

Annexe 4: REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WORKING PARTY N°2 MEDITERRANEAN RESOURCES

1. DEMERSAL FISH AND SHELLFISH RESOURCES

1.1. Delineation of desirable management areas

Unlike large pelagic, demersal and small pelagic resources are largely confined to coastal waters of the Mediterranean; a great proportion of demersal resources (and a significant proportion of small pelagic) lies within 50 miles of the coast. Notable exceptions where the shelf area extends beyond territorial into international waters are the Catalan and Balears shelves, Gulf of Lions and of Gabes, the Adriatic, and a number of areas in the Aegean Sea. The resources of these areas constitute Straddling Stocks in the sense now being discussed at the New York Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and demand that particular management agreements and provisions be developed that address these particular areas.

In practical terms, each of the different basins of the Mediterranean can be considered as having its unit stocks, and coordination of data gathering, research and management on these resources has been tackled within GFCM and elsewhere on a sub-regional basis. The Group considered that a sub-regionalisation of cooperative management mechanisms is inevitable under these conditions, and supported the interest shown in sub-regional harmonization of fisheries measures expressed at the meeting by several countries of the Adriatic Sea. A similar joint approach by coastal States to developing a special management regime seems inevitable in other areas such as the Aegean.

With the exception of the few extensive shelf areas mentioned above, most other shelf areas are narrow, and their demersal stocks are largely encompassed by territorial waters. Fisheries in these shelf areas can be managed by competent authorities, with relatively minor problems of sharing of joint resources between contiguous countries. There still remain however advantages in harmonizing measures; particularly for small pelagic resources, and deep water resources of the continental slope which are progressively coming under exploitation.

1.2 Coordination/standardization of data gathering and cooperative research

There seems little evidence that vessels from outside the Mediterranean are fishing demersal and small pelagic resources. However vessels from Mediterranean countries frequently fish directly offshore from the territorial waters of neighbouring countries. At present, there is no routine exchange of catch and effort/fleet data between "local" and "non-local" coastal States whose fleets fish a common resource in international waters respectively. Such a pooling of "local" and "non-local" catch and effort is essential for any joint assessment of stocks.

Setting minimum standards for data collection throughout the Mediterranean for key species and key fishing gear types would be a first step to removing our current state of ignorance of many fisheries, and a first step recommended is that such data collection using common formats and a minimum technical standards be given high priority.

The Group discussed the urgent need for cooperative mechanisms to be reinforced, in order to improve cooperation between States in matters of research by setting up networks of information between national research institutes, so that:

- information can be diffused between interested institutes using modern methods of communication (e.g. e-mail), and it appears appropriate at this time to set up a network between centres of excellence for exchange of research and statistical data.
- research and stock assessment approaches can be standardized and results compared, even without the need for frequent meetings
- peer review of methods, analyses and results can be facilitated
- cooperative decisions on research priorities can be arranged
- duplication of research and of costs can be reduced, and cost savings achieved
- complete information can be collected on catch, effort and biological characteristics/ demographic state of the resources throughout its range and/or GFCM statistical unit area.
- common approaches to the survey, and assessment, of resources can be adopted.

The current mechanisms for data collation and analysis followed in GFCM and elsewhere suffer from lack of manpower and resources. This has occurred both peripherally, in that many States have allocated inadequate resources to data gathering and analysis, and in the inadequacy of central compilation, analysis and rapid reporting of joint data for a given resource/area. It was recognised that this situation is of particular concern to countries of eastern Mediterranean and it was suggested that a small working group of experts could usefully explore the preconditions for tackling this question, with particular reference to fisheries bodies in the Mediterranean.

1.3 Monitoring and enforcement of management measures

The control and enforcement of fisheries management measures in international waters presents serious problems at the present time: problems that can only be addressed when Mediterranean and other States adhere to the Compliance agreement, which specifically recognizes the responsibility of States to control the activities of their flagged vessels in international waters. Further progress in this area will also need to recognize that part of the demersal stocks extend beyond the limits of territorial waters, and establish through concerted action of coastal States, common management zones that may extend beyond territorial seas, while avoiding conflicts of jurisdiction between neighbouring countries.

While representatives of non-EU countries saw the present approach to harmonization of management as a useful blueprint for future consideration at the national level, harmonization must begin from current national frameworks, and attempt to work towards an agreed common ideal within a realistic but short framework. This framework must recognize the serious limitations in resources in many countries to implement common management measures. E.U. representatives indicated that such a harmonized set of regulatory approaches must include in some form or other, the following elements:

- a limitation of access by gears of particular types to particular grounds. (Some type of mapping/zonation of current areas of fishing is required);
- a clear idea of the selectivity characteristics (by sizes and species) of the main gear/vessel types operating;
- a method of accounting for current catches, vessels operating by type of gear, and current levels of fishing effort/fishing mortality being exerted on the stock, for any management zone agreed to; and
- an agreed approach to control, surveillance and enforcement, with exchange of information, and possibly competencies, between the parties concerned.

The Working group concluded that the adherence of Mediterranean States to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing would be a major contribution to harmonizing fisheries measures on a Mediterranean wide basis.

1.4 Feasibility of coordinated approaches to effort control for different management areas

Fleet expansions averaging some 4 to 7% per year have characterised Mediterranean fisheries over the period 1970-1990. These figures have been somewhat lower for the Northern Mediterranean, but here fleet build-up began earlier: as early as immediately after the Second World War. Fleets fish demersal and small pelagic resources both inside and outside territorial waters, and consist both of vessels from the contiguous coastal State, and other coastal Mediterranean States (referred to here as "non-local fleets").

Judging from stock assessments available, demersal resources are fully to overfished. Small pelagic resources have some potential for further fishing except for Anchovy stocks which have declined in most parts of the Mediterranean, although this is more likely to be due to changing environmental conditions than overfishing. Several experiences with temporary reductions of effort show stocks can recover once effort is decreased.

Catch trends over the same period as the effort build up have also tended to be positive until recent years, although there is evidence that this build up has largely stopped, and has been accompanied by declining catch rates and largely sustained by increasing real prices of fish.

There seems clear evidence now of serious fleet overcapitalization, and a number of governments have been obliged to provide subsidies to avoid economic impacts on fishing communities. Economically, large-scale fisheries have competed poorly with small-scale fisheries under conditions of low catch rates, but we have little or poor information on the activities or catches from these.

The conclusion of the GFCM is that all other technical fishery measures are ineffective if the limitation of total fishing effort exerted on limited and circumscribed fishery resources is not given a high priority. Unless such a top priority is given, the following consequences are inevitable:

- decline in stocks and catch rates,

- wastage of the excessive economic resources invested in the fishery,
- conflicts between resource users and adverse impacts on coastal communities,
- adverse impacts on the environment and loss of biodiversity,
- calls for subsidies to support the affected sectors, and net economic loss from the sector, despite marked increase in prices for demersal species. This price increase have incidentally fuelled excessive investment in the catching sector, and have also lead to increased compensatory imports of fish into the region from elsewhere.

Two main approaches to management are quota and effort control. Experience with quota control has not been fully positive elsewhere, and has not eliminated the need to control fleet size. In the Mediterranean, quotas have a chance of working only in those few fisheries operating from a few ports, with little bycatch and a limited number of participating fleets.

In general, the first step for any management system, such as has been agreed to under GFCM and elsewhere appears to be to set up systems of limiting the number and fishing power of vessels registered within national or local databases of currently operating vessels and their characteristics. Setting up such a system compatible for all parties seems a reasonable and attainable objective within the short- to medium-term, and could be approached through adherence to the appropriate articles of the Compliance Agreement. Coastal Mediterranean States are urged to ratify this convention in the near future; setting the scene for a first coordinated summary of the total fleet size currently exploiting demersal and small pelagic Mediterranean international waters.

In the medium-term, the ideal sequence of events is suggested:

- based on such a standardized documentation of total fleet size, and following a common assessment of stocks agreed to by those parties sharing access to a common resource, the ideal level of fishing effort/stock mortality can be estimated which will optimize yields and conserve resources;
- negotiations may then begin between parties to adjust fleet size/fishing effort equitably, to the capacity of the resource to support such fishing effort in a sustainable fashion.

1.5 Appropriateness of existing international management framework

The seven management subareas in the Mediterranean proper (not including the Black Sea) provide a useful and flexible basis for regional management. The GFCM approach has been to develop general principles to be implemented at the discretion of its Member States. Its Members States have not, to date, considered it necessary to use the considerable powers specified in the GFCM Agreement to tackle the problems in each of these subregions separately, since the state of management science and how it is expressed in the management structure varies sub-regionally (although there are common themes).

The Working Group suggested that the provisions for management of fisheries in international waters specified in the GFCM Articles could be implemented for concrete fisheries management, and welcomed a more active management role for GFCM; recognizing that this will only be possible if the necessary resources for such an enhanced role are made available.

The group recognized that GFCM needs to be strengthened in order to fulfil its task. The main

areas of improvement were identified as:

- the political will to implement resolutions by Member Countries;
- increased frequency of cooperative activities and working groups;
- increased national capacity for data gathering, research and implementation of adopted measures.

On the first point, it was recognized that the undertaking made at UNFED, and those which will be required following the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and on the FAO Code of Conduct and Compliance agreement, offer sufficient opportunity to raise awareness of the need for timely action. With respect to the frequency and intensity of research activities, the development of national capacity, and the implementation process (all with their requirements for training and technical assistance), the group recognized that it will require significant supplementary support to FAO, since the desired changes cannot be achieved even with the necessary streamlining of GFCM procedures within currently available resources.

1.6 Monitoring and enforcement of management measures

The working Group was aware that any common fisheries management regime for straddling stocks will require the agreement of all parties to a common enforcement approach, but the development of such an approach will have to await the conclusions of the August session of the UN Conference mentioned earlier. The suggestion made in plenary that the present group review the draft conclusions of the above UN Conference was considered a necessary precondition for developing such a joint monitoring and enforcement regime.

2. LARGE PELAGIC RESOURCES

2.1 Fisheries

The Mediterranean pelagic fisheries have in recent years averaged about 65,000 tonnes annually, which comprises 11% of the total Atlantic catch. The capture of large pelagic fish in the Mediterranean, particularly bluefin tuna and swordfish has increased at a spectacular rate in recent years, the Mediterranean catch of these species providing 66% and 35% of the average total capture of the Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea (1983 to 1992).

2.2 Research and planning

The General Fisheries Committee for the Mediterranean (GFCM) a grouping within the FAO framework, is in charge of the management of resources in the Mediterranean, but due to the highly migratory character of swordfish and the necessity of taking into account the interactions between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, the development of statistical, research and development recommendations for tuna is de facto confined to ICCAT.

The statistics on the pelagic fisheries in the Mediterranean are consistently of poor quality and coverage (in comparison with the Atlantic tuna statistics) and are generally inadequate for the requirements of the ICCAT Scientific Committee. These serious statistical problems can be attributed to Mediterranean coastal countries who are not members of ICCAT, and to the effective increase in the fleet fishing for tuna in the Mediterranean under flags of convenience (in particular for blue fin tuna).

These statistical problems seriously limit the analyses of the state of most pelagic stocks in the Mediterranean: only bluefin tuna has been studied by ICCAT. The research carried out on the stocks in the Mediterranean is also very fragmented: the stock structure determining the rate of migration between the Mediterranean and different parts of the Atlantic being the main problem.

2.3 State of the stocks

This work has been completed in the case of SCRS (ICCAT) in cooperation with the GFCM. The only evaluation carried out was on bluefin tuna. These studies have prompted ICCAT to formulate various recommendations since 1974 to limit the fishing effort and reduce the capture of juvenile bluefin tuna (<6.4 k). The conclusions of the ICCAT-GFCM meeting held in September 1994 confirmed the serious concerns on the current state of the red tuna stock in the Mediterranean and East Atlantic. The absence of completed scientific analyses on swordfish due to the statistical data available, is by no means a positive factor, and the large increase in the catch of this species in the Mediterranean is very worrying, more so when a high capture rate of juvenile fish is recorded in the different fisheries.

2.4 Current management measures

An examination of the fisheries data shows clearly that the management measures recommended by ICCAT, have for the most part no real application in the Mediterranean. They have resulted in an uncontrolled increase in the associated fishing effort and in catch of juvenile bluefin tuna.

2.5 Towards the rational management of Mediterranean pelagic fisheries

The conservation of stocks in the Mediterranean in the medium- and long-term is therefore probably more uncertain, unless voluntary measures are quickly taken by the countries fishing in this region. The chronic weakness of statistics on the tuna fishery in numerous countries in the Mediterranean basin, and the lack of research carried out on the species greatly limits the quality of the assessments on the state of the stocks as a basis for rational management. Fisheries statistics and research coordinated on a Mediterranean scale must be developed. It is also clear that a mechanism allowing effective management by the relevant countries must be put into operation quickly, as any lesser measures pose a serious risk to the conservation of resources, in particular for bluefin tuna and swordfish.

The working group on Mediterranean fisheries resources unanimously adopted the above analysis and endorsed the following conclusions and recommendations.

2.6 Conclusions

- There are difficulties for non-ICCAT member Mediterranean countries to participate effectively as observers in the work of this committee in the time available; in addition the absence of Mediterranean researchers from ICCAT work often rendered the assessment of Mediterranean resources difficult or impossible;

- The consideration of socio-economic factors is essential in the management of the tuna fisheries in the Mediterranean, which are often traditional and artisanal. ICCAT work for statutory reasons never takes account of these socio-economic components;
- The need for conservation of resources has always been recognised, it is incontrovertible that if the resource collapses, no fishery can survive and the economic and social consequences will be dramatic;
- The principle of prudent management of fisheries for example based on simple biological terms of reference, must be logically applied to the tuna stocks for which some data exists, and for those stocks where there is a presumption of the danger of overexploitation (similarly if scientific analyses do not allow the exact assessment of the degree of overexploitation). This rule, which is not in use at ICCAT, could for example have useful applications for swordfish in the Mediterranean. The Working Group noted on this subject that the 1974 ICCAT measures on red tuna would have been excessive, this stock having proved its durability over the past 20 years, with catches higher than at the beginning of the 1970s;
- The application in the Mediterranean, from 1995 of new community regulations in the area of fisheries will allow better application of management measures in France, Spain, Greece and Italy. It has been noted that the application of minimum landing sizes will be largely simplified if undersized fish were considered illegal no matter where found along the marketing chain from the producer to the consumer;
- The tendency for many countries (outside the Mediterranean) to manage stocks by the use of an economic exclusion zone has been noted; it appears to complement and be compatible with the management of tuna resources on the schedule of large stocks managed in the ambit of international commissions;
- The working balance between ICCAT and GFCM should allow for a viable assessment of the state of the resources of the Mediterranean and for their rational management. However, it is obvious that this mechanism does not work in an efficient manner especially with the weaknesses in facilities of the GFCM and the various problems of ICCAT (statutory and related to working methods). A restructuring of these two entities at a structural and cooperational level leading to more efficient work in the Mediterranean zone must therefore be studied and put in place as soon as possible.

