

Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/3
establishing further emergency measures in 2017 and 2018 for
small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18)

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 marine living resources in the GFCM 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 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 (MSY);

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 FAO 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”;

NOTING that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) has considered that the stocks of European anchovy and sardine are distributed in GFCM geographical subareas (GSAs) 17 and 18 and has carried out the first joint assessments at its eighteenth session (Cyprus, March 2016);

NOTING that the revision of input data and the benchmark assessment for sardine and European anchovy in GSA 17 and GSA 18 were undertaken in 2015 and that final stock assessment models based on the revised data were provided by the GFCM Working Group on Stock Assessment of Small Pelagic Species (WGSASP) in November 2015;

CONSIDERING that, at its eighteenth session, the SAC concluded that both European anchovy and sardine stocks in GSA 17 and GSA 18 are overexploited and in overexploitation and that it advised once again to decrease fishing mortality;

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

NOTING that the acoustic survey data for both small pelagic species, sardine and European anchovy, indicate a declining trend in total biomass;

NOTING that there has been a declining trend in the mean length of sardine in catches for the last eight years and of European anchovy in catches for the last ten years in the western Adriatic Sea;

NOTING that the latest stock assessment of European anchovy has also indicated a declining trend in spawning stock biomass (SSB) since 2005;

NOTING that, since temporal restrictions are considered to have a beneficial effect on fisheries, a closed period during the spawning season of European anchovy and sardine in the Adriatic Sea shall be applied;

NOTING that hydroacoustic surveys have the potential of providing latest biomass estimates and that their results can support management decisions;

CONSIDERING that, due to stock dynamics, it may take several years to observe the effects of the management measures adopted and applied to date on the stock status of small pelagic species in the Adriatic Sea but that this delay should not be taken as a justification to postpone action to improve the status of these stocks;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM may consider adopting additional measures including catch limitations;

CONSIDERING the socio-economic importance of fisheries exploiting sardine and European anchovy in the Adriatic Sea and the need to ensure their sustainability;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/27/2002/1 on the management of selected demersal and small pelagic species and, notably, paragraph 2 therein;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/30/2006/1 on the management of certain fisheries exploiting demersal and small pelagic and, notably, paragraphs 2 and 3 therein;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 on a multiannual management plan for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 17 (northern Adriatic Sea) and on transitional conservation measures for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 18 (southern Adriatic Sea);

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1 on precautionary and emergency measures for 2015 on small pelagic stocks in geographical subarea 17 and amending Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1;

NOTING that, under Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1, a reduction of fishing effort as well as spatio-temporal closures are being applied in 2015 for vessels fishing small pelagic stocks in GSA 17;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/1 establishing further precautionary and emergency measures in 2016 for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18);

NOTING that, under Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/1, a reduction of fishing effort was applied for fishing vessels targeting European anchovy in GSA 17 for 2016 and spatio-temporal closures are being applied in 2016 for vessels fishing small pelagic stocks in GSA 17 and GSA 18;

CONSIDERING the findings of the GFCM Workshop on bioeconomic assessments of management measures (WKMSE) (GFCM headquarters, February 2016), which concluded that the effort limitations and

spatio-temporal closures proposed under Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1 and Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/1 are not sufficient to bring the stocks back above safe biological limits;

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

PART I

General objective, geographical scope and definitions

1. The general objective of the present recommendation is to ensure that the exploitation levels of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea are at the maximum sustainable yield by 2020.
2. The present recommendation shall apply in GSA 17 and GSA 18 (Adriatic Sea).
3. For the purpose of this recommendation,
 - a) “European anchovy” means fish pertaining to the *Engraulis encrasicolus* species;
 - b) “sardine” means fish pertaining to the *Sardina pilchardus* species;
 - c) “small pelagics” means stocks of European anchovy and sardine;
 - d) “pelagic trawler” means a fishing vessel operating single or in pair with a pelagic trawl net; and
 - e) “purse seiner” means a fishing vessel operating with a purse seine net for small pelagic species

PART II

Emergency management measures

Catches

4. In 2017 and 2018, contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) shall not exceed the level of catches for small pelagics exerted in 2014 as reported in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/3 on the implementation of the GFCM Task 1 statistical matrix and repealing Resolution GFCM/31/2007/1.
5. If this catch limit in 2017 or 2018 is exceeded in any given year, the GFCM shall recommend appropriate management measures.

Fishing effort

6. Notwithstanding the fishing effort established under paragraph 27 of Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 and Recommendation GFCM/38/2014/1, the CPCs shall reduce their fishing effort for the years 2017 and 2018. Fishing vessels targeting small pelagics shall not exceed 180 fishing days per year, with a maximum of 144 fishing days targeting sardine and a maximum of 144 fishing days targeting European anchovy.

Closures

7. In 2017 and 2018, the CPCs shall apply spatio-temporal closures in view of protecting nursery and spawning areas. Such closures shall cover the entire distribution of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea, for periods of not less than 15 continuous days and up to 30 continuous days. These closures shall take place during the following period:

- for sardine, from 1 October – 31 March, and
- for European anchovy, from 1 April – 30 September

8. In 2017 and 2018, the CPCs shall apply additional closures for vessels over 12 m length overall for not less than 6 months. Such closures shall cover at least 30 percent of the area which has been identified as a nursery area or as an important area for the protection of early age classes of fish (in territorial and inner sea).

9. The CPCs shall notify the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 November 2016, of the set of closure dates and areas of application.

Fleet capacity and fleet register

10. The CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 November 2016, the list of all pelagic trawlers (single or pair trawlers) and purse seiners actively fishing for small pelagic stocks in 2014.

11. The CPCs shall ensure that the overall fleet capacity of trawlers and purse seiners actively fishing for small pelagic stocks in terms of gross tonnage (GT), engine power (kW) and number of vessels, as recorded both in national and GFCM registers, does not exceed, in 2017 and 2018, the fleet capacity for small pelagics in 2014.

12. The provision under paragraph 11 shall not apply to the CPCs with a fleet of less than ten purse seiners and/or pelagic trawlers. Such CPCs may increase their fleet capacity for not more than 50 percent in number of vessels and in terms of gross tonnage (GT) and engine power (kW).

PART III

Scientific monitoring

13. The SAC shall suggest alternative solutions to ensure the availability of the hydroacoustic survey results of the previous year not later than 31 January of a given year.

14. A working group on alternative management measures for small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea shall be established in accordance with this recommendation, following to the terms of reference defined in Annex 1. The working group shall report back to the SAC before its annual session in 2017.

15. The SAC shall assess, in 2017, the relative merits of different management regimes for small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea. This task shall include an assessment of the biological, economic, social and market impacts.

16. The SAC shall assess in 2017 whether the impact of the measures adopted under this recommendation will enable achievement of the objective of Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1.

17. The SAC shall report back to the GFCM on paragraphs 15 and 16 before the annual session of the GFCM in 2017.

18. If the SAC concludes, in 2017, that European anchovy and sardine are still overexploited, the Commission may adopt more stringent measures for 2018, based on the scientific advice of the SAC. These measures shall aim at achieving the objective set out in paragraph 1.

PART IV
Control measures

19. Notwithstanding the national control programmes established under paragraph 29 of Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1, the CPCs shall ensure that all vessels above 15 m length overall actively fishing for small pelagic stocks are equipped with an electronic logbook and vessel monitoring system by the end of 2017.

20. In order to facilitate the monitoring of catches, all catches shall be landed, with the exception of those catches which may be discarded in accordance with national legislation.

Terms of reference for the Working Group on alternative management measures for small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea

The working group referred to in paragraph 14 shall:

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

The mandate of the working group will cover an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages as well as an analysis of biological, social, economic and market impacts of different management regimes for small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea, including:

- a) capacity limitations
- b) fishing effort regime
- c) spatio-temporal closures
- d) technical measures relating to fishing gear
- e) catch limitations

These measures should be considered individually as well as in combination.