



GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
Twenty-fourth Session
12-15 July 1999, Alicante, Spain
REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Twenty-third Session of GFCM decided that the First Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee should first review the current situation and future direction of its work with respect to availability of data and methodologies, and that it should provide concrete advice to the Commission, as feasible, on (a) the definition of appropriate management units; (b) the definition of appropriate parameters to use when measuring fishing effort; (c) the identification of the current situation of the stocks; and (d) the organization of its future work (paragraph 43 of the report of the Twenty-third Session of GFCM).

2. The Scientific Advisory Committee met in FAO Headquarters in March 1999 and adopted the agenda already proposed by the Commission. The following are the conclusions and recommendations of the Session.

II. DEFINITION OF THE APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT UNITS FOR MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES

3. The Committee noted that many large pelagic fishes (e.g. bluefin tuna and swordfish) are highly migratory species and that management of these species should be considered for the entire Mediterranean Sea and on a multi-national basis.

4. The Committee agreed that a harmonized approach is necessary for deciding on management units in situations where the key demersal resources were straddling stocks lying across the boundaries between national jurisdiction and international waters.

III. DEFINITION OF THE PARAMETERS TO EXPRESS FISHING EFFORT

5. Concerning fishing capacity, the Committee was unanimous in considering that such a control should cover not only boats of a length greater than 15 m. but also small-scale fishing units.

6. The Committee stressed the need for each country to provide the Secretariat with a comprehensive inventory of national fleets as decided by the Commission at its Twenty-first Session in its Resolution 95/4. The inventory of the national fishing fleets was considered by the Committee to be a prerequisite for a serious and reliable inventory of fishing capacity.

7. Considering the complexity of the definition of parameters to express fishing effort, the Committee decided to set up an *ad hoc* Working Group to discuss this issue and to provide the Committee with its views and particularly to discuss parameters allowing the identification of the fishing effort. The Committee agreed that the terms of reference identified by the Working Group should not be considered definitive and needed to be elaborated and finalized during the next session of SAC and presented for review and decision by the Twenty-fourth session of GFCM. The report of this second Working Group is attached as Appendix E to the report of the First Session of the SAC.

IV. IDENTIFICATION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AND AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON STOCK ASSESSMENT

8. The Committee observed that Mediterranean scientists have also shown increasing activity in population dynamics modelling and in direct abundance evaluation by acoustic (for small pelagics) or demersal surveys.

9. The Committee noted the durability of some fisheries which were essentially based on targeted catches of juveniles of some species. It felt that this situation was compatible with the maintenance of relatively good recruitment despite low levels of spawning stock biomasses.

10. The Committee noted that for many years there had been a trend towards the elaboration of Mediterranean common databases which could constitute reliable working tools for the assessment and management of the fisheries.

11. The Committee stressed that the use of the Geographical Information System (GIS) methodologies directed at fisheries resources management could also be considered a promising objective for the future and that in several Mediterranean countries, experimental projects were in progress at a national or international level. It observed that these techniques lead to the setting up of new common tools which reflect the diversity of Mediterranean environments. They allow an overall synoptic and geographical vision of the fisheries system and a regular updating of the information, producing easy-to-use results for the management bodies.

12. The Committee recognized the necessity of developing capacity to adapt some assessment methods to the Mediterranean context. It stressed that, in practice, it would be helpful to develop common standardized methodologies for the fisheries data processing and assessment techniques.

13. The Committee recognized the usefulness of listing the research surveys carried out by Members and invited the participants to provide the Secretariat with the list if immediately available or to send it to the Secretariat later.

V. ORGANIZATION OF FUTURE WORK: STRUCTURE, DATABASES AND FUNCTIONING

14. The Committee decided to establish (i) a Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment; (ii) a Sub-Committee on Fishery Statistics and Information; and (iii) a Sub-Committee for Economic and Social Sciences. The document also proposed that these Sub-Committees should rely on the work of *ad hoc* working groups on specific matters related to issues of concern to each of the Sub-Committees.

15. The Committee agreed to set up a Sub-Committee to deal with matters related to the marine environment (Sub-Committee for Marine Environment and Ecosystems). A first draft proposal of the terms of reference of this new Sub-Committee is attached as Appendix G to the report of the First Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

16. The Committee, while recognizing such constraints, recommended that the Second Session of SAC be held in June 1999.

17. The Committee convened a small group to draft terms of reference for the four Sub-Committees. The conclusions of the group are included in the report of the First Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee. It is suggested that the first meeting of the Sub-Committees should concentrate mainly on exploiting existing information relevant to their future work.

VI. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT SESSION

18. The Committee, taking into consideration the workload to be carried out before the next Session, called on its Members to make special efforts in order to prepare material relevant to agenda items 2, 3 and 4 of the Second Session.

19. The Committee noted that the terms of reference of its meeting should have a higher degree of continuity. This would allow for the completion of work over successive sessions.

20. The Committee decided to hold the Second Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee at FAO Headquarters, Rome, from 8 to 11 June 1999.

VII. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

21. The Commission is invited to review conclusions and recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Committee and to provide guidelines on the follow up to these conclusions and recommendations.

22. The Commission may also wish to indicate priorities to be considered by the Third Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee related to the mandate of the Committee and addressing concerns of Members.