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**REGIONAL STUDY ON SMALL TUNAS IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN INCLUDING THE BLACK SEA**



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**REGIONAL STUDY ON SMALL TUNAS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
INCLUDING THE BLACK SEA**

by

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M'Hamed Idrissi, Lidia Orsi Relini**

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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

During its thirty-second session, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) requested to its Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) to undertake a regional study on small tunas fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas with the perspective to prepare the eighth meeting of the joint GFCM/ICCAT Working Group on Large pelagic, held in Spain (May, 2008).

The study reverses the widespread perception that these fishing activities were almost irrelevant either in terms of catches or revenues. The fleet catching small tunas is scarcely defined or not identified in most of the countries studied, but it is generally known that thousands of small and medium-sized vessels, engaged in small-scale, artisanal or recreational fisheries, are carrying out activities that also target small tuna species. In addition, catches are also obtained as a bycatch in other fisheries.

This document, related to the above mentioned study, summarizes and makes analysis of the available information and data about the small tuna species in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, notably on their biology and ecology, their exploitation, including the fishery statistics by species, and the socio-economic aspects of these fisheries. It was elaborated with the financial support of the Japanese project titled “Supporting and strengthening function and coordination among regional fisheries bodies (RFBs)/Regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs)” quoted GCP/INT/069/JPN.

This document was prepared by Mr Abdellah Srouf (GFCM Deputy Executive Secretary) and five (5) consultants namely: Mr A. Di Natale, Mr A. Hattour, Ms Ç. Keskin, Mr M’Hamed Idrissi and Ms L.O.Relini.

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ABSTRACT

This study, undertaken upon request by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), summarizes the available information about the small tuna species in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea. It provides data on their biology and ecology, their exploitation, including the fishery statistics by species, and the socio-economic aspects of these fisheries.

The study reverses the widespread perception that these fishing activities were almost irrelevant either in terms of catches or revenues. Indeed it was commonly believed that these fisheries were mostly subsistence activities. On the contrary, important production levels can be achieved. The fleet catching small tunas is scarcely defined or not identified in most of the countries studied, but it is generally known that thousands of small- and medium-sized vessels, engaged in small-scale, artisanal or recreational fisheries, are carrying out activities that also target small tuna species. In addition, catches are also obtained as a bycatch in other fisheries.

Many Mediterranean and Black Sea countries are not reporting any catches, or, in the case of a few countries, only a small number of landings are declared. Nevertheless, fishery production data related to the small tuna species show a total official reported landing of 83 386 tonnes in 2005. The under-reporting is believed to be significant because landing sites are scattered all along the coastline and the islands – where many thousands of small and medium-sized vessels operate – and the catches are often directly marketed. Moreover, catches from recreational fishery in many countries are seldomly reported. Under such circumstances, the total landings could possibly be estimated at a minimum of about 150 000 tonnes. Considering only the total official production for the four most relevant species, it is likely that the estimation of the real production might reach about 300 millions euros in the best years.

A specific problem can be noted in relation to the small tuna species fishery in the Marmara Sea and in the Black Sea. Apart from Turkey, no recent data are present in any of the databases used for this study. The level of catches reported by Turkey in that area is, however, important.

A secondary difficulty is the lack of data on fleet segmentation targeting these species, on catch per unit effort (CPUE) and on socio-economic parameters.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude, réalisée sur demande de la Commission générale des pêches pour la Méditerranée, offre un résumé des informations disponibles concernant les petits thonidés en Méditerranée et dans la mer Noire. Elle fournit des données sur leur biologie et écologie ainsi que sur leur exploitation, y compris les statistiques des pêches par espèces et les aspects socioéconomiques de ces pêcheries.

Cette étude renverse l'idée reçue selon laquelle ces activités halieutiques étaient peu pertinentes en terme de prises ou de revenus. En effet, on croit généralement que ces pêcheries sont avant tout des activités de subsistance, alors qu'au contraire, elles peuvent atteindre d'importants niveaux de production. Dans la plupart des pays étudiés, la flotte capturant les petits thonidés est mal définie ou non identifiée, mais on sait que généralement des milliers de navires de petite ou moyenne taille, opérant dans la pêche artisanale ou récréative, exercent des activités visant également les petits thonidés. De surcroît il existe des prises accessoires dans d'autres pêcheries.

De nombreux pays de la Méditerranée et de la mer Noire ne font pas rapport de leurs captures ou, dans le cas de quelques pays, seulement un nombre limité de débarquements sont déclarés. Néanmoins les données de la production halieutique relative aux petits thonidés s'élèvent à 83 386 tonnes en 2005. On pense que cette estimation à la baisse est importante car les sites de débarquement sont disséminés le long des côtes et des îles – où opèrent plusieurs milliers de navires de petite et moyenne taille – et que les prises sont directement commercialisées. De surcroît, les prises provenant de la pêche récréative dans de nombreux pays sont rarement comptabilisées. Dans de telles circonstances, l'ensemble des débarquements pourrait être estimé à un minimum d'approximativement 150 000 tonnes. En considérant seulement la production officielle totale pour les quatre espèces les plus pertinentes, il est probable que l'évaluation de la production réelle atteigne 300 millions d'euros pour les années fructueuses.

Il existe un problème spécifique lié aux petits thonidés en mer de Marmara et en mer Noire. À l'exception de la Turquie, aucune donnée récente ne figure dans les bases de données utilisées dans le cadre de cette étude. Le niveau des captures dont la Turquie fait état dans la région est cependant notable.

Une deuxième question concerne le manque de données relatives à la segmentation des flottilles ciblant ces espèces, la capture par unité d'effort (CPUE) ainsi que les paramètres socioéconomiques.

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