

Resolution GFCM/44/2021/12

on a GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

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 and the sustainable development of aquaculture in the GFCM area of application;

RECALLING the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (UN headquarters, New York, September 2015) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, SDG 2 “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, SDG 6 “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, SDG 8 “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”, SDG 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, SDG 13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”, SDG 15 “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” and SDG 17 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”;

RECALLING 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 the conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment”, highlighting besides that “the absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and non-target species and their environment” and that “states should establish, maintain and develop an appropriate legal and administrative framework which facilitates the development of responsible aquaculture”;

RECALLING that the 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration and the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture both reflect the strong commitment of the GFCM to ensure the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture;

REAFFIRMING that the quest for productive, sustainable and responsible fisheries and aquaculture to achieve food security is enshrined in the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031 and captured in the four betters (better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life);

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), is a renewed call for action to achieve the sustainable management of aquatic resources;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the objectives of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030);

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

CONSIDERING 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;

RECOGNIZING to have a mutual interest in the development and the proper utilization of the marine living resources in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

RECOGNIZING that the overexploitation of scientifically assessed resources in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and the threats to the biodiversity of these two semi-enclosed basins remain a challenge;

RECOGNIZING the importance to pursue the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in the GFCM area of application by strengthening compliance and enforcement as well as progressing in the field of monitoring, control and surveillance, in a coordinated and transparent way;

RECOGNIZING the need to ensure the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector and its contribution to sustainable food systems, working towards its resilience against global challenges;

RECOGNIZING the importance of promoting resilient fisheries-based livelihoods while fully and efficiently implementing the Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea;

RECOGNIZING the need for capacity development and technical support at the national and subregional levels to ensure policy commitments are met;

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

1. The GFCM shall establish, in line with the global agenda, a GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (GFCM 2030 Strategy) to support the GFCM in fulfilling its mandate, as presented in the annex to this resolution.
2. The GFCM 2030 Strategy aims to preserve the heritage of fisheries and aquaculture as pillars of Mediterranean and Black Sea coastal communities, ensuring their transformation into a productive and sustainable food production system that contributes to thriving economies and healthy ecosystems. It offers a common vision and guiding principles to achieve sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the region, federating all efforts to deliver on national, regional and global commitments.
3. The GFCM 2030 Strategy is articulated around five targets:
 - 1) Fisheries and ecosystems: healthy seas and productive fisheries;
 - 2) Compliance and enforcement: a level playing field to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
 - 3) Aquaculture: a sustainable and resilient sector growing to its full potential;
 - 4) Livelihoods: decent employment and engaged fishers towards profitable fisheries; and
 - 5) Capacity development: Technical cooperation, knowledge sharing and efficient partnerships in a subregional perspective.

Each target is composed of expected outputs and strategic actions. The strategy is supported by a living document (action plan) detailing the activities to be executed to achieve its objectives.

4. A mid-term review of the strategy's objectives and outcomes shall assess the progress made in its implementation, review the lessons learnt and provide recommendations on possible readjustments

and improvements to ensure targets are met efficiently. The action plan shall be regularly updated by GFCM contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties, who are both the strategy's main stakeholders and direct beneficiaries.

GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

BACKGROUND

Fisheries and aquaculture are part of the cultural fabric of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. For millennia, they have been the key social and economic drivers of the region, providing essential coastal livelihoods and the basis for the so-called Mediterranean diet.

In recent years, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have made numerous positive strides in supporting the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. However, several challenges remain before they can be assured of a sustainable future and contribute to their full potential to the well-being of coastal communities. While today's catch levels are lower compared to those of decades past, the exploitation rates of shared assessed stocks are largely still high. On the other hand, aquaculture production continues to grow, making the overall sustainability of the sector even more important. From increasing human pressures on the marine environment to the global impact of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the region faces a critical turning point. To turn the tide, action is needed on several fronts, taking into account the semi-enclosed nature of the basins and the predominantly small-scale features of fisheries and aquaculture in the region:

- fisheries management measures, including technical and spatio-temporal measures, need to be extended to all main fisheries, including small-scale and recreational fisheries;
- discards and the incidental catch of vulnerable species must be reduced and mitigated;
- anthropogenic-driven impacts, such as climate change, non-indigenous species and pollution in all its forms, including eutrophication and underwater noise, need to be urgently addressed;
- monitoring, control and surveillance need to be enhanced, and management measures need to be fully enforced, towards the eradication of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- aquaculture production needs to meet demand and grow sustainably, capitalizing on innovation, digitalization and knowledge sharing, and enhancing its attractiveness for investment; and
- greater social support and decent working conditions are required to assist an ageing workforce and foster youth employment, ensuring an adequate balance between resources and fleet capacity.

It is crucial to move forward and address these priorities, consolidating the progress made and enhancing coordination with organizations interacting with these sectors. Concerted efforts are in fact essential to maximize GFCM action and address the social, economic as well as environmental aspects of sustainability in the region, in line with the ecosystem approach, and build resilience to respond to global challenges and crises.

The GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (GFCM 2030 Strategy) offers a common vision and guiding principles to achieve sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the region, federating all efforts to deliver on national, regional and global commitments. To ensure tangible results, the GFCM acts as the driving force behind regional cooperation and partnerships, bringing together different stakeholders, working in synergy with existing strategies at the national and subregional levels and promoting a multidisciplinary approach.

While addressing the priorities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea as a whole, the GFCM 2030 Strategy foresees interventions tailored to local needs and specificities through a subregional approach. In this respect, the GFCM subregional technical units play a critical role, organizing local action, sharing expertise and coordinating technical assistance work.

On a global scale, the GFCM 2030 Strategy is expected to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aiming to end poverty, achieve food security, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, is of particular relevance. The GFCM 2030 Strategy decisively contributes, at the regional level, to the objectives of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It also aims to integrate actions proposed within the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit towards more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems.

The quest for productive, sustainable and responsible fisheries and aquaculture to achieve food security is enshrined in the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031 and captured in the four betters (Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment and a Better Life), as well as in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The GFCM 2030 Strategy supports and contributes to these efforts, including the Blue Transformation programme aiming to achieve better production of quality wild captured and farmed fish through integrated, sustainable and socio-economically sensitive processes. Acknowledging the critical importance of fisheries and aquaculture for global agrifood systems transformation, the 2021 Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries, is a renewed call for action to achieve the sustainable management of aquatic resources. This vision is enshrined in the GFCM 2030 Strategy and accompanies its implementation.

Implementation mechanisms

In line with the global agenda, the strategy covers a ten-year span running until 2030. A mid-term review of its objectives and outcomes will assess the progress made in its implementation, review the lessons learnt and provide recommendations on possible readjustments and improvements to ensure targets are met efficiently. The strategy is supported by an action plan detailing the activities to be executed to achieve its objectives. This living document is expected to be regularly updated by the GFCM contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties, who are both the strategy's main stakeholders and direct beneficiaries. The vision and commitment of the GFCM Membership in adopting and implementing relevant decisions will be instrumental in achieving the targets set by the GFCM 2030 Strategy and in supporting the GFCM to effectively fulfil its mandate.

Five targets, one vision

The GFCM 2030 Strategy aims to preserve the heritage of fisheries and aquaculture as pillars for the livelihoods of Mediterranean and Black Sea coastal communities, ensuring their transformation into a productive and sustainable food system that contributes to thriving economies and healthy ecosystems. To fulfil its overarching sustainability vision, the GFCM 2030 Strategy is articulated around five targets. Each target is composed of expected outputs and strategic actions:

Target 1. Fisheries and ecosystems: healthy seas and productive fisheries

Target 2. Compliance and enforcement: a level playing field to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

Target 3. Aquaculture: a sustainable and resilient sector growing to its full potential

Target 4. Livelihoods: decent employment and engaged fishers towards profitable fisheries

Target 5. Capacity development: technical cooperation, knowledge sharing and efficient partnerships in a subregional perspective

Technical knowledge and expertise in the region underpin all actions while fully integrating cross-cutting themes such as gender, governance, nutrition, marine pollution, non-indigenous species, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation. The work towards achieving the five targets is supported by appropriate knowledge sharing, through the production of publications and informative materials that provide scientific and methodological insights into priority topics, and by a fully encompassing communication mechanism, with cross-cutting and specific communication strategies.

TARGET 1. Fisheries and ecosystems: Healthy seas and productive fisheries

The overexploitation of scientifically assessed resources in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and threats to the biodiversity of these two semi-enclosed basins remain a challenge. Target 1 tackles the sustainability of fisheries from a broad perspective, integrating social, economic and environmental principles, with the objective to reach exploitation at maximum sustainable yield while addressing the conservation of biodiversity. Its achievement is supported by four expected outputs.

1.1. Technical advice on the status of fisheries and potential management scenarios improved to provide a solid basis for decision-making

Output 1.1 enhances fishery-related data collection, monitoring and analytical capacity at the national, subregional and regional levels, in order to facilitate the formulation of sound advice for the sustainable management of fisheries. This output prioritizes stock assessments and simulations on the biological and socio-economic impacts of alternative management scenarios, including a focus on data-limited situations and small-scale fisheries. It uses multispecies approaches and integrated ecosystem assessments.

Actions

- A. Build, in the context of the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF), a regional scheme for the collection and analysis of relevant national fisheries data, and develop innovative tools to facilitate the integration of such information into comprehensive scientific advice.
- B. Consolidate scientific evaluations of the status of marine living resources, particularly priority species as well as vulnerable species and ecosystems, with the aim to further strengthen the formulation of technical advice for management.
- C. Provide advice on alternative potential management options for key fisheries, including through management strategy evaluation.
- D. Establish research programmes addressing specific needs for the management of key fisheries and the conservation of vulnerable species and ecosystems.

1.2. Evidence-based adaptive fisheries and ecosystem management implemented

Output 1.2 foresees the design and implementation of efficient multiannual adaptive management plans addressing key fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Based on the best available scientific advice, a combination of quantitative harvest control rules for data-rich stocks and precautionary measures for data-limited resources can feed existing management plans as well as inform new ones, guiding the management framework towards increased sustainability.

Actions

- A. Develop multiannual management plans for key fisheries, including small-scale fisheries, based on solid scientific advice and incorporating measures to address social, economic and ecological aspects.
- B. Monitor the effectiveness of management plans, by assessing related developments in the state of resources as well as fisheries socio-economic indicators; ensure management plans are regularly adjusted to meet objectives, in line with internal changes or external pressures.
- C. Manage and adapt fishing capacity to ensure an adequate balance between the productivity of marine living resources and that of the fishing fleet.

1.3. Efficient area-based conservation measures, technical and nature-based solutions strengthened to conserve biodiversity and enhance the productivity of marine living resources

Output 1.3 identifies, including on the basis of environmental and socio-economic evidence, new fisheries restricted areas and, once established, enhances their efficiency and monitoring in order to manage the significant adverse impacts of fisheries on vulnerable species, ecosystems and essential fish habitats. This output also addresses the use of other area-based management measures as well as bycatch- and impact-reduction technical measures, such as those aimed at improving fishing selectivity, deterring depredation and decreasing the mortality of incidentally caught vulnerable species.

Actions

- A. Establish effective area-based measures to minimize and mitigate impacts on vulnerable species, sensitive habitats and essential fish habitats to meet international spatial conservation targets.
- B. Assess, through adequate monitoring plans, the efficiency of area-based measures, in particular fisheries restricted areas, in contributing to the sustainability of fisheries and the conservation of biodiversity.
- C. Develop a regional plan of action to mitigate bycatch (including both discards and the incidental catch of vulnerable species, particularly elasmobranchs) and depredation through adequate monitoring, testing and implementation of mitigation and selectivity measures.
- D. Determine the fishing footprint of bottom contact fisheries and their potential interactions with essential fish habitats, sensitive habitats and vulnerable marine ecosystems.

1.4. Threats to fisheries and the marine environment, including plastic pollution, climate change and the expansion of non-indigenous species, prevented and mitigated

Output 1.4 aims to minimize and mitigate any form of pollution deriving from the activities of the fishing sector, in particular abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, *inter alia* by involving the sector in testing new technologies to remove litter, in particular plastics, from the marine environment. This output also consolidates the work on climate change and non-indigenous species, improving the initial assessments of the potential impacts of these threats on the sector, reinforcing monitoring programmes and integrating adaptive measures within management plans.

Actions

- A. Establish a regional observatory of non-indigenous species, exchanging information with other GFCM monitoring tools and interacting with relevant partners' platforms.
- B. Implement an adaptation strategy to address the potential effects of climate change and non-indigenous species on fisheries and on the marine environment and ecosystems, including by integrating adequate mitigation and adaptation measures within management plans.
- C. Develop, in collaboration with relevant partners, a regional adaptation strategy to cope with the potential effects of pollution on marine ecosystems, including pollution from land and sea sources of plastics, underwater noise, abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear as well as nutrients and contaminants.

TARGET 2. Compliance and enforcement: A level playing field to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

In pursuing the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action to Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, Target 2 aims to end illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by strengthening compliance and enforcement as well as progressing in the field of monitoring, control and surveillance in a coordinated and transparent way. Its achievement is supported by four expected outputs.

2.1. Full compliance with GFCM recommendations achieved

Output 2.1 endows the GFCM Compliance Committee with the necessary means to level the playing field in the GFCM area of application, using the existing solidarity mechanism to provide technical assistance to contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties found to be non-compliant with GFCM decisions. It also tackles the root causes currently undermining such a crucial endeavour.

Actions

- A. Reinforce the procedure for the categorization of non-compliance within the framework of the Compliance Committee, to enable the identification of appropriate deterrent measures, depending on the severity of detected infringements.
- B. Streamline the GFCM Authorized Vessel List, as well as other subregional vessel lists and related monitoring, control and surveillance data, ensuring transparency, cross-checking of information and preventing non-compliance.
- C. Develop, in line with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance, a methodology for the regular assessment of actions taken by contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties to ensure their fishing vessels do not engage in IUU fishing activities.
- D. Adopt a sanction scheme targeting cases of non-compliance, including reported infringements by fishing vessels operating in fisheries restricted areas.

2.2. Common system of enforcement consolidated

Output 2.2 identifies and reduces the main risks of potential illegal activities in critically important marine areas, and facilitates the implementation of a common system of enforcement by contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties, based on the common methodology to assess IUU fishing. It also capitalizes on the progress made in enforcing fisheries management measures, particularly multiannual management plans.

Actions

- A. Support the transposition of GFCM recommendations into national legislation across Mediterranean and Black Sea countries, including those related to investigation procedures and sanctions for non-compliance with conservation and management measures.
- B. Support risk assessments in the fisheries sector, based on the regular estimation and quantification of IUU fishing activities at the regional and subregional levels.
- C. Contribute to the prevention of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear and the reduction of their harmful impacts on the marine environment, by establishing a regional framework in line with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear.

2.3. Monitoring, control and surveillance centralized at the regional level

Output 2.3 capitalizes on the establishment and testing of a centralized/regional Vessel Monitoring System and related control system to strengthen and expand monitoring, control and surveillance across the region on a modular basis and taking into account regional specificities. Taking advantage of the most recent technological advances, it plans to integrate tracking solutions to monitor the presence of fishing vessels operating inside or in the proximity of fisheries restricted areas, and to further support contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties in using spatio-temporal data to back up the scientific work of the GFCM.

Actions

- A. Establish and maintain a GFCM centralized/regional vessel monitoring system and related control system.
- B. Strengthen capacity building to assist countries in using new technologies for monitoring, control and surveillance on all fleet segments, based on national specificities.
- C. Implement common sighting procedures, based on established mechanisms, enabling countries to gather and report information on fishing vessels operating in contravention with GFCM recommendations.
- D. Conduct permanent and voluntary international joint surveillance and inspection schemes across the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and organize, together with relevant partners, a fisheries inspection virtual academy for the regular training of practitioners.

2.4. Coordination to address illegal practices in the fishery sector bolstered

Output 2.4 recognizes the importance of allowing market access to legally caught fishery products only, regulating harvesting activities and monitoring the value chain following the “from bait to plate” approach. It promotes interagency coordination to exchange relevant information towards improved certification, traceability and market-oriented actions to regulate the sector.

Actions

- A. Enhance port state data exchange and information, including in the context of the mutual assistance mechanism, meeting the requirements of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement.
- B. Promote the use of catch documentation schemes to improve traceability of fishery products and the monitoring of their trade, including by using innovative technology tools.
- C. Address transshipment in the GFCM area of application.
- D. Develop appropriate measures to regulate recreational fisheries.

TARGET 3. Aquaculture: A sustainable and resilient sector growing to its full potential

Target 3 ensures the sustainable development of aquaculture and its contribution to sustainable food systems in line with the GFCM Strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture, working towards the resilience of the sector against global challenges such as climate change and pollution. Its achievement is supported by four expected outputs.

3.1. Efficient governance promoted in support of responsible investment

Output 3.1 plans to establish an effective and efficient aquaculture governance framework to attract investors who look beyond short-term financial return and take a responsible stance towards the overall impact of their investment, notably social and environmental sustainability. This output promotes strengthened collaboration with contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties, towards developing regulatory and administrative frameworks based on responsible production and due diligence, as well as on sustainable and impactful investment.

Actions

- A. Develop principles and guidelines for responsible investment in Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture.
- B. Promote environmental, social and governance investment in aquaculture.
- C. Collaborate with contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties as well as stakeholders to create enabling legal and administrative frameworks.

3.2. Practices supporting the sustainability of the aquaculture industry fostered

Output 3.2 addresses the blue transformation of the aquaculture industry, following an ecosystem approach and through science- and nature-based solutions, effective spatial planning tools, digitalization and innovation. Monitoring and reducing the sector's environmental footprint, dealing with climate change and pollution, and securing animal health and welfare are also crucial in achieving the sustainability of the sector. This output also focusses on diversification, towards aquaculture with lower environmental impact, alternative feeds, a reduction of the use of plastic and the provision of environmental services, promoted through the GFCM Aquaculture Demonstrative Centres.

Actions

- A. Improve the footprint of the aquaculture industry through applied research and capacity building, focussing on responsible practices and state-of-the-art techniques.
- B. Continue to promote allocated zones for aquaculture within marine spatial planning tools, through increased technical assistance.
- C. Promote environmentally friendly blue farming systems in Mediterranean lagoons in order to protect their valuable ecosystems and cultural heritage.

3.3. Perception of aquaculture improved

Output 3.3 ensures the competitiveness, resilience and social acceptability of the aquaculture sector, providing consumers with an easy and affordable choice of healthy and sustainable proteins while enhancing the image of aquaculture and its products. It focusses on awareness of blue food's health benefits, information and consumer understanding of the environmental value of low impact aquaculture, certifications as well as new business solutions and opportunities. This output also seeks to ensure that the sector is fair and inclusive, by providing opportunities for small-scale farmers in the

supply chain, supporting the empowerment of women and youth, and promoting a better integration of aquaculture activities in local communities.

Actions

- A. Promote a market-oriented aquaculture sector by building capacity in business planning and marketing.
- B. Increase awareness, improve the image of the aquaculture sector and its products and encourage responsible aquaculture practices.
- C. Promote aquaculture certification as a sustainability driver, through capacity building, appropriate regulatory frameworks and awareness.
- D. Focus on social issues, gender and inclusiveness in the aquaculture sector by stimulating relevant policies.

3.4. Technology and information systems maximized

Output 3.4 aims at providing contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties, producers, stakeholder platforms and other relevant institutions with all the necessary tools and information on aquaculture production, trade and markets. It facilitates the provision of reliable data for decision making, capitalizing on innovative, flexible and affordable technologies – the cornerstone of quality-controlled data products – in support of a sustainable, market-oriented sector. The GFCM Aquaculture Market Observatory, once fully operational, plays a central role in this respect, as an information hub for aquaculture stakeholders in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

Actions

- A. Create and further promote GFCM subregional knowledge sharing hubs, including new and existing Aquaculture Demonstrative Centres, the Aquaculture Market Observatory and other relevant technology platforms, fostering and advancing research, innovation and hands-on training.
- B. Improve aquaculture information systems through the use of modern technologies, reinforcing production and market data management practices through streamlined data collection, analysis and dissemination processes.
- C. Utilize innovative data management technologies, coupled with ad hoc capacity building and the creation of relevant regulatory frameworks, to ensure the traceability of aquaculture products from sea to plate.
- D. Enhance inter-administrative communication and cooperation on aquaculture development as well as harmonized information technology standards and tools.

TARGET 4. Livelihoods: Decent employment and engaged fishers towards profitable fisheries

Recognizing the importance of promoting resilient fisheries-based livelihoods while fully and efficiently implementing the GFCM Regional Plan of Action for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, Target 4 aims to address, in an integrated way, issues such as employment, socio-economic knowledge, value chains and participatory decision-making. Its achievement is supported by four expected outputs.

4.1. Productive and resilient employment supported along the fisheries value chain

Output 4.1 enhances sustainable livelihoods by fostering decent working conditions, including health and safety standards in the workplace, as well as productive employment opportunities for men and women in the fisheries sector, particularly youth. Access to social protection programmes and financial services are a central component of this output, supporting the resilience of fishers and enhancing their capacity to prepare for and respond to crises. Finally, linkages with other blue economy sectors are encouraged to promote livelihood diversification, including through specific training, upskilling and reskilling programmes.

Actions

- A. Advance the principle of decent work in the Mediterranean and Black Sea fishing sector, including through fair and safe working conditions and access to social protection.
- B. Promote policies that support and recognize the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security, employment and income for coastal communities.
- C. Support equal opportunities for women and promote youth development to ensure generational knowledge is transferred to a renewed workforce.

4.2. Socio-economic information enhanced in supporting decision-making processes

Output 4.2 strengthens the understanding of the socio-economic impact of fisheries, including recreational fisheries, along the value chain. Socio-economic data collection and analysis are enhanced to better integrate this information into decision-making processes. This output also sheds light on the role of women in fisheries, including in gleaning activities as well as pre- and post-harvest activities.

Actions

- A. Support the collection of accurate, timely, complete and gender-disaggregated social and economic data on fisheries-based livelihoods, including vessel and shore-based fisheries, the pre- and post-harvest sectors, as well as recreational fisheries.
- B. Facilitate the integration of socio-economic information into decision-making processes for fisheries management.
- C. Assess interactions between small-scale fisheries and recreational fisheries at a subregional level and identify opportunities for livelihood diversification and new revenue.

4.3. Dynamic and innovative fisheries value chains fostered

Output 4.3 identifies and implements innovative solutions to enhance the profitability of fisheries, making value chains more efficient and responsive to market demand, while ensuring food security and easy access to fresh, local products. The actions promote innovation to facilitate sustainable direct selling initiatives, minimize food waste, enhance traceability, promote the certification of local

and sustainable products, heighten consumer awareness and improve the integration of fisheries in a circular economy.

Actions

- A. Enhance fisheries value chains, particularly for small-scale fisheries, to increase profitability and reduce food waste, in the context of sustainable and inclusive ocean economies.
- B. Support capacity development to strengthen and valorize short value chains for small-scale fisheries products, including by leveraging technological innovations for direct selling and by raising consumer awareness on the benefits of buying local.
- C. Empower market value chain operators and consumers to make informed choices to support the sustainability of fish stocks, including through product certification and the use of digital technologies facilitating traceability.
- D. Facilitate the participation of fishers in a circular economy, including through innovative livelihood diversification activities.

4.4. Engagement of fishers in participatory management processes promoted, facilitating their role as guardians of the sea

Output 4.4 enhances the capacity of all producer organizations, notably small-scale fisher organizations, to engage as active contributors in management, through a multi-level participatory process. In particular, this output integrates fishers into knowledge building activities, capturing their local ecological knowledge, empowering them to advocate for their needs through management consultations, and partnering with them to institute participatory management models, such as co-management arrangements. The participatory approach is developed in a tailored and adaptive manner and is recognized, in particular, as an important governance tool for the identification, implementation and management of fisheries restricted areas.

Actions

- A. Raise awareness with fishers about the impacts their fishing methods have on the ecology of the ecosystems when operating in specific maritime areas.
- B. Disseminate information about good participatory management practices that reduce the impact of fisheries on the environment.
- C. Make the most of fishers' local and traditional knowledge to support and enhance fisheries management.

TARGET 5. Capacity development: Technical cooperation, knowledge sharing and efficient partnerships in a subregional perspective

Building capacity and providing technical support at the national and subregional levels ensure policy commitments made by the GFCM Membership are met. Target 5 builds upon past technical assistance achievements and successful cooperation mechanisms, capitalizing on the implementation of the subregional approach to fisheries management as well as on the experience of ad hoc GFCM technical assistance projects. Broad and inclusive partnerships underpin the overarching principle of solidarity. Its achievement is supported by three expected outputs.

5.1. Capacity development streamlined at the subregional level

Output 5.1 delivers, through the GFCM subregional technical units, on the ground technical and scientific support adapted to the various needs of each subregion, tailoring capacity development and assisting contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties in fulfilling their untapped potential.

Actions

- A. Ensure effective and targeted capacity building, including shared cooperative research, to support national plans in implementing the GFCM 2030 Strategy.
- B. Consolidate, following the subregional approach and with the support of the BlackSea4Fish and MedSea4fish projects, national expertise and scientific capacity to ensure a level playing field across the region.
- C. Continue strengthening aquaculture know-how and competencies at the regional level, through Aquaculture Demonstrative Centres and other such hubs.

5.2. Technical cooperation promoted, scientific research and innovation boosted

Output 5.2 fills gaps in knowledge regarding specific cross-cutting themes, by capitalizing on the research of the wider community of scientists and stakeholders working in fisheries, aquaculture and the conservation of marine ecosystems, including through research programmes and consolidated scientific networks. This output accelerates innovation and cost-efficient interventions to improve livelihoods and competitiveness in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Actions

- A. Capitalize on existing knowledge and research, as well as on scientific collaboration and best practices in fisheries and aquaculture, by consolidating technical networks and promoting the role of the GFCM Forum on Fisheries Science.
- B. Improve technological capacities within the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, targeting, among others, the modernization of fishing fleets, aquaculture facilities and select infrastructures along the fisheries and aquaculture value chains.
- C. Promote cross-sector initiatives addressing ocean-based livelihoods and marine biodiversity conservation.

5.3. Role of partnerships in fisheries and aquaculture enhanced under a blue transformation perspective

Output 5.3 expands and reinforces the comparative advantage of strategic cooperation between the GFCM and its current and potential partners, involving countries, international organizations and

programmes, academia and research institutions, civil society organizations, professional associations and cooperatives as well as the private sector. This output seeks to boost the progressive integration of fisheries and aquaculture into a wider perspective, by building alliances that address common environmental, economic and social priorities. It also supports the participation and involvement of the GFCM in relevant global fora and initiatives, ensuring a concerted response to international calls and adopted policies, towards effectively meeting common goals and targets.

Actions

- A. Establish and consolidate partnerships with relevant organizations to create synergies that further support the sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.
- B. Continue to address the priorities under Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other relevant Sustainable Development Goals as part of a regional contribution to the global sustainability challenges for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- C. Take into account relevant policy developments under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the targets of the United Nation Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030).