

Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/4

on a management plan for the sustainable exploitation of blackspot seabream in the Alboran Sea (geographical subareas 1 to 3), amending Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/2

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

RECALLING 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);

REAFFIRMING the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and recalling the precautionary and ecosystem approach to fisheries management;

RECALLING the recommendations by the second performance review of the GFCM to develop conservation measures and management plans, making full use of the science-policy interface provided by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), and to initiate, within five years, appropriate interim management measures to conserve fisheries, stocks and habitats targeted by the different fisheries, comprising the small-scale fisheries sector;

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 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, at its twenty-first session (Egypt, June 2020), the SAC endorsed a proposed common minimum conservation reference size of 33 cm, measured as the total length of the fish;

FURTHER NOTING that the SAC advised 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 its twenty-first session, namely the elements adopted by the SAC in 2018 and the updates provided in 2019 and 2021 by the Subregional Committee for the Western Mediterranean;

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

NOTING that there is a high level of illegal, unreported and unregulated catch throughout the Mediterranean and that a more adequate monitoring of involved fishing fleets is needed, including an

assessment of the relevance of recreational fisheries to blackspot seabream in the area under the scope of this recommendation;

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 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);

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

1. The provisions of Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/2 are prolonged until 2022.
2. The twenty-third session of the SAC, in 2022, shall report to the GFCM on the progress accomplished thereon and on identified gaps in knowledge and provide the necessary elements for setting out future measures, with the objective of conserving blackspot seabream populations in the GFCM area of application.
3. At its forty-fifth session, in 2022, upon receipt of advice from the SAC, the GFCM shall adopt long-term measures allowing for the achievement of the sustainable exploitation of blackspot seabream in the waters subject to this recommendation including, when appropriate, fishing effort limitations, catch limits and seasonal closures to protect spawners and/or juveniles.