

REC.CM-GFCM/40/2016/6
on the scientific monitoring, management and control of turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (GSA 29)

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

CONSIDERING that the objective of the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement) is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of living marine resources in the area of application;

RECALLING that, in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall adopt recommendations on conservation and management measures aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities, in order to preserve the marine living resources and the economic and social viability of fisheries and that, in adopting such recommendations, the GFCM shall give particular attention to measures to prevent overfishing and minimize discards as well as to the potential impacts on small-scale fisheries and local communities;

RECALLING that in giving effect to the objective of the GFCM Agreement, the GFCM shall foster, as appropriate, a subregional approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development in order to better address the specificities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM shall adopt management measures based on an ecosystem approach to fisheries to guarantee the maintenance of stocks at levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield;

CONSIDERING that all measures formulated by the GFCM shall be based on the best scientific advice available, taking into account relevant environmental, economic and social factors;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

CONSIDERING that fisheries targeting turbot are multi-species in nature and management decisions should therefore take into account the possible impacts on the mixed fisheries;

CONSIDERING the socio-economic importance of fisheries exploiting turbot and associated stocks and the need to ensure their sustainability;

RECALLING that at its seventeenth session (March 2015, Italy) the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) concluded that the turbot stock in the GFCM geographical subarea (GSA) 29 (Black Sea) is overexploited and in a state of overexploitation and advised for the implementation of a recovery plan;

NOTING that, in 2016, the GFCM Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS) urged the GFCM to take corrective measures to mitigate the current situation of the turbot stock;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM Logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom-set gillnet fisheries for turbot and the conservation of cetaceans in the Black Sea;

RECALLING the GFCM roadmap to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Black Sea endorsed at the thirty-seventh annual session of the GFCM (May 2013, Croatia);

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/3 on the establishment of a set of measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in turbot fisheries in the Black Sea;

ADOPTS, in conformity with the provisions of Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, that:

PART I

General objective and scope

1. The purpose of the present recommendation is to counteract turbot overfishing and to restore, to the extent possible, the size of the Black Sea turbot stock, with a view to providing high long-term yields consistent with the maximum sustainable yield, while ensuring the sustainability of the fisheries.
2. The present recommendation shall apply in GSA 29 (Black Sea).
3. For the purpose of this recommendation,
 - a) “Turbot” means fish pertaining to the species *Psetta maxima*; and
 - b) “Bottom-set gillnet” means any net made up of a single piece of net held vertically in the water by floats and weights fixed or capable of being fixed by any means to the bottom of the sea and maintaining the gear in place either close to the bottom or floating in the water column.

PART II

Management of turbot fisheries

4. As of 2018, the GFCM Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) shall not exceed the average level of the fishing opportunities (quotas) allocated in 2013–2015 or, for the countries applying no quota system, the average level of the catches or the average level of fishing effort deployed in 2013–2015.
5. Each CPC shall establish each year a closure period for at least two months during the spawning season of turbot (i.e. from April to June).

PART III

Scientific monitoring

6. For the purpose of ensuring a proper scientific monitoring of the turbot fisheries, the SAC shall, during the intersessional period 2016–2017:
 - a) Regularly assess the state of the turbot stock and, particularly, establish the level of current fishing mortality (F_{curr}) and provide the GFCM with the necessary elements for setting target reference points;
 - b) Evaluate the fishing effort for turbot fisheries, on an annual basis (the first analytical evaluation shall take place in 2017);
 - c) For all countries that would freeze the average level of their fishing effort, estimate a fishing effort baseline which shall take into account the characteristics of the fishing gear;
 - d) Propose different scenarios/options for achieving MSY by 2020, while ensuring the sustainability of the fisheries;
 - e) Define the adequate dimensions of bottom-set gillnets by establishing the following characteristics: maximum length, maximum height and hanging coefficient;

- f) Propose the minimum requirements for the marking and identification of bottom-set gillnets operating in the turbot fisheries; and
 - g) Assess the impact of measures already adopted by CPCs.
7. The CPCs shall communicate to the SAC, not later than 30 November of each year, any additional information in support of the scientific monitoring of turbot fisheries.

PART IV
Control measures

8. All vessels above 12 metres length overall authorized to fish for turbot shall be equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other system of geolocalisation allowing control authorities to track their activities.
9. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM Logbook, all turbot catches shall be indicated in the logbook irrespectively of the live weight of the catch.
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