

REC.CM-GFCM/40/2016/4

establishing a multiannual management plan for the fisheries exploiting European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily (GSA 12 to 16)

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 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 above 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 the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides that “States should apply the precautionary approach widely to conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment. The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures”;

RECALLING the Guidelines on precautionary conservation measures pending the development and adoption by the GFCM of multiannual management plans for relevant fisheries at the subregional level in the GFCM area of application, as agreed during its thirty-seventh session;

CONSIDERING the Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/2 on the minimum mesh size in the codend of demersal trawl nets;

CONSIDERING the Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system (VMS) in the GFCM area of application;

CONSIDERING the Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3 on fisheries management measures for conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area of application and, in particular, the prohibition of any fishing activity with trawl nets within three nautical miles of the coast or within the 50 meters isobath where that depth is reached at a shorter distance from the coast;

CONSIDERING the Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom trawling fisheries of demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily, pending the development and adoption of a multiannual management plan;

NOTING that the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) has recurrently considered that the stocks of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp are in overexploitation in the geographical subareas (GSA) 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16;

CONSIDERING that the state of stocks as assessed by the SAC requires the development and adoption of management measures aimed at ensuring the conservation of demersal stocks in the above geographical subareas as soon as possible;

CONSIDERING that fishing mortality is an overall measurement system, which can be adjusted by applying reductions in term of fishing capacity and/or fishing effort;

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the SAC technical workshop on bioeconomic assessment of management measures that took place in February 2016;

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the meeting of the SAC Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean that took place in February 2016;

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

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the eighteenth session of the SAC, and in particular those regarding the management of selected fisheries in the Strait of Sicily;

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

PART I

Subject matter, scope and definitions

Subject matter and scope

1. The present recommendation establishes a multiannual management plan (plan) for the fisheries targeting European hake or deep-water rose shrimp in the marine waters of GSA 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 (Strait of Sicily), as defined in Resolution GFCM/33/2009/2.
2. This recommendation shall apply to bottom trawls above 10 meters length overall fishing for European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily, when the total catches of those species represents at least 25 percent of the catch in live weight or value.

Definitions

3. For the purpose of this recommendation:
 - a) “European hake” means fish pertaining to the species *Merluccius merluccius*;
 - b) “Deep-water rose shrimp” means crustaceans pertaining to the species *Parapenaeus longirostris*; and
 - c) “Designated landing ports” means ports, or places close to the shore, designated in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/2008/32/1 on port State measures, including offshore terminals and other installations for landing, transshipping, packaging, processing, refuelling or resupplying of fishing vessels, where landings, transshipments, packaging and/or processing operations of fishery products are permitted.

PART II

Specific objectives and targets

Specific objectives

4. The plan shall aim at contributing to the objectives mentioned in Article 2 and the principles listed in Article 5 of the GFCM Agreement.
5. The plan shall, in particular:
 - a) Apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management;
 - b) Ensure that exploitation levels of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp are at the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2020 at the latest;
 - c) Protect nursery areas and essential fish habitats important for the stocks of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily;
 - d) Gradually eliminate discards, by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, unwanted catches, and by gradually ensuring that catches are landed;
 - e) Provide for measures to adjust the fishing capacity of the fleets to levels of fishing mortalities consistent with the MSY, with a view to having economically viable fleets and without overexploiting marine biological resources.

Targets

6. The target fishing mortality ranges for the stocks of hake and deep-water rose shrimp, as provided in Annex 1 to this recommendation, shall be reached by 2020 and maintained onwards.

PART III

Technical measures

Fisheries restricted areas

7. Fisheries restricted areas (FRAs) shall be established for the conservation and management of the demersal stocks, European hake and deep-water rose shrimp, in the three areas of the Strait of Sicily as defined in Annex 2.
8. Any fishing activity with bottom trawlers shall not be allowed in the FRAs defined in paragraph 7.
9. In order to avoid accidental access to the FRAs established in paragraph 7, buffer areas shall be set up around the FRAs. Those buffer areas are extended one nautical mile outside the established FRAs and also defined in Annex 2.
10. Any fishing activity with bottom trawlers in the buffer areas established in paragraph 9 shall ensure their frequency of transmission of vessel monitoring system (VMS) signals. Those vessels not equipped with VMS transponder and aiming to fish in the buffer areas shall be equipped with any other system of geolocalisation allowing control authorities to track their activities.
11. The SAC shall identify additional nursery areas of European hake in the entire Strait of Sicily, with special attention to GSA 12, 13, and 14.

Temporal closure

12. Any fishing activity with bottom trawlers shall not be allowed between the coast and the 200 meters depth isobaths of GSA 14 (Gulf of Gabès). This closure shall apply from 1 July until 31 September.

PART IV

Management of the fishing effort

13. In accordance with paragraph 8 to Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2, the GFCM Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties (CPCs) shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat the list of operating vessels for which such authorization has been delivered for the forthcoming year or years, not later than 30 November each year.

14. The CPCs shall take the necessary measures to reduce the fishing mortality of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

15. Fishing vessels targeting European hake or deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily shall be equipped with a VMS in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7.

16. The CPCs shall decide and communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, by no later than 30 November 2016, the necessary measures identified to carry out the reduction mentioned in paragraph 14. Measures should be considered in terms of number of fishing days, fishing vessels and catch limits.

PART V

Specific measures to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities

17. The CPCs shall establish a mechanism to ensure that vessels authorized to fish for European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily will record catches of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp.

18. Each CPC shall designate landing ports in which landings of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp from the Strait of Sicily may take place.

19. The CPCs shall specify, for each designated landing port, the permitted landing and transshipping times and places. The CPCs shall also ensure inspection coverage during all landing and transshipping times and at all landing and transshipping places.

20. It shall be prohibited to land or tranship from fishing vessels any quantity of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp fished in the Strait of Sicily at any place other than landing ports designated in accordance with paragraph 18.

21. The CPCs shall transmit to the GFCM Secretariat no later than 30 November 2016, a list of the designated landing ports in which landings of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp from the Strait of Sicily may take place. Any subsequent change that may occur to this list shall be promptly notified to the GFCM Secretariat.

22. The CPCs shall engage to cooperate on the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, in particular through sharing information and gathering intelligence to fight against IUU fishing activities and organized crime.

PART VI

National programmes for control, monitoring and surveillance

23. The CPCs, through the GFCM, shall establish before 2018 an observation and inspection programme to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation. The programme may *inter alia* comprise the following elements:

- a) High seas inspection;
- b) Procedures for an effective investigation of an alleged violation of the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation, and for reporting to the GFCM on the actions taken, including procedures for exchanging information;
- c) Provisions for appropriate action to be taken when inspections reveal serious violations as well as the expedient and transparent follow-up of such actions in order to uphold the flag State's responsibility within the intended programme;
- d) Port inspections;
- e) Monitoring of landings and catches, including statistical follow-up for management purposes;

- f) Specific monitoring programmes, including boarding and inspection;
 - g) Observer programmes.
24. A working group shall be established to develop integrated control, monitoring and surveillance measures, in accordance with this recommendation and its tasks defined in Annex 3.

PART VII
Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the plan

25. The CPCs shall ensure adequate annual scientific monitoring of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.
26. The SAC shall provide advice on the status of European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily. Such advice shall include reference points in terms of fishing mortality at levels which can produce the MSY at the latest by 2020 and safeguard points.
27. The SAC shall assess the biological, economic and social implications of implementing several management scenarios with the objective of restoring and maintaining the populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the MSY.
28. The SAC shall advise on the most appropriate minimum and/or maximum landing sizes for elasmobranchs species affected by the fisheries exploiting European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.
29. The SAC shall advise on the most appropriate technical measures to improve the selectivity of bottom trawlers targeting European hake and deep-water rose shrimps stocks.
30. The SAC shall identify where appropriate nursery areas beyond 200 m depths in GSA 14 (Gulf of Gabès).
31. Whenever the GFCM, on the basis of advice from the SAC, finds that the target fishing mortality rates specified in paragraph 6 are no longer appropriate to achieve the objectives detailed in paragraph 5, it shall revise those parameters accordingly.
32. Where the scientific advice indicates that the general or specific objectives of the plan are not being met, the GFCM shall decide on additional and/or alternative management measures to ensure that those objectives are achieved.
33. Where for whatever reason (e.g. lack of appropriate data) the SAC is not in a position of providing an accurate advice on the state of the European hake and deep-water rose shrimp and on its exploitation level, the GFCM shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to ensure sustainability of the fishery. These measures shall be based on SAC advice taking into consideration socio-economic elements.
34. For the purpose of providing advice for the development of the plan, the SAC shall organise adequate workshops. To this purpose, the SAC shall promote scientific cooperation and a harmonised approach among all countries around the Strait of Sicily.

PART VIII
Final provision

Duration

35. The current plan remains in force for three years from the date of its adoption.
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**Estimated target fishing mortality for European hake and deep-water rose shrimp
in the Strait of Sicily**

Stock	Target fishing mortality range
European hake in the Strait of Sicily	0.12 – 0.18
Deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily	0.84 – 0.93

Geographical coordinates of the fisheries restricted areas (FRA)**FRA 1: East of Adventure Bank**

Fisheries restricted area		Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
37° 23,850' N	12° 30,072' E	37° 24,849' N	12° 28,814' E
37° 23,884' N	12° 48,282' E	37° 24,888' N	12° 49,536' E
37° 11,567' N	12° 48,305' E	37° 10,567' N	12° 49,559' E
37° 11,532' N	12° 30,095' E	37° 10,528' N	12° 28,845' E

FRA 2: West of Gela Basin

Fisheries restricted area		Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
37° 12,040' N	13° 17,925' E	37° 13,041' N	13° 16,672' E
37° 12,047' N	13° 36,170' E	37° 13,049' N	13° 37,422' E
36° 59,725' N	13° 36,175' E	36° 58,723' N	13° 37,424' E
36° 59,717' N	13° 17,930' E	36° 58,715' N	13° 16,682' E

FRA 3: East of Malta Bank

Fisheries restricted area		Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
36° 12,621' N	15° 13,338' E	36° 13,624' N	15° 12,102' E
36° 12,621' N	15° 26,062' E	36° 13,624' N	15° 27,298' E
35° 59,344' N	15° 26,062' E	35° 58,342' N	15° 27,294' E
35° 59,344' N	15° 13,338' E	35° 58,342' N	15° 12,106' E

**Terms of reference for the
Working Group on integrated MCS measures for demersal fisheries in the Strait of Sicily**

The Working Group referred to in paragraph 24, shall:

- 1) be supported by the GFCM Secretariat;
- 2) establish a time schedule for the development of its work, and will hold at least one meeting during 2016, before the next meeting of the GFCM Compliance Committee (CoC);
- 3) invite observers attending GFCM meetings, the FAO, and other regional fisheries organizations to participate in its meetings; and
- 4) report its conclusions and opinions to the CoC.

The mandate of the Working Group will cover the elements as described in part VI of this recommendation.