

Building a future for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

Regional Conference

7–9 March 2016, Algiers, Algeria



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General Fisheries Commission
for the Mediterranean
Commission générale des pêches
pour la Méditerranée



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Background information for the press

The Regional Conference on sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean is organized by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), including its Mediterranean regional projects, in collaboration with the Algerian Ministry for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries and in partnership with the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies – Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM-Bari), the Network of Marine Protected Area Managers in the Mediterranean (MedPAN) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). This is a very important opportunity for all stakeholders from national administrations, international and non-governmental organizations, fishers’ communities, the scientific world and civil society to discuss about common strategies that could secure the social, economic and environmental conditions for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the region.

In recognition of the need for a concerted action for the sustainable development of the small-scale fishery sector, the Algerian Ministry for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries graciously offered to host the Regional Conference with a view to mobilizing such an effort. This event falls within the framework of the “Aquapêche 2020” strategy, recently launched by Algeria. Developed as a result of a nation-wide concertation process with all actors and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the FAO, this strategy received broad support from professionals who signed a voluntary charter for the responsible development of fisheries and aquaculture. In line with Blue Growth principles, this strategy is also expected to bring a determining contribution in promoting sustainable small-scale fisheries, both at the national and regional levels.

Small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region: a way of life

Due to their longstanding traditions, small-scale fisheries are a major component of fishers and fish workers’ life and have a considerable socio-economic significance in the Mediterranean. This vibrant and multi-faceted sector is the expression of local communities’ identity, culture and values. At its best, it illustrates the added value traditional local knowledge and cultural heritage can bring to harmonious and peaceful cohabitation within the surrounding environment.

Although of global significance, the characteristics of small-scale fisheries vary from one location to another.

In our region, small-scale fisheries account for the main share of the active population currently operating in the fishery sector. According to GFCM data, at least 60 percent of fishing industry workers are indeed small-scale fishers and fish workers, which represents approximatively

150 000 people, many of which are self-employed. They are generally engaged both in directly providing food for their household and in related commercial activities, and are usually organized in different types of professional and producer organizations or cooperatives. The small-scale fisheries sector indeed provides valuable employment opportunities, ranging from fishing to associated jobs such as fish processing, distribution or marketing.

Small-scale fishing activities are often family-based, and the family provides the human capital needed for basic fishery-related activities. About half of the people working in small-scale fisheries are women (FAO data), and their active role along the value chain of small-scale fisheries products in some countries of the region is significant, and often fundamental. For these reasons, small-scale fisheries are a cornerstone activity for the empowerment of women in the area.

An economic and social engine

Small-scale fisheries are generally characterized by the use of a large number of boats of low tonnage (between 1 and 4 tonnes), extremely diversified and selective low-impact fishing gear targeting a wide variety of species, including demersal fish, crustaceans and some small and large pelagic species. Fishers exploit areas that are usually very close to the coast where they live and shelter their boats.

Small-scale fisheries production accounts for approximately 25 percent of the total landing value from capture fisheries in the region (GFCM data), and is of high economic value, as the catch is generally sold fresh in local markets or directly to private consumers or restaurants and, in some cases, directly exported. Small-scale fisheries serve as an economic and social engine that contribute significantly to the livelihood of coastal communities by providing food and ensuring nutrition security, fostering economic growth and boosting rural development. Furthermore, its linkages into other sectors, such as food and tourism, ensure that its multiplier effects benefit local economies.

In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the small-scale segment (defined as embarkations below 12 meters of length overall) accounts for more than 80 percent of the entire fishing fleet, which is made of about 90 000 vessels (GFCM data), and landings from the sector account for at least 14 percent of all Mediterranean and Black Sea landings.

As vectors of local knowledge and good practices, small-scale fisheries include a great number of diversified and versatile fishing techniques. They employ over 50 types of fishing gear to adapt to target species and fishing season based on a rotatory system and embrace all the *métiers* (fishing gear) that are not typically industrial (GFCM data).

Hence, small-scale fisheries exemplify at their best sustainable resource use: exploiting living marine resources in a way that minimizes environmental degradation while maximizing economic and social benefits. All this contributes to making small-scale fishing an activity of relatively low environmental impact.

Giving a voice to small-scale fisheries actors

Despite its crucial social, economic and environmental importance, the sector is often neglected and small-scale fishing communities continue to face many challenges and constraints on a daily basis. Indeed, the small-scale fishers suffer from the power differential that opposes them to industrial fisheries and other coastal activities, are the ultimate losers in the competition for space and resources, and this situation is even more serious given the overexploitation of stocks. As a result, small-scale fisheries' contribution to food security, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization in the area still needs to be fully realized.

In order to come to grips with the marginalization and exclusion from public policy and decision-making processes that affect small-scale fishers, it is urgent to foster innovative, participatory and bottom-up management and governance strategies that focus on small-scale fisheries through existing regional fisheries management organizations, such as the GFCM.

«Above all, I will keep in mind that the efforts we are now making and supporting are in favour of modest and invisible people, without a voice, to offer them a chance to make a living from small-scale fisheries in a fairer, more balanced world, in which their role and specificities are duly acknowledged»

H.E. Sid Ahmed Ferroukhi, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, Algeria

At present, all these issues are insufficiently addressed mainly due to the scarcity of precise quantitative information on the sector, which impedes a comprehensive analysis to be conducted. Indeed, because of their variety, dispersion and social complexity, small-scale fisheries are often poorly documented. Moreover, as one of the most salient characteristics of the sector is that landing sites are not restricted to fishing ports but instead widely distributed along the coasts, developing a thorough data collection on small-scale fishing effort and catches represents a great challenge.

Hence, there is an urgent need for identifying sources of information on small-scale fisheries, collecting data and involving stakeholders in order to carry out a thorough analysis of the current status of small-scale fisheries in the region. A better knowledge of the sector would indeed provide a sound basis needed for the formulation of holistic management plans and regional strategies to secure its long-term sustainability.

A Regional Conference to find solutions for a sustainable future

The Regional Conference on “Building a sustainable future for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea” will offer a proper forum to intensify concerted efforts and secure common strategies for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the area.

This event is intended as a follow-up to the First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (Malta, 27–30 November 2013) organized by the same partners, in collaboration with the Government of Malta. For the first time in this region, representatives of national administrations, international and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as fisheries scientists, professionals and experts gathered around the same table to discuss common issues with regard to the promotion of sustainable small-scale fisheries.

This first symposium demonstrated the potential of the small-scale fisheries sector to alleviate poverty, ensure food security and contribute to Blue Growth strategies. It can be considered as a milestone which raised awareness about the main issues at stake, laying the groundwork for future action in the area.

“It was a first, and the results went beyond our expectations. Discussions have laid the groundwork for a regional programme fostering the knowledge of all the components linked to small-scale fisheries and involving all interested stakeholders. Moreover, they have provided a timely basis for Mediterranean and Black Sea participants in the final negotiations of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, which were adopted six months after the symposium, in June 2014.”

Abdellah Srour, GFCM Executive Secretary

Since 2013, progress has been made to improve knowledge about small-scale fisheries and to enhance the management and support of this sector in the area. The first Regional Programme on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, established by the GFCM to promote, with interested partners, projects aimed at improving the livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities and ensuring the sustainable management of this sector, is certainly a major achievement. In parallel, the GFCM has introduced significant changes in its institutional and legal

framework to increase the focus on small-scale fisheries and local communities, and has launched a comprehensive data collection tool that provides for the annual submission of data on small-scale fisheries. Last but not least, the adoption of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) constitutes an important milestone which paves the way for the implementation of concrete strategies for the sector.

It is now time to build upon the progress made and move forward with implementing and consolidating the outcomes attained thus far.

Based on the concrete results of case studies carried out in different areas throughout the region as well as on available information and data, the Regional Conference is an interactive forum to discuss priorities, possible solutions and practical recommendations for sustainable small-scale fisheries in the region. Ultimately, the Conference seeks to promote political commitment towards tailored strategies for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region.

The Blue Growth initiative: unlocking the potential of the region in a sustainable way

Building upon the recent Blue Growth initiative promoted by FAO and following the ecosystem approach advocated in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Regional Conference focusses on the current status of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, with particular regard to their socio-economic impact.

The Blue Growth strategy highlights the blue part of the economy to ensure that economic growth and increased productivity are not achieved at the expenses of the natural capital that fish stocks represent. The ultimate objective of the strategy is that all the relevant stakeholders acknowledge that economic activity and fish resources are inherently linked, act accordingly and join efforts to develop fisheries policies that ensure sustainable growth in the small-scale fisheries economy.

The Regional Conference will showcase eight case studies that illustrate different approaches to the small-scale fisheries sector in the context of Blue Growth, as well as the main socio-economic and environmental challenges faced by the sector. These insights will prove useful to get a better grasp of different national small-scale fisheries realities such as the Alexandria bay, the Adriatic Sea, the Taseli coast (Turkey), the Gulf of Castellammare (Sicily), the Balearic islands, Tunis offshore banks, the Strait of Sicily and Algeria, and will focus on thematic issues of importance, such as the target species, fishing techniques and strategies.

Rethinking fisheries management to strengthen the role of stakeholders

As a consequence of the sector's marginalization, small-scale fishers and fish workers are usually not involved in top-down fishery management plans that are launched. This exclusion, combined with a general lack of investment from bigger stakeholders, impede small-scale fishers and fish workers to take part and have their voice heard in social, economic and politic processes that directly affect them. Hence, there is an urgent need to strengthen the role of small-scale fisheries communities in decision-making processes and to ensure their empowerment as a means to engage with government authorities on fisheries management issues.

Fostering the development of participatory and community rights-based decision-making mechanisms between government and communities, for instance in the form of small-scale fishers' organizations and regional platforms, could offer a viable alternative to reduce the vulnerability of small-scale fisheries operators and secure a better governance of common resources.

The Regional Conference will carry out a comparative analysis of six case studies on management and co-management schemes implemented in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, assessing the active involvement of fishermen in their establishment and implementation. Experiences at the national (Algeria, Croatia, Italy, Spain) and regional level will be reviewed, with a special focus on the establishment of spatial rules, including MPAs and no-take zones (NTZs). The overall objective will be to review the challenges faced by existing participatory management and co-management schemes and identify success stories of innovative conceptions of fisheries management organizations, in

order to strengthen collaboration between stakeholders and achieve small-scale fisheries sustainability.

Creating synergies between marine protected areas (MPAs) and the small-scale fisheries sector

MPAs are a form of collaborative solution which is considered as an efficient strategic tool not only for the long-term conservation of species, habitats, and ecosystems, but also to increase fish stocks and develop new socio-economic activities. MPAs cover 5.26 percent of the Mediterranean, including the Pelagos Sanctuary and the four open sea GFCM fisheries restricted areas¹.

The management objectives of MPAs and of small-scale fisheries intersect in many aspects, which proves that small scale-fisheries and MPAs can be integrated and coexist in a sustainable way, creating fruitful synergies and opportunities.

For the purpose of the Regional Conference, key challenges and issues related to biological, social, economic and management aspects have been identified for about 30 Mediterranean MPAs and will be presented through seven case studies. Strategies will be discussed with a view to providing concrete and tailored solutions to develop management plans that are specific to small-scale fisheries so that small-scale fishers' communities can take advantage of their biological, ecological and socio-economic benefits.

Enhancing small-scale fisheries value chains

Small-scale fisheries represent a key economic activity for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region, in terms of direct and indirect employment. The sector features a complex network of relations among different parties involved in the supply chain, showing a non-integrated structure where the distribution sector generally holds the dominant position.

However, the small-scale fisheries agri-food business environment has been dramatically altered as a result of globalization, liberalization, extensive organizational, institutional and technological change, and depleting fish stocks.

In order to face these challenges, small-scale fisheries economic actors need to develop proactive relationships with all other actors on the coastal area in order to be able to foster their competitiveness.

Since small-scale fisheries are often characterized by low levels of investments throughout the value chain (pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest stages), a value chain approach to the market would enable to exploit upstream and downstream information along the value chain and identify end market opportunities and constraints. Indeed, understanding the factors and conditions that generate value along the chain would help the small-scale fisheries sector improve its value system.

During the Regional Conference, five cases studies will be reviewed with a view to assessing the current status of small-scale fisheries value chains in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Highlights from experiences in Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia and Italy will be presented, placing a special emphasis on recent sustainable innovations, marketing strategies, intersectoral integration as well as infrastructure and service development. The aim is to identify good practices as well as potential areas for investment and improvement that could contribute to enhance small-scale fisheries value chains and thus help small-scale fisheries communities adapt and make the most of today's economic environment.

Tailoring the SSF Guidelines to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

Since 2003, the FAO and other organizations have embarked in a process of awareness-raising on the key role of small-scale fisheries for marginalized communities worldwide. In 2011, the FAO

¹ Source: Gabrié C. *et al.* 2012. *The Status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea*. MedPAN and CAR/ASP. Ed: MedPAN Collection. 260 pp.

Committee on Fisheries (COFI) recommended to develop an international instrument – the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) – to complement the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). Alongside the fishing provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the CCRF is the most widely recognized and implemented international fisheries instrument.

Adopted by the thirty-first session of COFI in June 2014, the SSF Guidelines are the result of a bottom-up participatory process initiated in 2010. Their endorsement represents today a major achievement towards ensuring secure and sustainable small-scale fisheries.

“The SSF Guidelines are a fundamental tool in support of the Organization’s vision to eradicate hunger and promote sustainable development [...]. The challenge is now for FAO Members and all partners to implement the SSF Guidelines”

José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General

Based on a number of key guiding principles (human rights and dignity; respect of cultures; non-discrimination; gender equality; equity; consultation and participation; rule of law; transparency; accountability; economic, social and environmental sustainability; holistic and integrated approaches; social responsibility; social and economic viability), the SSF Guidelines should become an integral part of regional, national and local strategies to secure the sustainability of small-scale fisheries.

The Regional Conference will be the occasion to present three case studies on the implementation of the Guidelines in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The outcomes of this work should offer a sound basis to identify possible avenues to use the SSF Guidelines as a tool to promote sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and adapt their implementation to the specificities of the region.