

## **Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/5**

### **on a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16), repealing Recommendations GFCM/39/2015/2 and GFCM/40/2016/4**

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 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”;

*RECALLING* the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries;

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

*CONSIDERING* that the state of the stocks as assessed by the SAC requires the development and adoption of management measures aimed at ensuring the conservation of demersal stocks in GSAs 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16, as soon as possible;

*CONSIDERING* the conclusions of the SAC Technical Workshop on bioeconomic assessment of management measures held in February 2016;

*CONSIDERING* the conclusions of the meeting of the Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean held in February 2016;

*CONSIDERING* the conclusions of the seventeenth session of the SAC (FAO headquarters, March 2015) and of the eighteenth session of the SAC (Cyprus, March 2016), in particular regarding the management of select fisheries in the Strait of Sicily;

*NOTING* that SAC concluded, at its eighteenth session, that the stocks of European hake are heavily overexploited and, in some cases, well below safe biological limits;

*NOTING* that many fisheries exploiting European hake in the Mediterranean exert a pressure over juveniles;

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

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

*CONSIDERING* 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;

*CONSIDERING* Recommendation 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 (geographical subareas 12 to 16);

*CONSIDERING* Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/5 establishing a minimum conservation reference size for European hake in the Mediterranean Sea;

*CONSIDERING* Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8 on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16);

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

*NOTING* Resolution GFCM/41/2017/5 on a network of essential fish habitats in the GFCM area of application;

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

## **PART I**

### **Subject matter, scope and definitions**

#### ***Subject matter and scope***

1. The present recommendation establishes a multiannual management plan for bottom trawl fisheries exploiting demersal stocks (hereafter “multiannual management plan”), including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp, in the marine waters of GSAs 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 (hereafter “Strait of Sicily”), 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.

2. This recommendation shall apply to bottom trawlers above 10 metres length overall.

#### ***Definitions***

3. For the purpose of this recommendation:

- a) “European hake” means fish belonging to the species *Merluccius merluccius*;
- b) “Deep-water rose shrimp” means crustaceans belonging to the species *Parapenaeus longirostris*;
- c) “Designated landing ports” means ports, or places close to the shore, designated in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/32/2008/1 on a regional scheme on port state measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application including offshore

terminals and other installations for landing, transshipping, packaging, processing, refueling or resupplying of fishing vessels, where landings, transshipments, packaging and/or processing operations of fishery products are permitted; and

- d) “fishing authorization” means a fishing authorization entitling a vessel to engage in fishing activities for demersal stocks, including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp, during a specified period and in a given area.

## **PART II**

### **Specific objectives and targets**

#### ***Specific objectives***

4. The multiannual management plan shall aim at contributing to the objectives mentioned in Article 2 and to the principles listed in Article 5 of the GFCM Agreement.

5. The multiannual management 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 MSY by 2020 at the latest;
- c) Protect nursery areas and essential fish habitats that are 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 all catches are landed;
- e) Provide for measures to adjust the fishing capacity of the fleets to levels of fishing mortality consistent with 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 European 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**

#### ***Minimum conservation reference size***

7. Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/5 establishing a minimum conservation reference size for European hake in the Mediterranean Sea shall apply.

8. The minimum conservation reference size for deep-water rose shrimp shall be set to 20 mm carapace length (CL).

9. Specimens of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp smaller than the minimum conservation reference size defined in paragraph 7 shall not be caught, retained on board, transshipped, transferred, landed, stored, sold, displayed or offered for sale.

10. Contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) shall communicate annually to the GFCM Secretariat the specific modalities they apply under the provisions of paragraph 7, 8 and 9 – including landing obligation – aiming at avoiding discards which are in force in some CPCs as well as landing inspection modalities when a flexibility scheme is foreseen at the national level.

11. In order to define additional appropriate spatio-temporal restrictions in view of the sustainable management of the stocks referred to in paragraph 1, CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, not later than 30 June 2019 and thereafter annually, the spatial restrictions in the waters under their jurisdiction that they apply with a view to protecting spawning and nursery areas for demersal stocks, including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp.

#### ***Fisheries restricted areas***

12. Fisheries restricted areas (FRAs) shall be established for the conservation and management of the demersal stocks, including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp, in the three areas of the Strait of Sicily as defined in Annex 2.

13. Notwithstanding paragraph 2, any fishing activity with bottom trawlers irrespective of their overall length shall not be allowed in the FRAs defined in paragraph 12.

14. In order to avoid accidental access to the FRAs established in paragraph 12, buffer areas extending one nautical mile beyond the FRAs shall be established as defined in Annex 2.

15. For any fishing activity with bottom trawlers in the buffer areas established in paragraph 14, vessels shall ensure that their vessel monitoring system (VMS) is fully functional before entering the buffer zone. Those vessels not equipped with VMS transponder and aiming to fish in the buffer areas shall be equipped with any other geolocation system allowing control authorities to track their activities.

16. The SAC shall identify additional nursery areas of European hake in the entire Strait of Sicily.

17. The SAC shall also identify areas where discards of European hake and/or deep-sea rose shrimp below the minimum conservation reference size or juveniles are high.

#### ***Temporal closure***

18. Notwithstanding paragraph 2, any fishing activity with bottom trawlers irrespective of their overall length shall not be allowed between the coast and the 200 metres depth isobath in GSA 14 (Gulf of Gabès). This closure shall apply every year from 1 July until 30 September.

### **PART IV**

#### **Fleet and effort management measures**

19. Bottom trawlers exploiting demersal stocks including European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily shall only be allowed to carry out specific fishing activities 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 (see Annex 3). Such vessels shall be equipped with a VMS, in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application.

20. The CPCs shall maintain and keep up-to-date a register of the above-mentioned fishing authorizations. Unless specifically provided for in the GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework, the CPCs shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat:

- The list of operating vessels for which such authorization has been delivered for the following year(s), not later than 30 November of each year;
- A report on fishing activities carried out by the vessels referred to in paragraph 19, in an aggregated format, including the following minimum information: number of exploitation days, exploitation area, catches and discards of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp, no later than 31 August of each year, starting from August 2019.

21. In order to facilitate the exchange of information regarding inspections to be done, the GFCM Secretariat shall provide the CPCs with access credentials to a secure website listing in real time the fishing vessels authorized to carry out fishing activities in a given fishery.

22. The CPCs that have introduced, since 2010, fishing capacity reduction measures or fishing effort restrictions, including through the establishment of spatial and/or temporal closures, shall be encouraged to ensure that such measures, or their effects, are maintained. The SAC shall be invited to formulate advice aiming at improving the efficiency of such measures.

23. The CPCs shall take the necessary measures to reduce the fishing mortality of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily and align them with the objectives and the timeline set out in paragraph 6. Measures should be considered in terms of number of fishing days, fishing vessels and catch limits.

#### **PART V** **National management plans**

24. In order to ensure adequate conservation of demersal stocks, the CPCs shall adopt fisheries management measures or national management plans in the Strait of Sicily.

25. The CPCs shall notify the GFCM Secretariat, from 31 January 2019, of the management measures or management plans adopted at the national level. Where appropriate, should these measures be modified, the CPCs shall communicate such modifications by 31 January of the following year.

#### **PART VI** **Specific measures to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities**

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

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

28. 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.

29. It shall be prohibited to land or transship from fishing vessels any quantity of European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp fished in the Strait of Sicily at any place other than landing ports designated in accordance with paragraph 26.

30. The CPCs shall transmit to the GFCM Secretariat no later than 30 November 2018 a list of the designated landing ports in which landings of European hake and/or 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.

31. 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 VII** **Monitoring, control and surveillance programmes**

32. The CPCs, through the GFCM, shall establish or maintain an observation and inspection programme to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation. Such programme may comprise *inter alia* 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.

33. Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/8 on an international joint inspection and surveillance scheme outside the waters under national jurisdiction in the Strait of Sicily (geographical subareas 12 to 16) shall apply for a period of three years from the date of the adoption of this recommendation.

### **PART VIII**

#### **Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the multiannual management plan**

34. The CPCs shall ensure adequate annual scientific monitoring of European hake and of deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

35. The SAC shall provide advice on the status of European hake and of 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.

36. 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.

37. 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/or deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

38. The SAC shall advise on the most appropriate technical measures to improve the selectivity of bottom trawlers targeting European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimps stocks.

39. The SAC shall identify where appropriate nursery areas beyond 200 metres depth in GSA 14 (Gulf of Gabès).

40. 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.

41. Where the scientific advice indicates that the general or specific objectives of the multiannual management plan are not being met, the GFCM shall decide on additional and/or alternative management measures to ensure that those objectives are achieved.

42. 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 of deep-water rose shrimp and on their exploitation levels, the GFCM shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to ensure the sustainability of the fishery. These measures shall be based on SAC advice taking into consideration socio-economic elements.

43. For the purpose of providing advice for the development of the multiannual management plan, the SAC shall organize adequate workshops. To this purpose, the SAC shall promote scientific cooperation and a harmonized approach among all countries around the Strait of Sicily.

**PART IX**  
**Final provisions**

44. This multiannual management plan remains in force for three years from the date of its adoption.
45. This recommendation repeals and replaces Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2 and Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/4.

**Target fishing mortality for European hake and deep-water rose shrimp  
in the Strait of Sicily**

<b>Stock</b>	<b>Target fishing mortality range</b>
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 fisheries restricted areas (FRAs)

#### FRA 1: East of Adventure Bank

Fisheries restricted area	
Latitude	Longitude
37° 23,850' N	12° 30,072' E
37° 23,884' N	12° 48,282' E
37° 11,567' N	12° 48,305' E
37° 11,532' N	12° 30,095' E

Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude
37° 13,041' N	13° 16,672' E
37° 13,049' N	13° 37,422' E
36° 58,723' N	13° 37,424' E
36° 58,715' N	13° 16,682' E

#### FRA 2: West of Gela Basin

Fisheries restricted area	
Latitude	Longitude
37° 12,040' N	13° 17,925' E
37° 12,047' N	13° 36,170' E
36° 59,725' N	13° 36,175' E
36° 59,717' N	13° 17,930' E

Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude
36° 13,624' N	15° 12,102' E
36° 13,624' N	15° 27,298' E
35° 58,342' N	15° 27,294' E
35° 58,342' N	15° 12,106' E

#### FRA 3: East of Malta Bank

Fisheries restricted area	
Latitude	Longitude
36° 12,621' N	15° 13,338' E
36° 12,621' N	15° 26,062' E
35° 59,344' N	15° 26,062' E
35° 59,344' N	15° 13,338' E

Buffer area	
Latitude	Longitude
37° 24,849' N	12° 28,814' E
37° 24,888' N	12° 49,536' E
37° 10,567' N	12° 49,559' E
37° 10,528' N	12° 28,845' E

### Annex 3

Subject to more detailed provisions under the GFCM data collection programme, the list referred to in paragraph 20 shall contain, for each vessel, the following information:

- Vessel name
- Vessel register number (code assigned by the 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)
- Vessel type, length overall (LOA) and gross tonnage (GT) and/or gross registered tonnage (GRT) and engine power expressed in kW
- Name and address of owner(s) and/or charter and/or operator(s)
- Main target species
- Main gear used for European hake and deep-water rose shrimp and fleet segment allocation
- Time period authorized for fishing with bottom trawl or any other gear likely to fish European hake and/or deep-water rose shrimp (if any of such authorization)