

Resolution GFCM/44/2021/7

on the implementation of a winch sensor system for demersal fisheries in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas 17 and 18)

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;

CONSIDERING the high level of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities in the GFCM area of application and the need for an adequate monitoring of the catches;

RECALLING the provisions of Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the GFCM area of application;

CONSIDERING Resolution GFCM/38/2014/1 on guidelines on vessel monitoring system and related control systems in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/5 on a multiannual management plan for sustainable demersal fisheries in the Adriatic (geographical subareas 17 and 18), in particular its paragraph 34 on the launch of a pilot project aimed at installing sensors on the vessel winches so to record and report in real time the shooting and hauling of deployed demersal towed gear;

CONSIDERING the commitments made under the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration and the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture;

RECOGNIZING that the operationalization of control systems, including information deriving from these systems, supports enhanced fisheries stock assessment and the identification of fishing grounds and fishing activities, thus contributing to the objectives of the GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

RECALLING the conclusions of the second meeting of the Working Group on Fishing Technology (online, April 2021) on advances in fishing gear technology to improve the selectivity and rational exploitation of fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

NOTING the conclusions of the fourteenth session of the Compliance Committee (CoC) (online, May 2021) and of the Working Group on Vessel Monitoring Systems and Related Control Systems (WGVMS) (online, May 2021);

ADOPTS, in conformity with Articles 5 and 8 of the GFCM Agreement, the following resolution:

PART I

General objectives and scope

1. The objective of this resolution is to provide terms of reference for two voluntary pilot projects aimed at testing the feasibility of the establishment of a winch sensor system (WSS) on fishing vessels exploiting demersal stocks by means of otter-trawling, beam-trawling, bottom-pair trawling and otter twin trawling in the Adriatic Sea (geographical subareas (GSAs) 17 and 18):

- a) The first pilot project should, in particular, be based on the experience and results of a centralized WSS, as described in Parts II and III.

- b) The second pilot project should, in particular, be based on the experience and results of a decentralized or regionalized WSS, as described in Parts II and IV.
2. Contracting parties and non-contracting parties (CPCs) may implement, on a voluntary basis, the pilot projects referred to in paragraph 1 to test the feasibility of the establishment of a WSS on vessels exploiting demersal stocks by means of trawling and exceeding an overall length of 15 metres in the Adriatic Sea.
3. This resolution considers the specifications and the state of play of the implementation of a WSS on fishing vessels in the Adriatic Sea, in particular in relation to the implementation of Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a vessel monitoring system in the GFCM area of application, ensuring compatibility with international standards and data confidentiality requirements for the exchange of WSS information between CPCs.

PART II

General terms of reference

4. The general terms of reference are applicable to the CPCs participating in the voluntary pilot projects referred to in Parts III and IV.

Winch sensor system requirements

5. Each CPC shall implement a WSS on commercial fishing vessels exceeding 15 metres length overall by mounting a winch sensor device on a winch or a gear, in conformity with the requirements laid down in this resolution and without prejudice to stricter obligations CPCs may have engaged in.
6. The CPCs shall ensure that the WSS installed onboard fishing vessels enable those fishing vessels to continuously collect and transmit automatically to the relevant authority, at least every two hours while out of their base port, the following data:
- a) the vessel registration number as recorded in the GFCM fishing fleet register;
 - b) the geographical coordinates (longitude and latitude) of the location(s) where the vessel deployed its net(s) into the water, with a minimum resolution of 500 metres and a confidence interval of 99 percent;
 - c) the date and time when the vessel deployed its net(s) into the water;
 - d) the length of time during which the winch was deployed; and
 - e) the type and length of the fishing net(s) deployed.
7. The CPCs shall take all the necessary measures to ensure that the relevant authority receives, in electronic format through the WSS, the data referred to in paragraph 6 and is equipped with computer hardware and software enabling automatic data processing and electronic data transmission.
8. The CPCs shall provide back-up and recovery procedures in case of system failures.
9. The CPCs shall ensure, as much as possible, that the WSS onboard their fishing vessels is tamper-proof and is not susceptible to manual data input. To this end, the onboard satellite device must be located within a sealed unit and protected by official seals enabling to reveal whether the unit has been accessed or tampered with. In the event that a CPC has evidence, following an inspection, that the onboard WSS does not meet the above requirements or has been tampered with, it shall immediately notify the flag state of the vessel.

Duties of the masters and owners/licensees of fishing vessels

10. The masters and/or owners/licensees of fishing vessels subject to WSS shall ensure that the devices onboard their vessels are permanently operational and that the information referred to in paragraph 6 is collected at least every two hours. The masters and/or owners/licensees of fishing vessels shall in particular ensure that:

- a) WSS data are not altered in any way;
- b) the antennas connected to the satellite devices are not obstructed in any way;
- c) the power supply of the WSS is not interrupted in any way; and
- d) the winch sensor device and the satellite device are not removed from the vessel.

11. In the event of a technical failure or non-operation of the WSS devices fitted onboard a fishing vessel, the masters and owners/licensees of the fishing vessels subject to WSS, or their representative, shall communicate to the flag state, every four hours starting at the time when the technical failure or the non-operation of the WSS was detected, up-to-date information as detailed in paragraph 6, by any available means.

12. Fishing vessels with a defective onboard WSS shall take immediate steps to repair or replace the hardware as soon as possible and, in any event, as soon as the fishing vessels enter a port. Fishing vessels shall not be allowed by the flag state/ port state to commence another fishing trip in the GFCM area of application without the defective part of the WSS being repaired or replaced, unless they are authorized to leave by the competent flag state/ port state authority.

PART III Specificities of a centralized pilot project

13. This part shall apply to any CPC and its respective fishing vessels participating in the centralized WSS pilot project.

14. Within a centralized WSS, the GFCM Secretariat should serve as the relevant authority as mentioned in Part II. As such, the fishing vessels operating under the conditions of the centralized pilot project shall transmit their WSS data automatically to the GFCM Secretariat.

15. Each CPC shall, notwithstanding stricter national requirements, implement a WSS according to the provisions described in Part II and ensure that the devices fitted onboard the fishing vessels are able to collect and continuously transmit the required data to the GFCM Secretariat, as prescribed in paragraph 6.

16. As such, the GFCM Secretariat shall establish and maintain a database for the purpose of receiving and storing the reported data. The GFCM Secretariat shall ensure that any information transmitted to and stored by the GFCM Secretariat pursuant to this resolution is maintained in strict accordance with the provisions of Resolution GFCM/35/2011/2 on data confidentiality policy and procedures, amending Resolution GFCM/30/2006/1.

17. In order to ensure a consistent data collection and sharing throughout the GFCM area of application, the GFCM Secretariat shall provide flag state CPCs with real-time access to any data involving their vessels and/or coastal state CPCs with real-time access to any data involving their waters.

18. Whenever the GFCM Secretariat does not receive the expected data or has reasons to doubt about the correctness of the data it has received, it shall notify the masters and owners/licensees of

fishing vessels subject to WSS, or their representatives, as soon as possible. Where appropriate, the flag state shall investigate the matter in order to establish whether the devices have been tampered with. The outcomes of such investigation, including any action taken by the flag state (e.g. fines, withdrawal of fishing license and legal proceedings), shall be forwarded to the GFCM Secretariat for consideration/action.

PART IV

Specificities of a decentralized pilot project

19. This part shall apply to any CPC and its respective fishing vessels participating in the decentralized or regionalized WSS pilot project.

20. Within a decentralized WSS, the flag state's fisheries monitoring centre (FMC) should serve as the relevant authority as mentioned in Part II. As such, the fishing vessels operating under the conditions of the decentralized pilot project shall transmit their data directly to the flag state's FMC.

21. Each CPC shall, notwithstanding stricter national requirements, implement a WSS according to the provisions described in Part II and ensure that the devices fitted on board the fishing vessels are able to collect and transmit continuously the required data to the FMC, as prescribed in paragraph 6.

22. In order to ensure a consistent data collection and sharing throughout the GFCM area of application, the FMCs shall transmit their data to the GFCM Secretariat on a regular basis. The GFCM Secretariat shall provide flag state CPCs with real-time access to any data involving their vessels and/or coastal state CPCs with real-time access to any data involving their waters.

23. The GFCM Secretariat shall establish and maintain a database for the purpose of receiving and storing any data transmitted by the FMCs. The GFCM Secretariat shall ensure that any information transmitted by the FMCs and stored by the GFCM Secretariat pursuant to this resolution is maintained in strict accordance with the provisions of Resolution GFCM/35/2011/2 on data confidentiality policy and procedures, amending Resolution GFCM/30/2006/1.

24. Each CPC shall notify the name, address, email and telephone numbers of the relevant authorities of their FMC to the GFCM Secretariat before the start of the pilot project. Each CPC shall also notify to the GFCM Secretariat, without delay, any change in these contacts. The GFCM Secretariat shall draw and maintain a list of contacts based on the information received from the CPCs.

25. Whenever the FMCs do not receive the expected data or have reasons to doubt about the correctness of the data they have received, they shall notify the masters and owners/licensees of the fishing vessels subject to WSS and the national authorities, as soon as possible. Where appropriate, the CPCs shall investigate the matter in order to establish whether the devices have been tampered with. The outcomes of such investigation, including any action taken by the flag state (e.g. fines, withdrawal of fishing license and legal proceedings), shall be forwarded to the GFCM Secretariat for consideration/action.

PART V

Final provisions

26. The pilot projects shall be launched by the end of 2022 and have a minimum duration of one year.

27. After the conclusion of the pilot projects, the GFCM Secretariat shall present to the WGVMS, before the next session of the CoC, a final report with all relevant data on WSS as well as a cost analysis of both pilot projects. Based on this final report, the WGVMS shall advise the CoC on a list of recommendations on the future implementation of WSS in the Adriatic Sea.

