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MEDAC OPINION FOR A MULTIANNUAL PLAN (MAP) FOR THE FISHERIES EXPLOITING DEMERSAL STOCKS IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA

1) Background

The MEDAC adopted this opinion in order to provide useful elements for the proposal of a Multi-annual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in Western Mediterranean.

The following meetings of the Focus Group on the West Mediterranean took place within the MEDAC:
- Rome (Italy) 21 February 2017
- Malta 28 March 2017
- Rome (Italy) 7 June 2017
- Palma de Mallorca (Spain) 10 October 2017

In each of these meetings the constructive spirit shown by all parties representing the social, economic and environmental interests, permitted to reach agreement and adopt this document.

2) Geographical scope of the plan

MEDAC's members agree that the geographical scope of the Multiannual Plan should be wide and inclusive. The general framework of implementation and measures should be applied for all the GSAs in the Western Mediterranean (GSA 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). However it is a shared opinion that the application of the same management measures when dealing with different stocks and gears and geographical areas, could lead to a difficult implementation of the measures at local level. Management measures should take into account the specificity of each homogeneous area and the state of the stocks in order to meet the targets of the plan.

3) Stocks and gears

MEDAC members agree on considering the following stocks as a priority for the multi-annual plan. However management measures should also be adopted for other relevant species including target and bycatch species and the number of stocks for which assessments are available, should be increased (see point 4c).

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GSA	Species	A3 code	Main Gear	Fcurr/FMSY
1	Merluccius merluccius	HKE	GNS, GTR, OTB	3.59
	Aristeus antennatus	ARA	OTB	3.41
	Lophius budegassa	ANK	OTB	1.56
	Mullus barbatus	MUT	OTB, GTR	4.85
	P. longirostris	DPS	OTB	1.65
5	Aristeus antennatus	ARA	OTB	1.75
	Lophius budegassa	ANK	OTB	10.50
	Mullus barbatus	MUT	OTB, GTR	6.64
6	Aristeus antennatus	ARA	OTB	2.08
	Lophius budegassa	ANK	OTB	6.50
	Mullus barbatus	MUT	OTB, GTR	3.27

GSA	Species	A3 code	Main Gear	Fcurr/FMSY*
7	Merluccius merluccius	HKE	GNS, OTB, OTT, LLS	3.59
	Mullus barbatus	MUT	OTB, LLS, GNS	3.21

GSA	Species	A3 code	Main Gear	Fcurr/FMSY
9	Merluccius merluccius	HKE	GNS, OTB	5.50
	A. foliacea	ARS	OTB	0.25
	Mullus barbatus	MUT	GNS, GTR, OTB	1.17
	P. longirostris	DPS	OTB	0.97
10	Mullus barbatus	MUT	GNS, GTR, OTB	1
	P.longirostris	ARS	OTB	1.70
	Merluccius merluccius	HKE	GNS, OTB	
	A. foliacea	ARS	OTB	1.40
11	Merluccius merluccius	HKE	OTB	5.50
	A. foliacea	ARS	OTB	1.61
	Mullus barbatus	MUT	OTB	9.73

SOURCE: STECF reports

4) Management recommendations for the area of application

Following discussions among stakeholders, considering the worrying conditions of fishery stocks which are affected also by others factors, MEDAC members, instead of TAC and Quotas, agreed on the following measures to be adopted at sub-regional level:

a) Extend the obligation for the **vessels** fishing in the area of application of the Multi-annual Plan, regardless of the length and gears in use, to be provided by an **electronic monitoring system** (taking into account of the new opportunities arising from emergent technologies and systems under development) to track fishing operations.

b) Considering the Mediterranean Regulation, where and when necessary, extend the **bottom towed gears ban from 50 m to an appropriate depth**. This measure will contribute to increase the protection of coastal essential fish habitats for juveniles in line with Art. 8 of the CFP requirements. It will also improve sensitive and protected habitats preservation.

c) MEDAC members agree on the need to **revise the minimum landing size** for all the species listed in Annex III of Reg 1967/2006, according to size at first maturity. Moreover the following relevant species, both for professional and recreational fisheries in coastal areas, should be subject to a minimum landing size: *Sciaena umbra,*

Umbrina cirrosa, Dentex dentex, Seriola dumerili, Lichia amia. The above 5 species should also be considered for **stock assessments**, in addition to *Dicentrarchus labrax* and *Sparus aurata and Epinephelus marginatus.*

d) In order to contribute to the reduction of fishing effort in the area of application, MEDAC members agree that in the context of EMFF, the measure for **fleet scrapping** (Reg. No 508/2014, art.34, Permanent cessation of fishing activities) **and temporary cessation** (Reg. No 508/2014, art.33, Temporary cessation of fishing activities), should be preserved in the future. It is an effective tool which allows a fast adaptation of the capacity to the state of resource and it is an important incentive for fishers.

e) All the measures adopted within the Multi-annual plan should also apply to **recreational fisheries** in the area of application. [1]

5) Management recommendations at sub-regional level (GSAs)

f) MEDAC members agree on identifying Fishing opportunities based on scientific advice (**effort limits**[2]) as an effective tool to reduce the fishing mortality. Limitations regarding **days at sea/vessels per day**, should be introduced at GSA level, according to scientific advice and the stakeholders' involvement. Reduction of the fishing effort should be proportionate to F_{curr}/F_{MSY} and be based on stock assessments.

g) MEDAC members agree on identifying **spatial-temporal closures** of fishing activities to protect spawning and nursery areas, with the full involvement of all stakeholders. The implementation of new **MPAs** and **FRAs** in sensitive habitats is considered key in order to ensure a sustainable exploitation in the long term.

h) MEDAC members agree on considering Co-management an effective tool for the management of fishing resources at local level. Such approach should include the participation of the industry, scientists, national administrations, recreational fisheries and NGOs for the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks.

MEDAC members agree that before the implementation of management measures a socio-economic analysis must be carried out in order to evaluate the impacts and ensure the stability for different activities and interests both for commercial and recreational fisheries.

[1] EFSA considers that this point does not take into account the specificities related to the recreational fisheries and that could have negative effects to the sector's related activities.

[2] Oceana considers that fishing opportunities based on scientific advice should also include catch limits as much as possible