

EUROPEAN UNION DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR A GFCM RECOMMENDATION

establishing a multiannual plan for the fisheries exploiting hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily (GSAs 12-16)

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (hereafter "the GFCM"),

CONSIDERING that the objective of the Agreement for the Establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (hereafter "the Agreement") is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at biological, social, economic and environmental level, of living marine resources in the area of application;

RECALLING that in giving effect to the objective of the 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 the marine living resources and the economic and social viability of fisheries; in adopting such recommendations, the GFCM shall give particular attention to measures to prevent overfishing and minimize discards. The GFCM shall also pay particular attention to the potential impacts on small-scale fisheries and local communities;

RECALLING that in giving effect to the objective of the 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;

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;

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;

CONSIDERING that the GFCM shall apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;

CONSIDERING the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (hereafter the "FAO") providing that "States should apply the precautionary approach widely to conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in order to protect them and preserve the aquatic environment. The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures.";

RECALLING the Guidelines on precautionary conservation measures pending the development and adoption by the GFCM of multiannual management plans for relevant fisheries at the subregional level in the GFCM area, as agreed during its thirty-seventh session;

CONSIDERING the Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/2 on the minimum mesh size in the codend of demersal trawl nets;

CONSIDERING the Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7 concerning minimum standards for the establishment of a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) in the GFCM area;

CONSIDERING the Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3 on fisheries management measures for conservation of sharks and rays in the GFCM area and, in particular, the prohibition of any fishing activity with trawl nets within 3 nautical miles of the coast or within the 50 meters isobath where that depth is reached at a shorter distance from the coast.

CONSIDERING the Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom trawling fisheries of demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily, pending the development and adoption of a multiannual management plan;

NOTING that the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee (hereafter the "SAC") has recurrently considered that the stocks of hake and deepwater rose shrimp are in overexploitation in the geographical subareas (hereafter "GSAs") 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16;

CONSIDERING that the state of stocks as assessed by the SAC requires the development and adoption of management measures aimed at ensuring the conservation of demersal stocks in the above subareas as soon as possible;

CONSIDERING that fishing mortality is an overall measurement system, which can be adjusted by applying reductions in term of fishing capacity and/or fishing effort.

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the SAC technical workshop on bio-economic assessment of management measures that took place in February 2016;

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the SAC Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean that took place in February 2016;

CONSIDERING the socioeconomic importance of fisheries exploiting demersal stocks and the need to ensure their sustainability;

CONSIDERING the conclusions of the eighteenth session of the SAC, and in particular those regarding the management of selected fisheries in the Strait of Sicily;

ADOPTS, in conformity with the relevant provisions of the GFCM Agreement:

PART I

Subject-matter, scope and definitions

Subject-matter and scope

1. The present Recommendation establishes a multiannual plan (hereafter referred to as "plan") for the fisheries targeting hake or deepwater rose shrimp in the marine waters of the Geographical Sub-Areas 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 (hereafter referred to as "Strait of Sicily"), as defined in Resolution GFCM/33/2009/2.

2. This Recommendation shall apply to bottom trawls above 10 meters length overall fishing for hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily, when the total catches of those species represents at least [25%] of the catch in live weight or value.

Definitions

3. For the purpose of this Recommendation:

- a) "Hake" means fish pertaining to the species *Merluccius merluccius*;
- b) "Deepwater rose shrimp" means crustaceans pertaining to the species *Parapenaeus longirostris*;
- c) "Designated landing Ports" means ports, or places close to the shore, designated in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/2008/32/1 on Port State Measures, including offshore terminals and other installations for landing, transshipping, packaging, processing, refuelling or resupplying of fishing vessels, where landings, transshipments, packaging and/or processing operations of fishery products are permitted.

PART II

Specific objectives and targets

Specific objectives

- 4. The plan shall aim at contributing to the objectives mentioned in Article 2 and the principles listed in Article 5 of the Agreement for the establishment of the GFCM.
- 5. The plan shall, in particular:
 - a) Apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management;
 - b) Ensure that exploitation levels of hake and deepwater rose shrimp are at the maximum sustainable yield (hereafter referred to as "MSY") by 2020 at the latest;
 - c) Protect nursery areas and essential fish habitats important for the stocks of hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily;
 - d) Gradually eliminate discards, by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, unwanted catches, and by gradually ensuring that catches are landed;
 - e) Provide for measures to adjust the fishing capacity of the fleets to levels of fishing mortalities consistent with the MSY, with a view to having economically viable fleets and without overexploiting marine biological resources.

Targets

- 6. The target fishing mortality ranges for the stocks of hake and deepwater rose shrimp, as provided in Annex I to this Recommendation, shall be reached by 2020 and maintained onwards.

PART III

Technical measures

Fisheries Restricted Areas

- 7. It shall be established Fisheries Restricted Areas (hereafter referred to as "FRAs") for the conservation and management of the demersal stocks, hake and deepwater rose shrimp, in the three areas of the Strait of Sicily as defined in Annex II.

8. Any fishing activity with bottom trawlers shall not be allowed in the FRAs defined in paragraph 7.

9. In order to avoid accidental access to the FRAs established in Paragraph 7, it shall be set up buffer areas around the FRAs. Those buffer areas are extended one nautical mile outside the established FRAs and also defined in Annex II.

10. Any fishing activity with bottom trawlers in the buffer areas established in paragraph 9 shall ensure their frequency of transmission of VMS signals. Those vessels not equipped with VMS transponder and aiming to fish in the buffer areas shall be equipped with any other system of geo-localisation allowing control authorities to track their activities.

11. The SAC shall identify additional nursery areas of hake in the entire Strait of Sicily, with special attention in GSAs 12, 13, and 14.

Temporal closure

12. Any fishing activity with bottom trawlers shall not be allowed between the coast and the [200] meters depth isobaths of the GSA 14 "Gulf of Gabès". This closure shall apply from 1 July until 31 September.

PART IV Management of the fishing effort

13. In accordance with paragraph 8 to Recommendation GFCM/39/2015/2, the Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall communicate to the GFCM Secretariat the list of operating vessels for which such authorization has been delivered for the forthcoming year or years, no later than 30 November each year.

14. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall take the necessary measures to reduce by [20%] the fishing mortality (*inter alia*, fishing capacity or fishing effort) of hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily. Such reduction shall be applied as from 2017, with 2011 as a reference year.

15. Fishing vessels targeting hake or deep water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily shall be equipped with a vessel monitoring system (VMS) in accordance with Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/7.

16. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall decide and communicate to the GFCM Secretariat, by no later than 30 November 2016, the necessary measures identified to carry out the reduction mentioned in paragraph 14. It should be considered measures in term of number of fishing days, fishing vessels and catch limits.

PART V Specific measures to address IUU fishing activities

17. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall establish a mechanism to ensure that vessels authorised to fish for hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily will record catches of hake and deepwater rose shrimp.

18. Each Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall designate landing ports in which landings of hake and deepwater rose shrimp from the Strait of Sicily may take place.

19. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall specify, for each designated landing ports, the permitted landing and transshipping times and places. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall also ensure inspection coverage during all landing and transshipping times and at all landing and transshipping places.

20. It shall be prohibited to land or tranship from fishing vessels any quantity of hake and deepwater rose shrimp fished in the Strait of Sicily at any place other than landing ports designated in accordance with paragraph 17.

21. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall transmit to the GFCM Secretary by no later than 30 November 2016, a list of the designated landing ports in which landings of hake and deepwater rose shrimp from the Strait of Sicily may take place. Any subsequent change that may occur to this list shall be promptly notified to the GFCM Secretariat.

22. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall engage to cooperate on the fight against IUU activities, in particular through sharing information and gathering intelligence to fight against IUU activities and organized crime.

PART VI

National Programmes for Control, Monitoring and Surveillance

23. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties, through the Commission, shall establish before 2018 an observation and inspection program to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation. The program may *inter alia* comprise the following elements:

- a) High seas inspection;
- b) Procedures for an effective investigation of an alleged violation of the conservation and management measures contained in this recommendation, and for reporting to the Commission on the actions taken, including procedures for exchanging information;
- c) Provisions for appropriate action to be taken when inspections reveal serious violations as well as the expedient and transparent follow-up of such actions in order to uphold the Flag State's responsibility within the intended program;
- d) Port inspections;
- e) Monitoring of landings and catches, including statistical follow-up for management purposes;
- f) Specific monitoring programs, including boarding and inspection;
- g) Observer programs.

24. A Working Group shall be established to develop integrated control, monitoring and surveillance measures, in accordance with this recommendation and its tasks defined in Annex III.

PART VII

Scientific monitoring, adaptation and revision of the plan

25. The Contracting parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties shall ensure adequate annual scientific monitoring of hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

26. The SAC shall provide advice on the status of hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily. Such advice shall include reference points in terms of fishing mortality at levels which can produce the MSY at the latest by 2020 and safeguards points.

27. The SAC shall assess the biological, economic and social implications of implementing several management scenarios with the objective of restoring and maintaining the populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the MSY. To this end, the SAC shall also consult its Subcommittee on Economic and Social Sciences (SCESS).

28. The SAC shall advise on the most appropriate minimum and/or maximum landing sizes for elasmobranchs species affected by the fisheries exploiting hake and deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily.

29. Whenever the GFCM, on the basis of advice from the SAC, finds that the target fishing mortality rates specified in paragraph 6 are no longer appropriate to achieve the objectives detailed in paragraph 5, it shall revise those parameters accordingly.

30. Where the scientific advice, indicates that the general or specific objectives of the plan are not being met, the Commission shall decide on additional and/or alternative management measures to ensure that those objectives are achieved.

31. Where for whatever reason (e.g. lack of appropriate data) the SAC is not in a position of providing an accurate advice on the state of the hake and deepwater rose shrimp and on its exploitation level, the Commission shall decide on the most appropriate management measures to ensure sustainability of the fishery. These measures should be based on SAC advice taking into consideration socio-economic elements.

32. For the purpose of providing advice for the development of this plan, the SAC shall organise adequate workshops. To this purpose, the SAC shall promote scientific cooperation and a harmonised approach amongst all countries around the Strait of Sicily.

PART VIII

Final provisions

Duration

33. The current plan remains in force for [3] years from the date of its adoption.

**Estimated target fishing mortality for hake and deepwater rose shrimp
in the Strait of Sicily**

Stock	Target fishing mortality range
Hake in the Strait of Sicily	0.12 – 0.18
Deepwater rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily	0.84 – 0.93

Geographical coordinates of the Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRA)**FRA 1: *East of Adventure Bank***

Fisheries Restricted Area		Buffer Area	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
37° 23,850' N	12° 30,072' E	37° 24,849' N	12° 28,814' E
37° 23,884' N	12° 48,282' E	37° 24,888' N	12° 49,536' E
37° 11,567' N	12° 48,305' E	37° 10,567' N	12° 49,559' E
37° 11,532' N	12° 30,095' E	37° 10,528' N	12° 28,845' E

FRA 2: *West of Gela Basin*

Fisheries Restricted Area		Buffer Area	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
37° 12,040' N	13° 17,925' E	37° 13,041' N	13° 16,672' E
37° 12,047' N	13° 36,170' E	37° 13,049' N	13° 37,422' E
36° 59,725' N	13° 36,175' E	36° 58,723' N	13° 37,424' E
36° 59,717' N	13° 17,930' E	36° 58,715' N	13° 16,682' E

FRA 3: *East of Malta Bank*

Fisheries Restricted Area		Buffer Area	
Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
36° 12,621' N	15° 13,338' E	36° 13,624' N	15° 12,102' E
36° 12,621' N	15° 26,062' E	36° 13,624' N	15° 27,298' E
35° 59,344' N	15° 26,062' E	35° 58,342' N	15° 27,294' E
35° 59,344' N	15° 13,338' E	35° 58,342' N	15° 12,106' E

The Working Group referred to in paragraph 23, will:

- be supported by the GFCM Secretariat;
- establish a time schedule for the development of its work, and will hold at least one meeting during 2016 before the next Commission meeting; and
- invite observers attending GFCM meetings, the FAO, and other regional fishery organizations to participate in the meetings of this Working Group.