

Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/17
on a catch certificate scheme for turbot 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;

NOTING that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 recognizes the need to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in order to ensure prosperity, food security and sustainability for all;

ACKNOWLEDGING the principles and international standards of responsible fishing practices enshrined in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the FAO international plans of action, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication;

CONSIDERING 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 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 to be implemented by the riparian countries, particularly with regard to the fight against IUU fishing;

RECALLING 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), in particular paragraph 3 b) on the development of a catch certificate pilot scheme for turbot;

NOTING that the Compliance Committee, at its fourteenth session (online, May 2021), recommended developing a catch documentation scheme for Black Sea turbot;

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

PART I

General objective, geographical scope and definitions

General objective

1. This recommendation establishes a regional catch documentation scheme (CDS) to identify the origin of turbot catches in the Black Sea. The regional CDS shall be implemented in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3, whereby the development of the CDS aims at identifying the origin of turbot catches in the Black Sea and ensuring their traceability.

Geographical scope

2. This recommendation applies to all fishing activities exploiting turbot in geographical subarea (GSA) 29.

Definitions

3. For the purpose of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:
- a) “Black Sea” means GSA 29 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.
 - b) “Catch documentation scheme” or “CDS” means a system established in accordance with relevant international obligations, with the primary purpose of helping to determine, throughout the supply chain whether the fish originates from catches that are consistent with applicable national, regional and international conservation and management measures.
 - c) “Catch certificate” means an official document accompanying a consignment and validated by the competent authority, allowing to pass accurate and verifiable information concerning fish throughout the supply chain.
 - d) “Supply chain” means a sequence of processes involved in the production and distribution of fish from catch to the point of import in the end market, including events such as landing, transshipments, re-export, processing and transport.
 - e) “Turbot” means fish pertaining to the species *Scophthalmus maximus*.

PART II

Traceability of turbot catches in the Black Sea

Principles

4. A GFCM catch certificate shall be issued by contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting Parties (CPCs) to identify the origin of turbot catches in GSA 29 in all the steps of the supply chain. Such certificate shall be used to certify that such catches have been made in accordance with the conservation and management measures established in Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 as amended by Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3.

5. A valid GFCM catch certificate issued by the competent authorities of the flag CPC shall accompany all landings, imports, exports and re-exports of turbot.

6. Each CPC shall take the necessary steps to implement a CDS for the purpose of identifying the origin of turbot catches in GSA 29 and in order to support the implementation of the multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries established under Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3.

7. Such measure shall be without prejudice to other traceability systems in force ensuring the same level of control over the traceability of turbot by CPCs.

8. Each catch certificate shall have a unique document identification number. Such number shall be specific to the flag CPC and assigned to each fishing vessel authorized to fish for turbot. The catch certificate shall not be transferable to another fishing vessel.
9. The competent authorities of the relevant flag CPC shall validate the catch certificates for turbot only once it has been established, after a verification of the supporting documents and corresponding consignment, that all the information contained in the certificates is accurate.

Pilot phase

10. For a transitional period of two years, from 2022 to 2023, the CPCs shall participate in the pilot phase of the CDS, where all the above traceability measures shall be fully implemented to the extent possible, taking into account specificities of the turbot fisheries of CPCs.
11. A validated catch certificate, based on the template in the annex to this recommendation (for the pilot phase) and issued by the competent authorities of the flag CPC, shall be attached to all landings, imports, exports and re-exports of turbot caught from the entry into force of this recommendation.
12. In parallel to the pilot phase, the Working Group on integrated MCS measures and catch documentation scheme for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea, established pursuant to Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 as amended by Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3, shall be tasked to develop a permanent GFCM turbot CDS according to the terms of reference provided in the annex of Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3. In 2023, such working group shall submit to the Compliance Committee (CoC) its recommendations for a permanent GFCM CDS for turbot.
13. The working group referred to in paragraph 12 shall be tasked to develop a user guide for the implementation of the permanent GFCM CDS for turbot, based on the results and experience from the implementation of the pilot phase. The working group shall recommend training and capacity-building activities to the CoC, taking into account the experience of CPCs in implementing existing national, regional and international traceability schemes to ensure the effective implementation of the permanent GFCM CDS for turbot. In addition, the working group shall assess the results of the pilot phase of the paper-based CDS when working towards the establishment of the permanent CDS scheme, which may be electronic.
14. The CPCs shall report annually to the working group referred to in paragraph 12 on the implementation of the CDS pilot phase in preparation of a permanent GFCM CDS for turbot. The CPCs shall submit their annual reports to the GFCM Secretariat at least 60 days before the date of the session of the CoC.
15. Upon CoC advice, the GFCM shall adopt the permanent GFCM CDS for turbot at its forty-sixth session in 2023 and CPCs shall start implementing it from 1 January 2025.
16. Flag CPCs shall notify to the GFCM Secretariat their competent authorities for the validation, check and verification of the catch certificates referred to in paragraph 1 by the entry into force of this recommendation at the latest.

PART III
Final provisions

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

GFCM pilot catch documentation scheme for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea

GFCM catch certificate			
Turbot in GSA 29			
Catch document number		Validating authority	
1. Name of the fishing vessel's master		Address Tel/fax/email	
Signature and stamp of the fishing vessel's master			
2. Vessel name and registration no.		Flag and home port	Call sign/IMO (where applicable)
		Inmarsat/fax/telephone number/email	
3. Port			
		Port of departure and country	Port of landing and country
4. Master of the fishing vessel		Name Address Tel/fax/email	
Fishing licence number - valid to (date)		Turbot fishing authorization number - valid to (date)	Signature of the holder
5. Catch area (coordinates longitude, latitude)	Catch date	Estimated live weight (kg)	Verified landed weight (kg)
a.			
b.			
c.			

d.			
e.			
6. Flag state authority validation			
Name and title		Signature	Date and stamp
7. Name of the exporter, if applicable		Address Tel/fax/email	
Exported weight (kg)		Product type	
Signature and stamp of the exporter – Date			
8. Export authority validation		Signature	Date and stamp
Name and title			
9. Name of the importer		Address Tel/fax/email	
Weight imported (kg)		Product type	
Signature and stamp of the importer – Date			
10. Import authority validation		Signature	Date and stamp
Name and title			

