

Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/2

on a management plan for the sustainable exploitation of blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea (geographical subareas 1 to 3)

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;

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);

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;

NOTING the inclusion of blackspot seabream in the list of priority species for the western Mediterranean under the mid-term strategy (2017–2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries ;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with 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 and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

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

RECALLING the results of the latest assessment carried out at the twenty-first session of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC) (Egypt, June 2019), indicating that blackspot seabream is in overfishing and overexploited in the waters covered by this recommendation;

NOTING that, during its twenty-first session, the SAC endorsed a proposed common minimum conservation reference size of 33 cm, measured as the total length of the fish;

FURTHER NOTING that, at its twenty-first session, the SAC advised that a management plan be adopted and implemented on a progressive basis, taking into account the management measures included in Annex 6/B of the report of the twenty-first session of the SAC, namely the elements adopted by the SAC in 2018 and the update provided in 2019 by the Subregional Committee for the Western Mediterranean;

FURTHER NOTING that, at its twenty-first session, the SAC advised that the socio-economic impacts of the measures adopted should be assessed;

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

CONSIDERING that important fisheries targeting blackspot seabream with longlines and handlines exploit in particular a stock distributed across the Strait of Gibraltar, including the Alboran Sea;

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 involved fishing fleets, including recreational fisheries, is needed;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT Recommendation 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, and in particular its paragraph 20;

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

1. This recommendation establishes an adaptive multiannual management plan for the sustainable exploitation of blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea.

Scope

2. This recommendation applies to all commercial fishing activities with longlines and handlines catching blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea (geographical subareas [GSAs] 1 to 3).
3. Where SAC advice indicates, on the basis of the results of its scientific studies, that other fishing gear or recreational fishing have a significant impact on the fishing mortality of the stock, additional measures could be proposed.
4. Taking into account the distribution of the stock and the specific targeted fishery in the area of the Strait of Gibraltar as well as the importance to apply the same management measures in the area where the stock has been jointly assessed, the contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs) concerned agree to implement the measures foreseen in this recommendation within the area of distribution of blackspot seabream in the Strait of Gibraltar.

Definitions

5. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
 - a) “blackspot seabream” means fish pertaining to the species *Pagellus bogaraveo*;
 - b) “recreational fishing” means a non-commercial fishing activity exploiting marine living resources for recreation, tourism or sport;
 - c) “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;

- d) “fishing effort of longlines and handlines” means the number of days at sea, including those days where blackspot seabream is targeted but no catch is made, multiplied by the number of hooks on the longline or handline.

PART II
Specific objectives

6. The operational objective of this recommendation shall be to maintain fishing mortality for blackspot seabream within agreed precautionary reference points in order to reach and maintain as soon as possible a fishing mortality level consistent with the MSY.
7. The plan shall contribute to improving scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of the fisheries exploiting blackspot seabream.
8. In particular, the plan shall aim to:
 - a) apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management;
 - b) counteract or prevent overfishing with a view to ensuring long-term yields while maintaining the size of the stock within biologically sustainable levels; and
 - c) establish measures to adjust exploitation rates and fishing capacity to sustainable levels.

PART III
Transitional precautionary management measures

9. In 2020 and 2021, pending updated scientific advice and following the precautionary approach to fisheries management, CPCs shall:
 - a) maintain their catches at the average level authorized and exerted over the period 2010–2015 for the exploitation of blackspot seabream in the waters subject to this recommendation; and
 - b) decrease by 20 percent the fishing effort exerted on blackspot seabream as compared to the average level authorized and exerted over the period 2010–2015 for the exploitation of blackspot seabream in the waters subject to this recommendation. This reduction shall not apply when CPCs have already reduced their fishing effort by more than 20 percent during the period referred to above.
10. These transitional management measures shall not prejudice decisions on a possible permanent allocation of catches.

PART IV
Technical and conservation measures

Technical measures

11. CPCs involved in this fishery are encouraged to actively trial and adopt alternative gear or mitigation measures for gear or materials having a negative impact on the seabed.
12. Without prejudice to the flexibility established under paragraph 13 regarding the minimum conservation reference size, CPCs involved in this fishery shall encourage their fishers to release into the sea unharmed and immediately upon catch specimen that are smaller than this size.

Minimum conservation reference size

13. Until 2021 included, it shall be prohibited to land specimen of blackspot seabream where the total length of the fish is smaller than 30 cm. During the period where transitional precautionary management measures shall apply, CPCs may apply flexibility, as long as such specimens represent less than 10 percent of the landings, expressed in volume or numbers.

**PART V
Fleet management measures**

Register of authorized vessels

14. CPCs shall establish a register of the fishing vessels authorized to catch blackspot seabream with longlines and handlines. They shall be allowed to catch or retain on board blackspot seabream only if they hold a valid fishing authorization issued by the competent authorities.

15. The fishing authorization shall include at least the elements listed in the annex of this recommendation.

Register of fishing authorizations

16. CPCs shall maintain an updated the register of the fishing authorizations referred to in paragraphs 14 and 15. Unless already provided for within the GFCM data collection programme, CPCs shall communicate annually to the GFCM Secretariat:

- a) 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; and
- b) a report on the fishing activities carried out by authorized vessels, in an aggregated format, including the following minimum information: number of exploitation days, exploitation area and catches of blackspot seabream per gear. Such report shall be sent to the GFCM Secretariat not later than 30 November.

17. In order to facilitate the exchange of information regarding possible inspections, the list of vessels authorized to fish blackspot seabream in the waters subject to this Recommendation shall be published in the purpose-made registers on the GFCM website.

Vessel monitoring system

18. All vessels above 12 metres length overall (LOA) authorized to catch blackspot seabream under the scope of this recommendation shall be equipped with a vessel monitoring system (VMS) or any other geolocation system allowing control authorities to track their activity at all times during the fishing trips.

**PART VI
Control and enforcement**

Designated ports

19. Each CPC shall designate ports in which landing blackspot seabream under the scope of this recommendation is authorized and immediately communicate any update of this list to the GFCM Secretariat.

20. Landings of blackspot seabream shall only take place in designated ports.

21. Prior to entry into any port, except for small-scale vessels, and at least four hours before the estimated time of arrival or at least one hour if the fishing grounds are less than four hours from the port of arrival, the fishers or their representative shall notify the relevant authorities of the following information:

- a) estimated time of arrival;
- b) external identification number and name of the fishing vessel; and
- c) estimated live weight retained on board.

Catch recording

22. The CPCs whose fleets are authorized to catch blackspot seabream under the scope of this recommendation shall set up a mechanism for monitoring the fisheries and the catches.

23. By way of derogation from paragraph 1 of Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/1 concerning the establishment of a GFCM logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1, CPCs shall set up a mechanism to ensure that all commercial blackspot seabream daily catches and bycatch, irrespective of the live weight of the catch, are recorded. CPCs shall also endeavour to record or estimate recreational catch.

Control of landings

24. Each CPC shall establish a programme based on risk analysis, in particular to verify the landings and validate the logbooks.

Transshipment

25. It shall be prohibited to transship blackspot seabream at sea.

PART VII Scientific monitoring

26. Based on the information transmitted by CPCs to the GFCM Secretariat, the SAC shall provide, in 2021, updated information and advice on at least the following items:

- a) characteristics of the fishing gear, *inter alia*, the characteristics of the fixed nets and the number, type and size of the hooks used in handlines and longlines;
- b) deployed fishing effort and catch of commercial fishing fleets as well as an estimate of recreational fisheries catch;
- c) conservation and management reference points with a view to ensuring a low risk of stock collapse as well as the sustainability of fisheries, in line with the MSY objective;
- d) socio-economic effects of alternative management scenarios, including input/output and/or technical measures;
- e) possible spatio-temporal closures aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the stock and of the fisheries exploiting it; and
- f) potential impacts of recreational fisheries on the conservation status of blackspot seabream.

PART VIII
Long-term management measures

27. In 2021, at its twenty-third session, the SAC shall advise on the effectiveness of the measures contained in this recommendation with respect to the specific objectives listed in paragraphs 6 to 8, notably as concerns the minimum size. In particular, the SAC shall provide consolidated advice on management measures for the sustainable exploitation of blackspot seabream in the waters subject to this recommendation, including on fishing effort limits, catch limits and possible seasonal closures to protect spawners and/or juveniles.

28. In 2021, at its forty-fifth session and based on SAC advice, the GFCM shall adopt long-term management measures. Such measures shall be implemented as of the entry into force of GFCM measures for the sustainable exploitation of blackspot seabream in the waters subject to this recommendation, including on fishing effort limits, catch limits and, if appropriate, on seasonal closures to protect spawners and/or juveniles.

29. The provisions contained in this recommendation shall be applied without prejudice to stricter rules enforced in CPCs.

Minimum information to be included in fishing authorizations

Subject to more detailed provisions under the GFCM data collection programme, the list referred to in paragraph 15 shall contain, for each fishing 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 / other geolocation system (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 used to fish for blackspot seabream, fleet segment and operational unit allocation in the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF)
- Seasonal period authorized for fishing blackspot seabream