



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



General Fisheries  
Commission for  
the Mediterranean

# GFCM Fisheries Management Plans

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NPFC/FAO workshop: Science-based management options  
available for operationalizing the precautionary approach as  
outlined in the Convention for NPFC priority species

10 December 2025



# The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean



## OBJECTIVES

Federate efforts of countries towards:

- the **conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources** at all levels (biological, social, economic and environmental)
- the **sustainable development of aquaculture**

24 Contracting Parties  
5 Cooperating non-Contracting Parties  
(Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Jordan,  
Moldova, Saudi Arabia)

# Multiannual management plans & the PA

- + **Framework for Sustainability**

Management plans provide structured frameworks focusing on long-term sustainability of fish stocks and preventing overfishing.

- + **Adaptive Management Approach**

These plans are adaptive, allowing adjustments based on changing environmental and socio-economic factors and new data.

- + **Precautionary Conservation Measures**

The precautionary approach ensures proactive measures like conservative catch limits and habitat protection to avoid irreversible damage.

- + **Balancing Ecology and Economy**

Management plans balance ecological sustainability with economic viability, supporting resilient fisheries and dependent livelihoods.





# Multiannual management plans & the PA



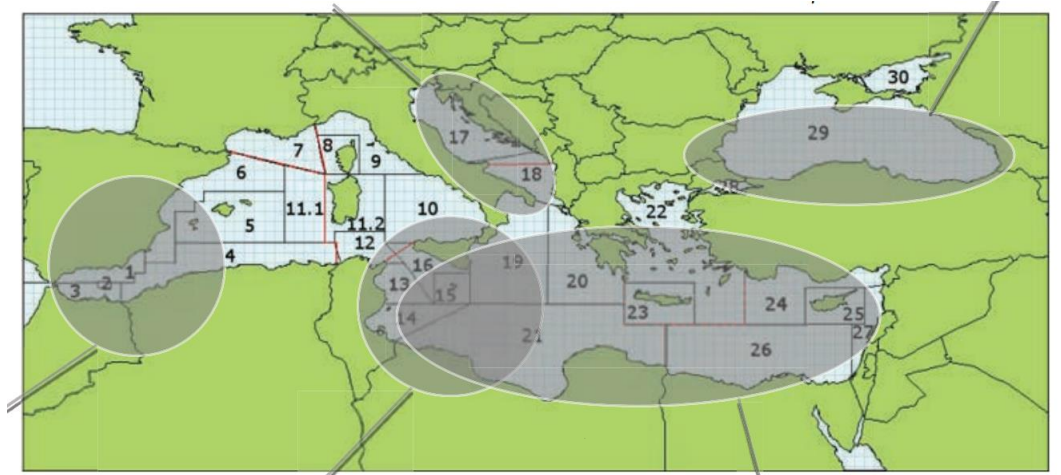
- + **Addressing Scientific Uncertainty**  
The PA prevents delaying protective measures despite incomplete scientific data to safeguard marine resources.
- + **Conservative Management Strategies**  
Setting conservative biological reference points and adaptive strategies helps maintain sustainable fish populations.
- + **Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation**  
Ongoing data collection and evaluation allow refinement of management plans for better ecological outcomes.
- + **Sustainable Fisheries Governance**  
Precautionary approach aligns with global sustainability goals, supporting biodiversity and ecosystem-based management.

# Multiannual management plans in the GFCM

## 36<sup>th</sup> session GFCM (2012)

- + Adopted general **guidelines for the development of multiannual management plans**
  - Recognize the **GFCM's role** in developing and adopting multiannual management plans, especially for stocks shared among CPs or spanning adjacent GSAs.
  - Countries can develop national management plans as long as they are at least as strict as, and not conflicting with, GFCM subregional plans
  - The main goal of these plans is to **prevent and reverse overfishing** based on **biological reference points**.

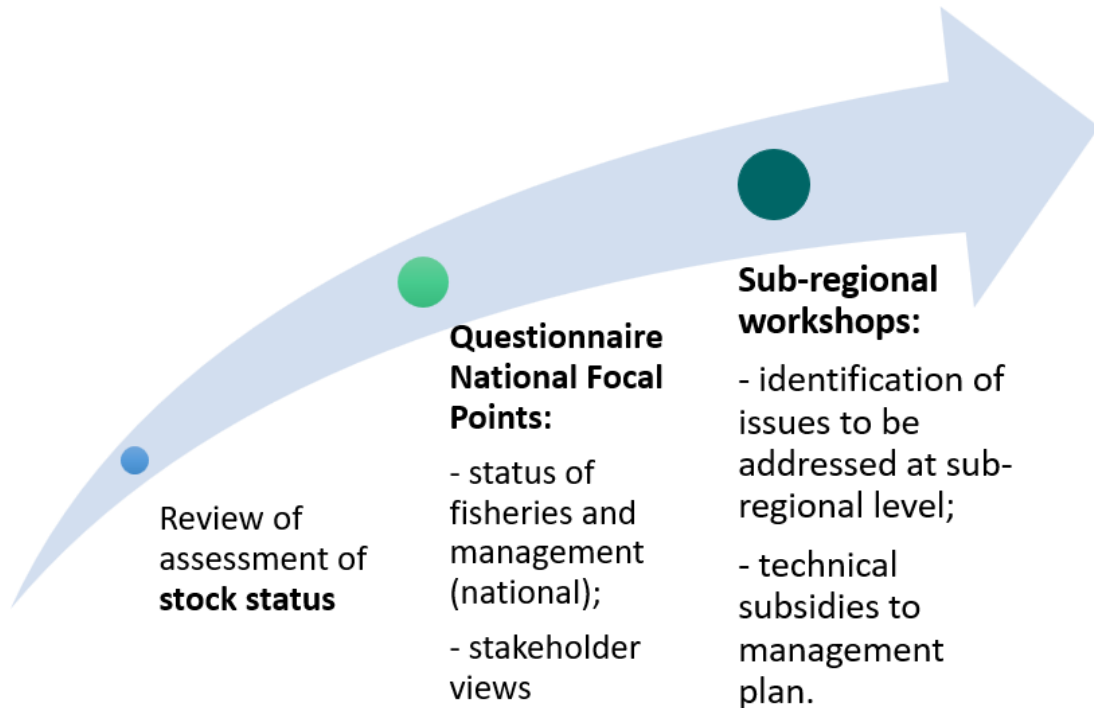
## Roadmap to assess feasibility



**Six case studies of representative fisheries in the different GFCM subregions** selected for the first activities developed for implementation of management plans

# Testing the feasibility of the GFCM guidelines

## Roadmap to assess feasibility



Sequence of steps to obtain the baseline information establishing the core elements of a management plan

## Roadmap outcomes

- + It was widely accepted that they should be based on the principle that to manage fisheries sustainably, it is **necessary to implement a precautionary and adaptable system** that maintains stocks within safe biological limits
- + Common emerging issues concerned the **interactions of fisheries in the ecosystem**, the need to **evaluate stock units** appropriately and the need to **evaluate the socio-economic consequences** of management measures/plans
- + The case studies enabled the preparation of **baseline information that could form the foundation for developing management plans** in the future:
  - **Background Technical Document**
  - **Technical elements for management**: outline of the main elements of a management plan, including potential objectives, indicators, reference points and technical measures, whilst also highlighting priorities for research

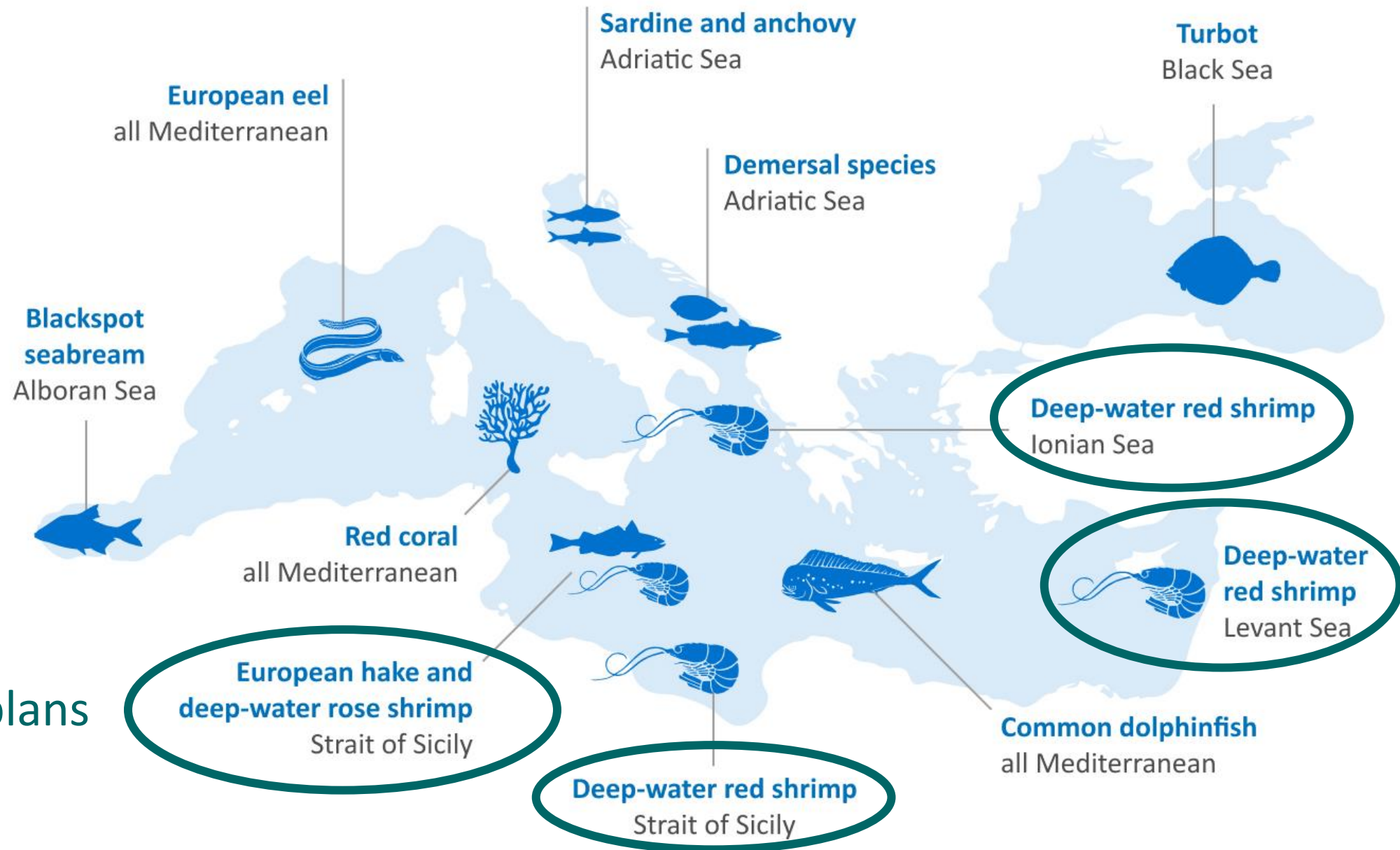


# GFCM Management plans nowadays

- + Consistent with the **precautionary approach**, designed to provide high long-term yields consistent with MSY and guarantee a low risk of stock collapse while maintaining relative stability of fisheries
- + Adopted as **binding recommendations** at the GFCM annual session based on the technical work of the Scientific Advisory Committee for fisheries (SAC) and the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Black Sea (ACBS)
- + Typically focused on **large-scale fisheries and shared stocks** at the regional or subregional level
- + All specify **adaptive mechanisms** in order to achieve specific objectives within **desired timeframes** and maintain results over time, while accounting for changing and evolving stocks, fisheries and environments
- + Mostly foreseen to be implemented in two stages:
  - **Transitional phase** implementing **transitional precautionary measures** while advancing on scientific work to identify long-term measures
  - **Second phase** implementing **long-term adaptive measures** based on the information collected in the transitional phase
- + In the past management tended to be top down, more recently adopted management plans have taken a more **participatory and collaborative approach**

# GFCM Multiannual management plans nowadays

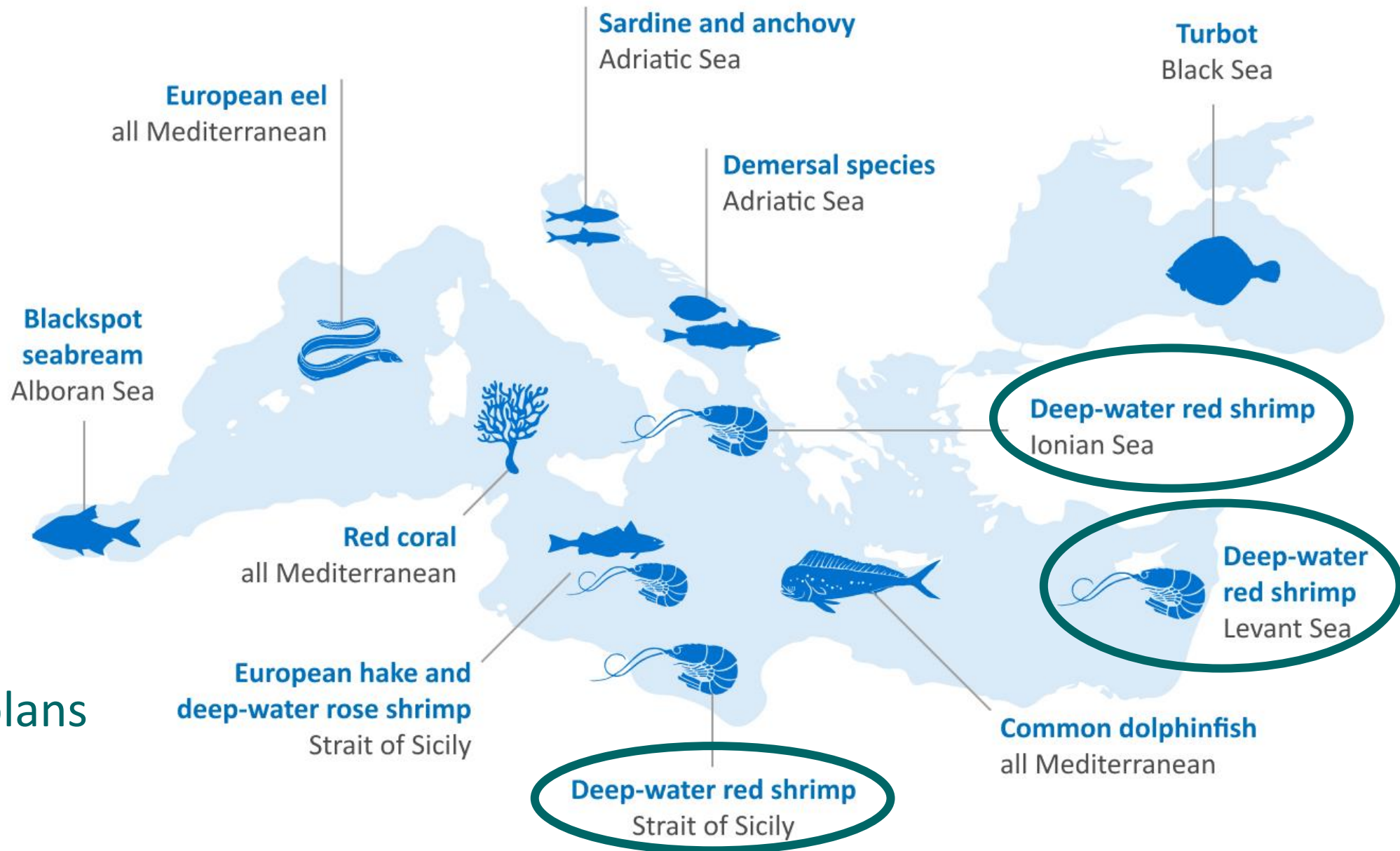
11  
multiannual  
management plans  
5 600+ vessels





# GFCM Multiannual management plans nowadays

11  
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# Management of deep water red shrimp trawl fisheries in the Strait of Sicily, the Ionian Sea and the Levant sea

## Demersal fisheries

Rec. GFCM/45/2022/5

Rec. GFCM/45/2022/6

Rec. GFCM/45/2022/7

Rec. GFCM/46/2023/2

Rec. GFCM/46/2023/3

Rec. GFCM/46/2023/4



Catch limits



Temporal measures



MCRS



Limits of fishing capacity



Authorised  
vessels/landing points



Measures addressing  
IUU fishing



Adaptive  
approach



- + **Transitional period:** 2023-2025 with a transitional fishing regime based on 2021:
- Catch limits by species: 3% annual reduction
  - Temporal closure for 30 consecutive days from the months of March and September
  - MCRS 50 mm CL (additional Recs)
  - Fleet capacity at 2019
  - Annual advice on status
  - Permanent international inspection and surveillance scheme
  - i) performing MSE, ii) finalizing identification of the fishing footprint on vulnerable marine ecosystems; and iii) finalizing the identification of essential fish habitat areas for juveniles and spawners of deep-water red shrimps

**EXTENDED BY ONE YEAR!**

# Management of deep water red shrimp trawl fisheries in the Strait of Sicily, the Ionian Sea and the Levant sea

## Demersal fisheries

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Catch limits



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MCRS



Limits of fishing capacity



Authorised  
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Adaptive  
approach

## + LT management plan: 2026(7) – 2030:

- Single-species yearly catch limits **based on a Harvest Control Rule emerging from MSE**
- The HCRs shall ensure a **low probability of spawning stock biomass falling below Blim** (5 percent probability)

### Safeguards

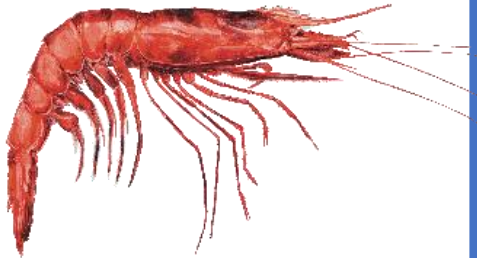
- Where **SSB is below Bpa**, remedial measures shall be taken to ensure the rapid return of the concerned stocks to levels above those capable of producing MSY → catch limits shall be set at levels consistent with producing a fishing mortality lower than  $F_{msy}$ , taking into account the decrease in biomass.
- Where **SSB is below Blim**, further remedial measures shall be taken to ensure the rapid return of the concerned stocks to levels above those capable of producing MSY → may include suspending the fishery



# Management of deep water red shrimp trawl fisheries in the Strait of Sicily, the Ionian Sea and the Levant sea

## VMEs

Res. GFCM/43/2019/6



**Resolution GFCM/43/2019/6 on the establishment of a set of measures to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems formed by cnidarian (coral) communities in the Mediterranean Sea:**

- CPCs should encourage the progressive implementation of a **set of transitional measures to prevent significant adverse impacts (SAIs) of deep-sea fisheries activities on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs)** formed by cnidarian (coral) communities protected under Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol of the Barcelona Convention
- Consistent with **the precautionary approach** and ensure a low risk of SAIs
- These measures should be **in line with the protocols for the protection of VMEs** in the GFCM area of application endorsed by the 42nd session of the GFCM

→ all fishing vessels > 15 m LOA operating with bottom contact fishing gear:

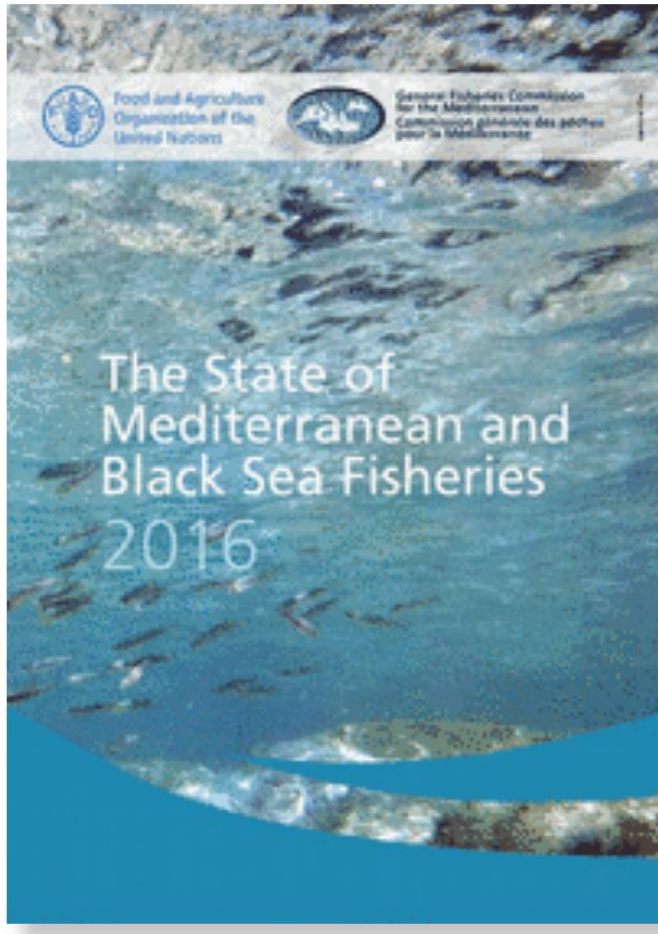
- targeting *Aristaeomorpha foliacea*, *Aristeus antennatus*, or *Plesionika martia*; and
- deeper than 300 metres and on all offshore seamounts

→ **A - VME encounter reporting protocol** in the GFCM area of application

→ **B - Mapping existing deep-sea fishing areas** in the GFCM area of application

→ **C - Exploratory deep-sea bottom fishing reporting protocol** in the GFCM area of application

# Resources



<https://www.fao.org/gfcm/publications/somfi/en/>



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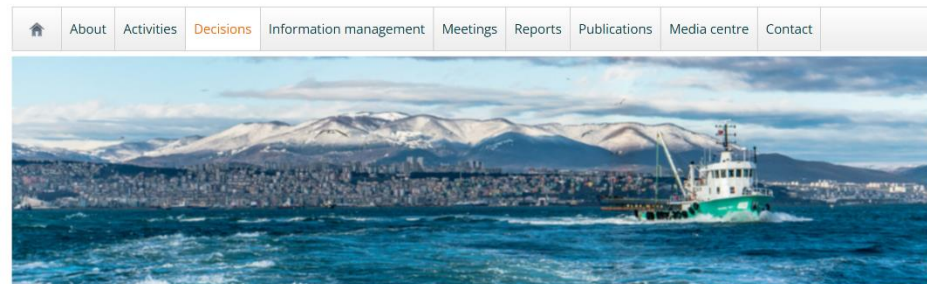


FISHERIES

Management plans

<https://www.fao.org/gfcm/activities/fisheries/management-measures/management-plans/en/>

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - GFCM



GFCM recommendations and resolutions

<https://www.fao.org/gfcm/decisions/en/>

# Thank you for your attention

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[www.fao.org/gfcm](http://www.fao.org/gfcm)

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