

Recommendation GFCM/45/2022/2 on a management plan for the sustainable exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean Sea, amending Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/4

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 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 the conclusion of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), at its twenty-third session (Italy, June 2022), on the importance of improving the quality and completeness of data sent by contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties (CPCs), especially regarding the average diameter of harvested red coral colonies and the percentage of undersized colonies;

FURTHER NOTING that the SAC advised extending the deadline to 2024 (currently 2023) for the entry into force of a permanent catch documentation scheme (CDS) and extending the research programme on red coral to 2023, including the use of remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) for scientific purposes;

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

Amendment of Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/4

1. Paragraph 47 of Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/4 on a management plan for the sustainable exploitation of red coral in the Mediterranean Sea shall be amended as follows:

“For a transitional period of four years (2020–2023), CPCs may participate in the pilot phase of the CDS, during which all of the above traceability measures shall be fully implemented.”

2. Paragraph 50 of Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/4 shall be amended as follows:

“Upon the advice of the CoC, the GFCM shall adopt the permanent CDS for red coral at its forty-sixth session and CPCs shall begin implementing it on 1 January 2024.”

3. Paragraph 51 of Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/4 shall be amended as follows:

“In addition to the provisions related to red coral contained in Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/2, CPCs shall report the data listed below:

- a) number of red coral fishing authorizations granted to fishers and to authorized vessels;
- b) number of dives per authorized fisher and fishing trip;
- c) number of authorized fishers on board for each fishing trip; and
- d) diameter of each colony harvested or average of diameter by landing.

When available, this data should be provided at the bank, GFCM statistical grid and national levels. Such data shall be reported by 30 June of each year.”

4. Paragraph 53 of Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/4 shall be amended as follows:

“The use of remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) shall be allowed through the end of the research programme referred to in paragraph 58 for scientific purposes only and within CPC authorized research programmes led by scientific institutions. Such authorizations shall be without prejudice to stricter measures adopted by CPCs.”

5. Paragraph 58 of Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/4 shall be amended as follows:

“In 2020, the GFCM shall launch the research programme on red coral endorsed by the SAC at its twenty-first session and referred to in Appendix 9 of its report. The research programme shall be completed in 2023. The research programme shall, in particular, evaluate the trigger for closure as established in paragraph 22.”