** when fishing in the **continental shelf and upper slope and in deep-waters**;

(l) the vessel uses highly selective gear the technical specifications of which results in, according to a study by STECF, a reduction of **at least 25 % of catches of juvenile fish** of all demersal species or **at least 20 % of spawners of all demersal species** compared to **2020**, such as a **sorting grid with 20 mm spacing**;

Adopt spatial protection

Targets:

- nursery areas
- spawning grounds

Tools:

- FRAs
- seasonal closures
- adaptive protection

(c) the **vessel's activity** is subject to a **closure period** prohibiting fishing activities for trawlers at depths **between 100 m and 500 m** for **at least six consecutive weeks** between **February and September**;

(d) & (e) the **vessel's activity** is subject to a **closure period** prohibiting fishing activities for trawlers in **GFCM GSAs from 1 to 11** for **at least four consecutive weeks** between **March and October**;

(f) **at least 5 % of the vessel's fishing grounds** at depths between **100 m and 500 m** fall within an area that is subject to a **12-month closure period** prohibiting fishing activities;

(g) **the vessel's fishing grounds fall within a temporary closure area** established in order to reduce by **at least 20 % catches of spawners of European hake**;

(h) **the vessel's fishing grounds fall within a temporary closure area** established in order to reduce by **at least 25 % catches of juvenile fish** of all demersal species or by **at least 20 % catches of spawners of all demersal species**;

(i) **the vessel's fishing grounds** are subject to a **permanent closure** for fishing activity with trawlers **fishing for blue and red shrimp and giant red shrimp** in deep-waters at a **depth below 600 m**;

(j) **the vessel's fishing grounds** are subject to a **permanent closure** for fishing activity with trawlers fishing in deep-waters at a **depth below 800 m**;

(m) **at least 10 % of the vessel's fishing grounds** at depths between **300 m and 600 m** fall within an area that is subject to a **permanent closure** for fishing activity with trawlers fishing for **Norway lobster** in **GFCM GSAs 6, 9 or 11**

Take home message

Due to the efforts made in previous years to reduce the overcapacity of European fleets in the Mediterranean, **to achieve FMSY under WestMed MAP** the time is right to try to reduce fishing mortality by alternatives to reducing fishing effort...

...starting with the compensation mechanism of the Reg. UE 266/2026, **which alternative management measures** can be activated now?

How can **further effort cuts be avoided?**

How can we accelerate **improvements in selectivity?**

What are the priorities for **spatial and temporal closures?**