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**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN**

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**MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE FAO REGIONAL PROJECTS**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. This document summarizes the main activities carried out by the FAO Regional Projects, namely, AdriaMed<sup>1</sup>, MedsudMed<sup>2</sup> and MedFisis<sup>3</sup>, during the intersessional period and reports on the status of newly emerging projects, namely CopeMed II<sup>4</sup>, EastMed<sup>5</sup> and the GEF Mediterranean<sup>6</sup>. Project activities include research and training programmes, workshops and working groups, as well as the technical assistance provided to some countries and to the Sub-Committees and Working groups of SAC. The text below is elaborated on the basis of the document GFCM:SAC10/2007/Inf.18 presented to the Tenth Session of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) as well as on recent information related to the achievements of the projects. It complements document GFCM/32/2008/2.

<sup>1</sup> "Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea". The project is co-financed by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Policies (MiPaf) and the European Community.

<sup>2</sup> "Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily". The project is financed by the MiPaf.

<sup>3</sup> "Mediterranean Fisheries Statistics and Information System". The project is jointly financed by the European Community and FAO.

<sup>4</sup> "Advice, Technical Support and Establishment of Cooperation Networks to Facilitate Coordination to Support Fisheries Management in the Western and Central Mediterranean". Phase one of the Project was financed by the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional. The second phase is expected to be co-financed by the Secretaría de Pesca Marítima de España, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional and the European Community.

<sup>5</sup> "Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean". The preparatory phase for this project has been financed by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Policies (MiPaf). The project will be co-financed by the MiPaf, the Government of Greece and the European Community.

<sup>6</sup> "Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem – Regional Component: Implementation of agreed actions for the protection of the environmental resources of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas"/Biodiversity Component., entitled : 'Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biological Biodiversity of Vulnerable Coastal and Marine Resources of the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem'. The Programme is prepared under the responsibility of UNEP/MAP on behalf of the Global Environment Facilities (GEF).

## II. ADRIAMED

2. The activities carried out during the intersessional period followed the workplan for 2007 as approved by the 8<sup>th</sup> AdriaMed Coordination Committee meeting (December 2006). They include the following actions:

### - Demersal and Small Pelagic Fishery Resources :

- Organization of a meeting on the development of the application created to store and analyse trawl survey data (ATrIS) and the possibility of creating a pilot study according to the definition of Operational Units;
- Organization of a training course on cephalopods statoliths reading. A Technical Manual to be published in the AdriaMed Technical Documents series is being finalized;
- Organization of the 5<sup>th</sup> trawl survey was carried out in Albanian and Montenegrin waters in February 2007 and in Croatian and Slovenian waters in March 2007;
- Organization of a training and a workshop respectively on the daily egg production method (DEPM) and on the use of GIS in fisheries and aquaculture;
- Collection and compilation of data related to the essential fish habitat of demersal and small pelagic resources. The data includes basic information on the environmental and biological features which could characterise the different ontogenetic phases in the life-span of the species;
- Promotion of the cooperation between the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Split (IOF) and the CNR - Istituto Scienze Marine (ISMAR) of Ancona by providing technical advice, in the framework of SOLEMON Project, to perform joint “Stock Assessment of *Solea solea* in the northern and central Adriatic Sea and evaluation of the impact of the different fishing activities”;
- Establishment of a Coordinated Team on echo-survey in the Adriatic Sea with the aim to identify standard methodologies/scientific protocol adopted by the Adriatic countries for the evaluation of small pelagic fishery resources (GCP/RER/010/ITA/OM-157).

### - Social and Economic Fishery Sciences:

- Launching the collection of information to update the database on the fishery legislation of countries bordering the Adriatic Sea, in particular the section related to recreational fisheries. A draft proposal has been prepared for a programme of activities to be carried out in cooperation with the GFCM Secretariat, to develop a multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of recreational fisheries in the Adriatic Sea;
- Creation of a DataBase on fisheries sector social surveys data version 1.1 (AdriaMed DBS) to organize the storage and preliminary analysis of the dataset available after the social survey of the fisheries sector in Albania (carried out in 2003);
- Starting to update the information on Operational Units collected so far (up to 2004), including by Montenegro (which joined the AdriaMed project in 2004). A pilot study was designed with the primary objective of describing and monitoring the Montenegrin fisheries sector information, applying the OUs concept.

#### - Fishery Statistics and Information Systems :

- Continuation of the activities related to the inclusion of Adriatic Scientific publications in the ASFA database and to the support to national institutions of the members for establishment of new ASFA data input centres;
- Updating and improving regularly the AdriaMed Information System (AIS) and the AdriaMed Website;
- Updating and promoting the use of the AdriaMed Trawl Survey Information System (ATrIS) version 2.1;
- Continuations of the technical Support to the national statistic system notably to create a fleet register for artisanal fisheries.

#### - Interactions between aquaculture and capture fisheries:

- Implementation of a Pilot Study on the “Interactions between capture fisheries and aquaculture and environment in the Lezha Lagoon system” and finalisation of the related technical document. Upon request of the Fisheries Directorate of Montenegro, a similar task is being prepared for the national lagoons.

### **III. MEDSUDMED**

3. The main activities carried out by the MedsudMed project during the intersessional period are summarized as follows:

#### - Demersal Fisheries Resources :

- Review of the knowledge currently available on the biology, ecology, reproduction patterns, legislation, management and exploitation trends of *Merluccius merluccius*, *Mullus barbatus*, *Parapenaeus longirostris*, *Aristaeomorpha foliacea*, *Octopus vulgaris* and finalization of the technical report summarizing the results obtained on the spatial distribution of hake and Red mullet and on the identification of areas of major concentration of juveniles and mature females;
- Finalization of technical guidelines on methodological indications for multidisciplinary studies is being done, considering the outcomes of the Pilot study on “Spatial pattern of fisheries demersal resources, environmental factors and fishery activities” that was previously undertaken in the GSA 15.

#### - Small Pelagic Fisheries resources:

- Production of a technical report and maps on some oceanographic characteristics of the sea in the Central Mediterranean;
- Support for the organisation of cooperative surveys at sea with mixed teams on board the research vessels and during which, in addition to collecting data, on-the-job training is provided. In this

context two surveys were performed (ichthyoplankton surveys along the southern coast of Sicily and in Maltese waters and acoustic surveys covering the South-Sicilian and Maltese waters);

- Other activities are being performed such as the production of a catalogue on ichthyoplankton on the basis of the results obtained in 2006 in Libyan waters and the review on small pelagic fisheries resources in the MedSudMed area.

- MedSudMed Fishery and Ecosystem Information System (FEIS) :

- Updating of the regional component of the FEIS in particular regarding the web interface.

- Other issue :

- Support for the compilation of bibliographic scientific references from the grey literature published in Tunisia and in particular by the Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM) from 1976 to 2005.

- Trainings courses on:

- Processing of ichthyoplankton samples (January 2007): to provide baseline knowledge on the identification of the eggs and larvae of fishery resources;
- Analysis of ichthyoplankton data (February 2007): techniques for density calculation and mapping were taught during this course and preliminary maps were produced for the main species found along the Libyan coasts;
- Processing of oceanography data (January 2007): focusing on the post processing of CTD casts (filtering of raw data), analysis of temperature, salinity, oxygen patterns and calculation of geostrophic currents;
- Processing of water samples (February 2007): aimed at teaching laboratory techniques used for the processing of water samples collected with Niskin bottles for the analysis of POC (Particulate Organic Carbon), PON (Particulate Organic Nitrogen) and nutrient concentration;
- Micro-algae identification (February 2007): to carry out a qualitative analysis for the identification of species and a quantitative analysis with the enumeration of individuals for each species and hence characterize the phytoplankton association along the Libyan coast.
- Macroscopic identification of maturity stages (April 2007): provided a comprehensive overview of the techniques and scales used for the macroscopic identification of maturity stages of the main demersal fisheries species.
- Processing of acoustic data related to zooplankton (June 2007): for the processing of acoustic data related to zooplankton, including the basic techniques to process raw acoustic data and calculations to provide estimates of zooplankton biomass.
- Marine biotoxins (August 2007): consisted of laboratory work on techniques to detect lipophilic and water soluble toxins;
- Daily Egg Production Method (September 2007);
- Bacteriological and virological investigations for controlling bivalve molluscs safety ( November 2007).

#### **IV. MEDFISIS**

4. The MedFisis project was conceived to promote and develop a Mediterranean Fishery Statistics and Information System with the ultimate objective of achieving a region-wide integrated system as outlined by the MedStat adaptive approach. Central to the MedFisis concept is that the fundamental components of any fisheries management information system are the vessel record and catch and effort data.

5. In the intersession period from October 2006 to February 2007 (end of the project's second year), the MedFisis project undertook a number of actions and initiatives at the regional (GFCM) and national (GFCM member countries) levels as reported below:

- Database software development and implementation:

- Finalization of the current version of the MedStat fishing vessel register software, developed in Visual Studio .NET;
- Continuation of the work concerning the finalization of the new reengineered version of the MedStat catch and effort (CAS) database software. The package being developed includes both logbook and a sample-based approach to CAS.

- Support to GFCM Secretariat for:

- The initial establishment of the GFCM record of vessels over 15 m authorized to operate in the GFCM area. according to the Recommendation GFCM/2006/1;
- Compilation and analysis related to the landing pattern by country and statistical area of the GFCM priority species. An ad hoc CD incorporating a software tool for the easy and real time visualization, which had been previously produced, was further refined and made available for the users;
- Assisting the MedFisis National Focal Point of Egypt and Syria in compiling required data for the SAC "Transversal Workshop on the Compilation of the GFCM Task 1 Data" (June 2007);
- The renewal and re-development of the Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM) which was carried out within the MedFisis framework until April 2007, including for the production of technical documents and notes on "SIPAM Revitalization".

- Support to individual GFCM member countries for:

- Organizing a data analysis workshop at the Syrian Fisheries Department (February 2007): focused on the appraisal of the catch and effort survey programme being developed by the country;
- Conducting a joint MedFisis/General Authority for Fish Resources Development (GAFRD) review mission (February 2007): in order to appraise the current catch and effort monitoring system and to identify those activities that might be implemented according to the available human and financial resources and to improve/upgrade the fishery statistic system in the country.

6. Regarding the future perspectives of MedFisis, it should be underlined that, in the third and last year of the first phase, the Project will continue to follow the adaptive approach, also finalizing

the development and implementation of catch and effort assessment surveys and related database software. It is expected that, the concerted synergy and integration of MedFisis, including the AdriaMed, MedSudMed, the forthcoming CopeMed II and EastMed projects, will be continued and be further developed. This coordinated action will provide technical assistance to the GFCM Secretariat and to the member countries to develop and consolidate internationally compatible fishing vessel registers where needed and promote and establish catch and effort monitoring systems. The core MedStat software suite of the MedFisis fishery statistics and information system will be completed with the release of the marine fisheries catch and effort software application that, integrated with the fishing vessel register, constitutes a basic component of the GFCM fisheries information and management system.

## **V. COPEMED**

### **CopeMed Phase I**

7. Awaiting the second phase of project, the CopeMed website has still been accessible and all materials (e.g., virtual library) available to the users. The book “Is There a Future for Artisanal Fisheries in the Western Mediterranean”, conceived and initiated during the first phase of the CopeMed project. The book aims to divulgate the problems of the artisanal fisheries, the obstacles to their development, and some possible opportunities for such a development.

### **CopeMed Phase II**

8. In May 2006 the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department of the FAO has officially submitted the project document to the two donors: the Spanish General Secretariat of Marine Fisheries and the General-Directorate for Fisheries and Marine Affairs of the EC. In early 2007, the project proposal was informally shown to the CopeMed National Focal Points for their advance information. Eventual comments and suggestions on the activities and work plan by the involved members will be made at the Inception/Coordination Committee meeting, foreseen for early 2008. It should be noted that the project was approved by the two donors and that the process to recruit the project coordinator was launched during January 2008.

### **ArtFiMed**

9. Past initiatives and activities, focusing on the Mediterranean artisanal small-scale fisheries, have highlighted the relevance of this sub-sector. They also stressed that artisanal fishery and its interaction with the other activities in the same areas needed special attention. At the final CopeMed Coordination Committee Meeting (Tunis, May 2005), representatives from all participating countries agreed to a continuance of the initiative focussing on the artisanal fisheries sector undertaken by the project. The AECI (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional) expressed to the FAO its readiness to support pilot targeted initiatives in this specific sector in Morocco and Tunisia with the aim of contributing to the socio-economic development and welfare of coastal communities. Consequently, the project “Sustainable development of Mediterranean Small Scale Fisheries: Morocco and Tunisia” was formulated by the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department.

10. Through valorisation of the fish chain and promotion of fishers’ organizational systems, the proposed project aims to support sustainable development of Mediterranean small-scale fisheries, which can alleviate poverty in fishing communities. The project will constitute a pilot activity implemented at two selected sites in Morocco and Tunisia that will operate within the framework of the second phase of CopeMed. Furthermore, in agreement with the national fisheries management

authorities, the envisaged project will lay the basis and initiate the processes that, gradually, will develop and eventually lead to the establishment of participatory fishery co-management framework. This will not reasonably be reached within the first three years of project's implementation, but will act as an objective, and, should the necessary conditions occur, will be pursued in the long term on the basis of the results obtained during this first period.

11. It is believed that this project will play a pilot role within the context of the existing FAO-executed fisheries projects in the Mediterranean, as well as within the broader framework of GFCM. Should this project initiative prove successful, it may be replicated at a larger scale in the region. It should be underlined that Morocco and Tunisia have approved the above-mentioned project and that the related activities will start in the near future.

## **VI. EASTMED**

### **Project Formulation and Preparatory Phase**

12. The whole preparatory phase leading to the formulation of the EastMed project was made possible through the Italian contribution to the "EastMed Project Formulation and Preparatory Phase". During the intersessional period, the technical formulation of EastMed was completed.

13. One of the weaknesses affecting the national fishery sectors in the eastern and southern Mediterranean region is the limited knowledge of and skills needed for marine species identification that hinders the establishment and development of responsible fishery management measures and the proper attribution of catches at species level. Scientifically sound field guides will therefore be prepared for the eastern and southern Mediterranean bio-ecological areas and will be made available and understandable to Arabic-speaking users, as a joint effort with the MedFisis and MedSudMed Projects, as well as with the FAO/FI Species Identification Programme. This Guide will serve as an essential tool for the acquisition of reliable statistical data, for the control of fishing activities and for the enforcement of management technical measures. Additionally, the Guide can help monitor biodiversity and report the presence of Lessepsian species, and monitor more reliably the marine species landed. For this purpose, an ad hoc network of regional fishery experts and taxonomists was composed and complemented by high-level experts from, when necessary, outside the region.

### **Project Implementation Phase**

14. The technical formulation of the main phase of the EastMed project was completed in 2006. Since June 2006, options are being considered between donors and FAO on the implementation arrangements of the project and to ensure the integration of the financial contributions from the different sources.

## **VII. GEF**

15. The Full Brief "Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem. Regional Component: Implementation of agreed actions for the protection of the environmental resources of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas" was approved by the GEF Council on July 2007.

16. FAO and the GFCM Secretariat are the executing agencies for the component 3 of the proposal: "Conservation of biological diversity: Implementation of SAP BIO and related NAPs", subcomponent 3.2: "Promote the sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean through

ecosystem-based management approaches". The objective of the Sub-Component is to increase the ability of coastal nations to utilise coastal and high seas resources through the adoption of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management and the application of targeted interventions to reduce bycatch and other unsustainable fishing practices. The following are the activities to be developed during the next 5 years:

- Identification of regional needs and priorities for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into fisheries research and management in four countries (Croatia, Montenegro, Tunisia, Turkey): practical directions to enhance the full development of EAF-based research supporting the implementation of policies to address the impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Implementation of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem approach into fisheries research and management in four countries (Croatia, Montenegro, Tunisia, Turkey): integration of ecosystem and environmental considerations in effective fisheries management policy.
- Development of legal and management reforms to ensure the long-term limitation of fishing impacts on biodiversity and marine ecosystems in four countries (Croatia, Montenegro, Tunisia, Turkey): Overall fishing impacts on biodiversity and marine ecosystems are greatly reduced over the long-term.
- Undertake a risk assessment to prioritise regional threats to vulnerable fish and fisheries interactions with iconic vertebrate species in five countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey), priority will be given to the three countries involved in 3.2.2.2): to assess the scale and drivers for the bycatch on vulnerable species (sharks, certain invertebrates, cetaceans, monk seals, sea turtles and seabird populations). 1 or 2 fishing métiers per country to be identified and targeted.
- Development and implementation of demonstrable solutions to bycatch mitigation for protected / endangered species of fish and invertebrates and for iconic vertebrate species in three countries (Algeria, Morocco, Turkey): by-catch mortality on sharks, marine mammals, sea turtles and sea birds is significantly reduced.
- Identification of significant fishing impacts in areas of particular vulnerability in five countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey). The impact of towed gears on critical bottom habitats, forbidden fishing practices and protected species significant by-catch identified and mitigation approaches developed with the support of stakeholders

17. Currently UNEP/MAP is in the process of preparation of the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Project Document including detailed budgets, terms of reference for staff and consultants, and the implementation modalities and arrangements.

## **VIII. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION**

18. The Commission is invited to review the work performed by the FAO regional projects and provide comments and views, especially on those activities directly supporting the current scientific and technical priorities of SAC.