

Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3
amending Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual
management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea
(geographical subarea 29)

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 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 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”;

RECALLING that the 2016 Bucharest Declaration towards enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture and the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture provide a concrete set of actions for the riparian countries to implement, particularly with regard to existing management measures that will be complemented and expanded to progressively achieve exploitation at MSY;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29);

NOTING that for turbot in geographical subarea (GSA) 29, the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS) concluded, at its seventh session (Bulgaria, July 2018), that the stock is overexploited and in overexploitation. The WGBS noted first signs of reversal in the trend of the overexploitation rate and positive trends in spawning stock biomass, concluding that the constructive evolution of fishing mortality seemed confirmed due to the gradual application of management measures, and that the stock was in line with the provisions of Recommendation GFCM41/2017/4. The WGBS further advised for a benchmark assessment in 2019 and the implementation of a management plan;

NOTING that for turbot in GSA 29, the WGBS at its eight session (Turkey, September 2019), based on the conclusions of the turbot benchmark sessions of the Subregional Group on Stock Assessment for the Black Sea (SGSABS) (Bulgaria, July 2019 and Turkey, September 2019), recommended implementing a precautionary approach by establishing a precautionary total allowable catch (TAC) and confirmed that the perception of the stock continued to show a positive trend;

CONSIDERING that the Working Group on the allocation of the total allowable catch for turbot in GSA 29 (Turkey, September 2019) concluded on the allocation scheme provided for by Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4;

CONSIDERING the socio-economic importance of fisheries exploiting turbot 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 turbot stock and scientific knowledge, and that an appropriate method to this end shall be established;

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

Amendment of Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4

1. Part II, paragraph 12, shall be amended as follows:
 - a) For the years 2020–2022, an annual TAC shall be set to 857 tonnes for CPCs with the following allocation:

CPCs	Annual quotas 2020–2022 (in tonnes)	Percentage
European Union	150	17.5
Turkey	497	58.0
Ukraine	160	18.7
Georgia	20	2.3
Others	30	3.5
Total	857	100

- b) The quota under “others” is reserved for parties that are not qualified as GFCM CPCs.
 - c) When 90 percent of the quota of a CPC is exceeded, the concerned CPC shall inform the GFCM Secretariat, which shall notify all CPCs. When a CPC exhausts its quota, it should immediately close the fishery and inform the GFCM Secretariat accordingly, which shall notify all CPCs.
 - d) If the total catch exceeds the TAC in a given year, the excess amount shall be paid back by CPCs. The excess quantities shall be deducted the following year from the adjusted quota(s) of the concerned CPC(s). If any CPC exceeds its catch limit during any two consecutive years, the GFCM shall recommend appropriate measures, which may include, but are not limited to, a reduction in the quota corresponding to a minimum of 125 percent of the excess harvest.

- e) The maximum underage that a CPC may carry over in any given year shall not exceed 15 percent of its initial annual quota. If the stock is in a dire state and scientific advice of the WGBS recommends a reduction in fishing mortality, then carrying-over of any unused quota may be prohibited.

2. Part II, paragraph 14, shall be amended as follows:

- a) The level of the TAC referred to in paragraph 12, as amended, may be reviewed by the GFCM in line with the recommendations and assessments of the WGBS, should the continuation of the constructive evolution of the stock recovery not be confirmed.
- b) The level of the TAC and the allocation key, referred to in paragraph 12, as amended, may be reviewed by the GFCM in case of new parties becoming CPCs to the GFCM Agreement.

3. Part VII, paragraph 54, shall be amended as follows:

In order to support the implementation of the conservation and management measures of the multiannual management plan and to ensure the traceability of turbot catches, a working group shall be established in the context of the Compliance Committee (CoC) with a view to developing integrated MCS measures, in accordance with this recommendation. Such working group shall assess the following and report to the CoC and the GFCM at its forty-fourth annual session:

- a) the results of the voluntary observation and inspection pilot project;
- b) the development of a catch certificate pilot scheme for turbot. For the purpose of identifying the origin of turbot catch in the GFCM area of application, CPCs shall issue a valid catch documentation scheme certificate. Such certificate, issued by the competent authorities of the flag CPC, shall accompany all landings, imports, exports and re-exports of caught turbot.

The tasks of this working group are defined in the annex 2 of this recommendation.

4. Part VIII, paragraph 56, shall be inserted as follows:

In the context of the multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries, the WGBS shall provide scientific advice, including the necessary elements for setting biological reference points and for the revision of TAC and quotas, at its eleventh annual meeting (2022), to be adopted by the GFCM Commission in 2022 at its forty-sixth annual session.

5. The Annex, shall be replaced as follows:

Annex

Terms of reference for the Working Group on integrated MCS measures and catch documentation scheme for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (GSA 29)

The mandate of the working group covers the elements described in Part VII of this recommendation. The working group referred to in paragraph 54, shall:

- 1) be supported by the GFCM and the CoC;
- 2) establish a calendar for the development of its work and hold at least one meeting during the intersession period and before the sessions of the CoC and of the Commission;
- 3) invite observers attending GFCM meetings, the FAO, and other regional fisheries management organizations to participate in its meetings, if appropriate;
- 4) report its conclusions and opinions to the CoC; and

5) develop an effective and cost-efficient permanent catch documentation scheme, taking into account possible national best practices, the state of the stock, the specificities of turbot fisheries in the Black Sea, the results of the inspection pilot project, information on IUU fishing activities, the schemes in place in various RFMOs, as well as the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes.