

REC.CM-GFCM/41/2017/2
on the management of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea
(geographical subareas 1 to 3) for a two-year transition period

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;

RECALLING that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration requires that, in the context of establishing an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, all key fisheries should be managed with management plans;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks of 4 August 1995 and 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, taking account of the best scientific evidence available. The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take measures to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and non-target species and their environment”;

CONSIDERING that the scientific evaluation and/or management of blackspot seabream is under the responsibility of the GFCM, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF);

CONSIDERING that the latest assessment, carried out at the fifteenth session of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), indicated that blackspot seabream is in overfishing and overexploited in the Alboran Sea;

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;

NOTING that as the scientific data available to assess the stock of blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea remain insufficient, the management of blackspot seabream, covered in this recommendation for a two-year transitional period, is based on the precautionary approach in the absence of a solid scientific advice;

NOTING that, based on the scientific advice of the SAC, the GFCM should adopt a management plan for this species at its forty-third session;

CONSIDERING the significant socio-economic importance of fisheries, especially local fisheries, exploiting blackspot seabream and the need to ensure their sustainability;

CONSIDERING that blackspot seabream is also targeted by recreational fisheries;

CONSIDERING that important fisheries targeting blackspot seabream exploit in particular a stock distributed across the Strait of Gibraltar, including the Alboran Sea and adjacent waters of the Atlantic ocean (i.e. ICES division IXa and FAO area 34 1.11);

NOTING that blackspot seabream is included in the GFCM list of priority species for the western Mediterranean;

NOTING that there is a high level of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) catches all over the Mediterranean, including blackspot seabream, and that a more adequate monitoring of the fishing fleets involved in such activities, including recreational fisheries, is needed;

NOTING that the SAC agreed on the need, as highlighted by the Subregional Committee for the Western Mediterranean (SRC-WM), for the provision of advice for the potential establishment of management measures for the blackspot seabream fishery in the Alboran Sea, including, *inter alia*, improving socio-economic monitoring and standardization of fishing effort;

CONSIDERING Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 for a mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries, in particular targets 1, 2 and 3 therein;

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

PART I
General objective, scope and definitions

General objective and scope

1. The measures set forth in this recommendation aim at improving the exploitation pattern of blackspot seabream fisheries as well as the scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of those fisheries in the Mediterranean.
2. This recommendation shall apply to the Alboran Sea (geographical subregions [GSAs] 1, 2 and 3) for a transitional period of two years.
3. This recommendation shall apply to all commercial and recreational fishing vessels fishing blackspot seabream.

Definitions

4. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
 - a) “blackspot seabream” means fish pertaining to the species *Pagellus bogaraveo*;
 - b) “targeted fishing for blackspot seabream” means fishing activities having on board or landing quantities of blackspot seabream that constitutes more than 20 percent of the catch in live weight after sorting per tide;
 - c) “recreational fishing” means a non-commercial fishing activity exploiting marine living resources for recreation, tourism or sport; and
 - d) “authorized vessel” means a fishing vessel with a fishing authorization entitling it to carry out specific fishing activities during a specific period, in a given area or for a given fishery under specific conditions.

PART II
Specific objectives and transitional measures

5. The operational objective of this recommendation shall be to maintain fishing mortality for blackspot seabream within precautionary reference points and to achieve as soon as possible or maintain the maximum sustainable yield.
6. Based on the SAC advice, the GFCM shall establish the specific objectives of the management plan, at the latest at its forty-third session.
7. The objective of the transitional measures for blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea for a period of two years is to start preparing the ground for a future management plan, which will only be established after the SAC provides an updated validated assessment of the status of the stock, while reducing the risk that, in the absence of relevant scientific assessment, the biomass level of the stock could drop below undesirable values, which would entail also negative consequences on the economic viability of the fisheries concerned.
8. Pending scientific advice, in 2018 or at the latest in 2020, and following the precautionary approach to fisheries management, the contracting parties or cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) concerned

shall maintain the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort at levels authorized and applied in recent years for the exploitation of blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea.

9. Taking into account the scientific advice, CPCs may designate spatio-temporal restrictions, if they do not exist under national legislation in view of banning or restricting fishing activities to protect juvenile and/or spawner aggregation areas of blackspot seabream. CPCs shall notify to the GFCM, by 31 January 2019, the areas and the restrictions applied. Passive fishing gear, including markers and intermediary buoys, shall permanently display the registration letters and numbers reported on the hull of the fishing vessel to which they belong.

10. Without prejudice to the provisions foreseen under paragraph 1 and in line with paragraph 2 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1, CPCs shall establish a mechanism to ensure that all daily catches and bycatch of blackspot seabream, irrespective of the live weight of the catch, are declared. As for recreational fisheries, CPCs shall endeavour to record or estimate the catches of this species.

PART III

Management and monitoring of the fishing capacity and fishing effort

11. CPCs shall establish a register of the fishing vessels authorized to carry out targeted fishing for blackspot seabream. Fishing vessels targeting blackspot seabream shall be allowed to carry out specific fishing activities only if these are indicated in a valid fishing authorization issued by the competent authorities and specifying the technical conditions under which such activities shall be carried out, as defined in the annex to this recommendation.

12. CPCs shall maintain and update the above mentioned register of fishing authorizations. Unless specifically provided for within the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF), CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat:

- The list of operating vessels for which such authorization has been delivered for the current or the following year(s), not later than 28/29 February of each year;
- A report on fishing activities carried out by the vessels referred to in paragraph 8, in an aggregated format, including the following minimum information: number of exploitation days, exploitation and catch area of blackspot seabream, not later than 30 November every year, as from 30 November 2018 or at the latest from 30 November 2020.

13. In order to facilitate the exchange of information regarding inspections to be done, the list of authorized vessels shall be made available to the CPCs concerned, which may also communicate with each other their information on the fishing vessels authorized to carry out blackspot seabream fishing activities.

14. All vessels above 12 metres length overall authorized to fish for blackspot seabream shall be equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other geolocalization system allowing control authorities to track their activities.

PART IV

Scientific monitoring

15. CPCs whose fishing fleets target blackspot seabream and are authorized to do so shall ensure that a mechanism for adequate monitoring of fisheries and catches is duly in place with a view to allowing the SAC to provide descriptive information and advice on at least the following:

- a) characteristics of fishing gear, *inter alia*, the maximum length of longlines and fixed nets and the number, type and size of hooks;
- b) deployed nominal fishing effort (e.g. number of fishing days/week times the relevant unit of activity, e.g. hooks) and overall catch levels by commercial fishing fleets. An estimate of recreational fisheries catches should also be provided;
- c) conservation and management reference points with a view to establishing multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in line with the objective of maximum sustainable yield and low risk of stock collapse;
- d) socio-economic effects of alternative management scenarios, including input/output and/or technical measures, as identified by the GFCM and/or CPCs;
- e) possible spatio-temporal closures aimed at preserving the sustainability of fisheries; and
- f) potential impacts of recreational fisheries on the status of blackspot seabream stock(s);

16. The SAC shall provide, to the maximum extent possible, an updated status of the different blackspot seabream fisheries and stocks in the Mediterranean, by 2020.

17. Without prejudice to paragraph 13, the SAC, taking into account the recommendations of the SRC-WM, shall provide, in 2019 at the latest, an update of the status of blackspot seabream stocks distributed in the Alboran Sea and in the adjacent waters of the Atlantic Ocean. For this purpose, the SAC shall attempt to deliver a joint assessment with ICES and the CECAF Scientific Subcommittee.

18. In the event that an evaluation, as described in paragraph 15, would not be possible, the SAC shall provide an update of the status of blackspot seabream stocks distributed in the Alboran Sea.

PART V

Final provisions

19. Data submissions referred to in Parts III and IV shall be done in accordance with appropriate data submission standards, procedures and protocols to be made available online by the GFCM Secretariat, in line with existing recommendations and the technical manual of the DCRF.

20. This recommendation, given its transitional nature, shall remain in force until the adoption by the GFCM, at its forty-third session, of a management plan for blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea.

Annex

Subject to more detailed provisions under the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework, the list referred to in paragraph 12 shall contain, for each vessel, the following information:

- Vessel name
- Vessel register number (code assigned by CPCs)
- GFCM registration number (country ISO 3-alpha code + 9 digits, e.g. xxx000000001)
- Port of registration (full name of the port)
- Previous name (if any)
- Previous flag (if any)
- Previous details of deletion from other registers (if any)
- International radio call sign (if any)
- VMS (indicate Y/N)
- Type of vessel, length overall (LOA) and gross tonnage (GT) and engine power expressed in kW
- Name and address of owner(s) and operator(s)
- Main gear(s) used to fish for blackspot seabream and fleet segment allocation
- Seasonal period authorized for fishing blackspot seabream