

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

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

RECALLING 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 marine living resources in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/29/2005/1 on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and deep-water species and the establishment of a fisheries restricted area below 1000 m and, notably, paragraph 1 therein;

CONSIDERING that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) considers that several stocks are overexploited, some with a high risk of collapse, and that sustainable management requires that measures aimed at limiting the capture of juveniles are implemented;

REAFFIRMING its commitment to further improving the gear selectivity of demersal trawl fisheries beyond what can be achieved by a 40 mm diamond mesh size with a view to ensuring a better protection of juveniles of several species as well as to reducing discarding practices in a multispecies context;

RECALLING Resolution GFCM/31/2007/3 on the voluntary implementation of 40 mm square mesh size in codend of trawl nets exploiting demersal resources;

CONSIDERING the recurrent advice on implementing a minimum 40 mm square mesh in the codend of demersal trawl fisheries exploiting several demersal stocks, as also given at the eleventh session of the SAC (Morocco, December 2008);

NOTING that the stock assessment conducted by the SAC only concerns specific geographical subareas (GSAs) corresponding to the data supplied by certain contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) and that the assessed stocks may be shared with adjacent GSAs;

CONSIDERING that, in the absence of any scientific information on the status of fisheries and of the exploited resources, a more cautious approach is needed and that suitable information coming from adjacent areas could be used for proper and precautionary management of fisheries;

NOTING that the SAC advises to apply the precautionary approach and calls for the immediate implementation of a minimum 40 mm square mesh in demersal trawl vessels operating outside territorial waters as from 2009;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/31/2007/1 authorizing derogation to use codend mesh size smaller than 40 mm to operate in certain local and seasonal demersal trawl fisheries exploiting not-shared demersal stocks;

RECOGNIZING that, from a social and economic point of view, and unless otherwise requested by conservation needs, it is necessary to ensure gradual changes in the exploitation pattern of fisheries;

ADOPTS, in conformity Articles 5 b), 8 b) and 13 of the GFCM Agreement, the following recommendation:

1. CPCs shall adopt and implement a minimum 40 mm square mesh codend or a diamond mesh size of at least 50 mm, of acknowledged equivalent or higher size selectivity, for all trawling activities exploiting demersal stocks when operating in the GFCM area of application;
2. The CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, every three months, the list of fishing vessels equipped with a trawl codend mesh size, as stipulated in paragraph 1 above, and their percentage out of the whole national demersal trawl fleet;
3. The list of vessels referred to in paragraph 2 above shall contain the following information for each vessel:
 - Vessel name
 - Vessel register number
 - GFCM unique identifier (country ISO 3-alpha code + 9 digits, e.g. xxx000000001)
 - Previous name (if any)
 - Previous flag (if any)
 - Previous details of deletion from other registers (if any)
 - International radio call sign (if any)
 - Type of vessel, length overall (LOA) and gross tonnage (GT) and/or gross registered tonnage (GRT)
 - Name and address of owner(s) and operator(s)
 - Main gear used
 - Time period authorized for fishing with demersal trawl gear
4. Each CPC shall promptly notify the GFCM Secretariat of any addition to, any deletion from and/or any modification of the demersal trawl fleet referred to in paragraph 2 above, at any time such changes occur;
5. The GFCM Secretariat shall maintain such a list of demersal trawl fishing vessels and take any measure to ensure publicity of the list, including through electronic means, and placing it on the GFCM website, in a manner consistent with confidentiality requirements noted CPCs;
6. On the basis of the outcome of selectivity experimental trials which will be carried out at the regional or national level in the GFCM area of application, in line with Resolution GFCM/31/2007/3 and on the basis of SAC advice, the measures referred to in paragraph 1 shall be implemented accordingly for the fisheries concerned.