

Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/3
on a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fisheries targeting giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp in the Levant Sea (geographical subareas 24, 25, 26 and 27)

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 at levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY);

RECALLING that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration (MedFish4Ever 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 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

RECALLING the United Nations 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, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels in the High Seas;

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

RECALLING that the MedFish4Ever Declaration calls upon Mediterranean riparian countries to enhance multilateral cooperation and implement actions to improve the sustainability of resources, particularly with

regard to data collection and scientific advice, the implementation of an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, compliance and elimination of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, support to sustainable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, and greater solidarity and coordination;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING Decision GFCM/36/2012/1 on guidelines on a general management framework and the presentation of scientific information for multiannual management plans for sustainable fisheries in the GFCM area of application;

CONSIDERING the advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) at its twentieth session on adopting management rules (e.g. fishing authorizations) for giant red shrimp and blue and red shrimp;

CONSIDERING that fishing mortality should be kept below safe thresholds to ensure long-term high yields while limiting the risk of stock collapse and guaranteeing stable and more viable fisheries;

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

CONSIDERING that certain fisheries management measures need to be revised and adapted to the evolution of both the status of exploited stocks and scientific knowledge, and that an appropriate method shall be established to this end;

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

PART I

General objectives, scope and definitions

General objectives of the multiannual plan and transitional measures

1. The present recommendation establishes a multiannual management plan for sustainable trawl fishing activities in the Levant Sea (geographical subareas [GSAs] 24, 25, 26 and 27). Such multiannual management plan contains transitional measures that shall be applied until the adoption of permanent measures, based on the scientific advice provided by the SAC, in accordance with paragraph 14.
2. The multiannual management plan shall be consistent with the precautionary approach. It shall be designed to provide high long-term yields consistent with MSY and to guarantee a low risk of stock collapse while maintaining sustainable and relatively stable fisheries.
3. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) whose vessels are actively fishing in GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27 agree to implement such a multiannual management plan for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with the general and specific objectives and measures set by this recommendation.
4. A set of transitional precautionary management measures for the Levant Sea shall be developed in order to ensure that, pending formal scientific advice by the SAC, the stocks and fisheries are kept at biologically sustainable levels.
5. The CPCs whose vessels are actively fishing in GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27 agree to implement such transitional management measures for the fisheries concerned and in accordance with the general and specific objectives set by this recommendation.

6. The multiannual management plan shall also pursue the reduction of IUU fishing activities in GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27.

Geographical scope

7. The multiannual management plan established by the present recommendation shall apply to GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27.

Definitions

8. For the purpose of this recommendation:

- “Levant Sea” means GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27 as defined in Resolution GFCM/33/2009/2 on the establishment of geographical subareas in the GFCM area of application, amending Resolution GFCM/31/2007/2;
- “Vessel actively fishing” means any trawler targeting the key species listed in Annex 1 and entitled by the CPC whose flag it is flying to carry out specific fishing operations during a specified period, in a given area or for a given fishery under specific conditions;
- “Fishing day” means any continuous period of 24 hours, or part thereof, during which a vessel is present within GSAs 24, 25, 26 and 27 and is searching for fish, shooting, setting, towing, hauling of a fishing gear, taking catch on board, transshipping, retaining on board, processing on board, transferring and landing fish and fishery products;
- “Key species” means marine organisms pertaining to the species as defined in Annex 1 of this recommendation;
- “Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing” or “IUU fishing” means the activities described in paragraph 3 of the 2001 FAO International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU), and following the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7;
- “Designated landing point” means ports, or places close to the shore, designated by the CPCs according to Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/1 on a regional scheme on port state measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities in the GFCM area of application, including offshore terminals and other installations for landing, transshipping, packaging, processing, refuelling or resupplying fishing vessels, where landings, transshipments, packaging and/or processing operations of fishery products are permitted.

PART II

Specific objectives of the multiannual management plan and transitional measures for the Levant Sea

9. The operational objective of the multiannual management plan shall be to maintain fishing mortality for key species (Annex 1), as defined by CPCs with the assistance of the GFCM, within agreed precautionary reference points, with a view to achieving or maintaining fishing mortality at MSY level, in accordance with the objectives described in Part I of this recommendation.

10. The objective of the transitional measures for key species (Annex 1) in the Levant Sea is to prepare for a future management plan while reducing the risk that, in the absence of relevant scientific assessment, the biomass level of the stocks could drop below biologically sustainable levels, with negative consequences also on the socio-economic viability of the fisheries concerned.

11. Pending the identification of biological reference points in line with the MSY, the general objectives of the multiannual management plan set out in paragraph 1 shall be attained while maintaining the fishing fleet capacity or fishing effort at the levels authorized and exerted during the years 2014–2017 for the exploitation of key species in the Levant Sea. This reference period shall be without prejudice to the discussions to take place in the context of the working group referred to under paragraph 49 of this recommendation.

12. A GFCM working group shall be established in 2020, 30 calendar days following the twenty-second session of the SAC, in order to develop measures for the management of the key species listed in Annex 1, taking into consideration the efforts made by CPCs to manage the relevant fisheries as well as the amount of historical catches, and to apply in some cases stricter rules than those defined in this recommendation, also based on socio-economic considerations.

13. By way of derogation from paragraph 11, CPCs that intend to target the key species referred to in Annex 1 shall be allowed to submit fleet development plans during the time period between the entry into force of this recommendation and the adoption of permanent management measures by the GFCM. Such fleet development plans shall be assessed by the SAC and adopted by the GFCM.

14. The SAC shall, upon the availability of updated data, regularly assess the state of the key species and, in particular, establish the level of current fishing mortality and provide the GFCM with the necessary elements for setting biological reference points.

15. Operational objectives in terms of fighting against IUU fishing activities relevant for the key species fisheries shall be developed as defined in Part VI of this recommendation.

16. At its forty-fourth session, the GFCM shall adopt long-term management measures allowing for the achievement of the objectives set out in paragraph 1, in complement to or in replacement of the measures referred to in Part IV.

PART III

Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the plan

17. CPCs shall ensure annually an adequate scientific monitoring of the status of the key species in the Levant Sea.

18. The SAC shall provide, on an annual basis as from 2019, advice on the status of the key species in the Levant Sea, including specific objectives to maintain fishing mortality within agreed precautionary fishing mortality reference points and to maintain or restore the stocks of the key species at levels that can produce MSY in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraph 1.

19. The SAC shall assess the biological, economic and social implications of implementing several management scenarios with the objective of restoring and maintaining the species population above levels that can produce MSY.

20. Based on the SAC advice, the GFCM may review the content of the multiannual management plan.

21. Where SAC advice indicates that the general or specific objectives of the multiannual plan are not being met, the GFCM shall decide on additional and/or alternative management measures to contribute to achieving those objectives.

22. Where, for any reason (e.g. lack of appropriate data), the SAC is not in a position to provide an accurate advice on the stock status of the key species listed in Annex 1 and on their exploitation levels, the GFCM shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries. Such measures shall be based on SAC advice, in accordance with the precautionary approach and taking into consideration environmental and socio-economic elements in a way that guarantees the sustainability of the fisheries.

23. In 2020, the SAC shall evaluate the effectiveness of the measures already applied at the national level and advise on whether these measures are adequate and possibly applicable to adjacent GSAs.

24. For the purpose of providing advice for the revision/adaptation of the multiannual management plan, the CPCs and the SAC shall facilitate the collation of existing relevant data and the collection of additional relevant data (including research survey data) and organize adequate workshops. For this purpose, the SAC shall promote scientific cooperation and a harmonised approach amongst all Levant Sea riparian countries.

PART IV

Fleet management measures

25. Vessels authorized to fish for the key species listed in Annex 1 in the Levant Sea shall be listed by the CPC whose flag they are flying. Vessels not listed by the CPC whose flag they are flying shall not catch, retain on board, tranship, land, store or sell any of the key species.

26. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat not later than 31 January of each year, the list of the vessels flying their flag and actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 for the current year or for the forthcoming years. This list shall include, for each vessel, the information referred to in Annex 1 of Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom trawling fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily, pending the development and adoption of a multiannual management plan.

27. The vessels actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 shall comply with the obligations established under Resolution GFCM/37/2013/2 on guidelines on the management of fishing capacity in the GFCM area of application and provide national authorities with a detailed report of their fishing activities, including as minimum requirements: operating days, operating area and total catch of key species. This information shall be transmitted to the GFCM Secretariat at least on a yearly basis.

28. CPCs may designate additional spatial/temporal restrictions to those already established, where fishing activities may be banned or restricted in order to protect aggregation areas of juveniles of the key species. Where applicable, CPCs shall notify to the GFCM Secretariat, by 1 January 2019, the list of these areas and the restrictions applied.

PART V

Management of fishing effort

29. CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, for the first time not later than 1 June 2019, the list of all vessels actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 together with their historic level of fishing effort.

30. Such list shall contain, for each vessel, the information referred to in Annex 1 of Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2.

31. Any fishing vessel not included in the list established under paragraph 26 above shall not be allowed to fish for, retain on board or land any quantity of the key species greater than 3 percent of the total live weight catch retained on board, if the vessel is engaged in a fishing trip in any of the GSAs 24, 25, 26 or 27.
32. CPCs shall promptly notify the GFCM Secretariat of any addition to, deletion from and/or modification of the fishing fleets for the key species, as identified under paragraph 27, at any time such changes may occur.
33. The GFCM Secretariat shall maintain and update the list of fishing vessels authorized to fish for the key species and publish it on the GFCM website in a manner that is consistent with GFCM data confidentiality policy and procedures.
34. Each CPC shall ensure the set-up of adequate mechanisms for the recording of each fishing vessel in a national fleet register, for the recording of vessel catches and fishing effort via the logbook and remote sensing as well as for the monitoring of fishing vessel activities and landings via catch and effort sampling surveys, according to the rules stipulated by each CPC.
35. The above provisions are without prejudice to Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application.

PART VI
Specific measures to address IUU fishing

36. CPCs shall establish a mechanism to ensure that vessels actively fishing in the Levant Sea declare all catches and bycatch of the key species listed in Annex 1. The obligation to declare catches shall apply irrespective of the volume of the catch.
37. CPCs shall, not later than 31 December 2020, communicate to the GFCM Secretariat a map of the fishing grounds exploited by their fishing vessels authorized to catch the key species listed in Annex 1. Such map shall be prepared using the VMS data transmitted to CPCs by their authorized vessels.
38. Each CPC shall designate landing points where the landings by vessels actively fishing for key species in the Levant Sea shall take place.
39. For each designated port, CPCs shall specify permitted landing and transshipping times and places.
40. CPCs shall carry out inspections to take place on the basis of a risk analysis.
41. It shall be prohibited to land or tranship from fishing vessels any quantity of key species fished in the Levant Sea at any place other than ports designated by CPCs in accordance with paragraph 38 above.
42. CPCs shall transmit to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 November each year, any change to the list of designated landing points where landings of key species in the Levant Sea may take place.
43. CPCs shall engage in cooperation for the fight against IUU fishing, in particular by sharing information and gathering intelligence to fight against illegal activities.
44. Part VI is without prejudice to Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application.

PART VII
Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) programme

45. All vessels above 10 metres length overall actively fishing for the key species listed in Annex 1 shall be equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other geopositioning system allowing control authorities to track their activities.
46. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, all the catches of key species shall be indicated in the logbook irrespectively of the live weight of the catch.
47. Upon request of CPCs, with the assistance of the GFCM Secretariat, the GFCM shall establish, in 2019, a pilot project with a view to establishing an observation and inspection programme in order to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation.
48. Such observation and inspection programme shall be based on the results of the pilot project and adopted before the end of 2020. It shall comprise, *inter alia*, the following elements:
- a) High sea inspections;
 - 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.
49. A working group shall be established to develop integrated MCS measures, in accordance with this recommendation. The tasks of this working group are defined in Annex 2 of this recommendation.

List of key species to be considered in the current recommendation

Name	Scientific name	GSA			
		24	25	26	27
Giant red shrimp	<i>Aristaeomorpha foliacea</i>	X	X	X	X
Blue and red shrimp	<i>Aristeus antennatus</i>	X	X	X	X

Terms of reference for the Working Group on integrated MCS measures for fisheries targeting key species in the Levant Sea

The working group referred to in paragraph 49, shall:

1. be supported by the GFCM Secretariat;
2. establish a schedule for the development of its work, and hold at least one meeting in 2019, before the next meeting of the Compliance Committee (CoC);
3. invite observers attending GFCM meetings, the FAO, and other regional fisheries organizations to participate in its meetings; and
4. report on its conclusions and opinions to the CoC.

The mandate of the working group shall cover the elements described in Part VII of this recommendation.