



European Commission

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Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe

● Special Issue: The Mediterranean
Managing Mediterranean fisheries



● **GFCM:**
Transmediterranean
cooperation

● **Bluefin tuna:**
Appropriate means of control

Calendar

Shows and exhibitions

• **Nor-Fishing, Trondheim (Norway), 12-15 August 2008**

This major Norwegian trade show is held every two years. All sectors related to the fishing economy are represented, from shipyards to packaging for processed products.

> For more information:

Tel: + 47 73 56 86 41

E-mail: mailbox@nor-fishing.no

Website: <http://www.nor-fishing.no>

• **Polar-Fish, Sisimiut (Greenland), 12-14 September 2008**

This fish fair takes place in one of Greenland's major ports (because it is ice-free). It targets buyers and sellers of equipment and products related to Arctic Ocean fisheries.

> For more information:

Tel: + 45 99 35 55 55

E-mail: ehe@akkc.dk

Website: <http://www.polar-fish.net>

• **Interpescas 2008, Aveiro (Portugal), 18-21 September 2008**

This Portuguese trade show is an international gathering for all operators involved in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

> For more information:

Tel: + 351 243 370 174

E-mail: geral@exposan.pt

Website: <http://www.interpescas.com>

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Note to readers

We welcome your comments or suggestions at the following address:
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or by fax to: (+ 32) 2 299 30 40 with reference to *Fisheries and
aquaculture in Europe*. E-mail: fisheries-magazine@ec.europa.eu

For further information on fisheries and maritime affairs, please consult the following sites:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/borg/index_en.htm

<http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries>

<http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs>

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A sea unlike any other?

In the European Union alone, the Mediterranean fisheries sector provides a living for more than 90 000 fishermen ⁽¹⁾ working on more than 40 000 vessels ⁽²⁾. But fishing in the Mediterranean is not just an economic activity. It is part of the area's culture and way of life. Whole regions have been built and developed on fishing activities.

In the Mediterranean, more than anywhere else, the sector presents specific characteristics that call for tailor-made actions. First of all, the Mediterranean is a semi-closed sea. Due to its narrow continental shelf, a large portion of the fishing activity takes place near the shore. Other distinguishing features include the presence of shared, overlapping, and highly migratory fish stocks, the fragmented nature of scientific data, the importance of recreational fisheries and above all the practice of multispecies fishing.

With the adoption of its regulation on the Mediterranean in November 2006, the European Union aimed to set in place an effective policy for the management of Mediterranean fish resources.

It was not easy to get the regulation adopted. Although everyone agreed on the need for effective measures to protect fish stocks and marine ecosystems, as well as a management framework suited to Mediterranean fisheries, a fair balance had to be struck between the need for more uniform measures and that of guaranteeing the flexibility required to best support the specific features of the fisheries concerned.

Today, the dynamic is in place, not only for the measures taken by the European Union, but more broadly for all the countries concerned, which are represented in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) ⁽³⁾. Indeed, the solutions to meet the challenge of sustainable Mediterranean fisheries only make sense if they are applied by all the Mediterranean rim countries.

Vigilance and monitoring remain essential: there are too many exceptions to the rules. For example, although drifting gillnets have been banned since 2002 they are still being used. If care is not taken, and if such violations go unpunished, the measures could well be rendered ineffective.

The members of the GFCM are working in the same direction. Real progress has been made on controls, closer collaboration for the collection of reliable data, the adoption of technical measures to improve selectivity and the creation of conditions for sustainable aquaculture. The aim is to guarantee sustainable Mediterranean fisheries, enable coastal communities to maintain a fishing activity and preserve the ancestral heritage of this activity for future generations.

The Editor

(1) P. Salz, E. Buisman, J. Smit, B. de Vos, Employment in the fisheries sector: current situation, Final report, April 2006.

(2) Fleet register on the Net – <http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/fleet/>

(3) The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean is the regional fisheries organisation with responsibility for the Mediterranean and Black Seas – www.gfcm.org

Joining forces to guarantee sustainable Mediterranean fisheries



80% of the Mediterranean fleet is made up of vessels less than 12 metres long that practice coastal fishing on short trips.

Fish resources are threatened in the Mediterranean just as they are in other waters. They must be protected and fisheries must be managed. With that aim in mind, the European Union adopted a specific regulation ⁽¹⁾ in December 2006 for the sustainable management of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Sea. At the same time, new rules for transmediterranean cooperation were put in place under the auspices of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. The aim of all these actions is to guarantee the sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries, while respecting the unique features of this sea.

Fisheries production in the Mediterranean and Black Seas has been declining since the 1980s: it has slipped from 1.95 million tonnes in 1986 to 1.45 million tonnes in 2005 (Eurostat figures). Leaving aside bluefin tuna fishing, catches are now 25% smaller than 20 years ago. This shrinking level, which is not due to a reduction in fishing activity itself, reflects an alarming decline in certain stocks. Pressure is particularly high on swordfish, hake, whiting, red mullet, all the sparidae (sea bream, red seabream, sargo bream, etc.), anchovy, sardine, deepwater rose shrimp and blue-and-red shrimp, species that scientists readily describe as 'overexploited'. And other stocks have yet to be evaluated. . . As for bluefin tuna, illegal overfishing has grown to such an extent that it has become hard to assess the exploitation level.

This situation calls for effective conservation measures. But such measures must take account of the distinct features of this semi-closed sea.

The unique features of the Mediterranean

Mediterranean fisheries cannot be managed like Atlantic fisheries. It would be difficult, for example, to impose catch quotas in a sea where operators do not target one or two species in particular. Apart from bluefin tuna, swordfish and shellfish, Mediterranean fisheries are referred to as 'multispecies', meaning that, on every trip to sea, fishermen take in a wide variety of species that then have to be sorted.

This is due to the Mediterranean's geological configuration. This sea is very deep – its average depth is 1 500 m but it has deeps of over 5 000 metres. Aquatic organisms, which tend to avoid the darkness and food scarcity characteristic of great depths, are concentrated on the continental shelf, which is generally very narrow except in the Adriatic, the Aegean and the Straits of Sicily.

(1) Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006.

This particular environment cannot ensure the subsistence of large populations of marine animals. It also determines the types of fishing practiced: primarily coastal fishing aboard small boats less than 12 metres in length (80% of the Mediterranean fleet) on short trips rarely lasting more than 12 hours. This essentially small-scale activity is also reflected in social terms. Mediterranean fishing is mainly a family affair. Fishermen generally own their vessel and equipment and support their family with the activity, sometimes as a supplement to another job. They also learn the trade in the family, from their elders. With its centuries-old traditions, Mediterranean fishing has tremendous socio-cultural importance for certain coastal communities, particularly in the islands and in southern Spain and Italy. Yet the impact of this activity on resources must not be underestimated: it can be highly efficient when large gears are used.

Alongside this myriad of small vessels, the importance of the fleet of vessels over 12 metres in length cannot be ignored. These are generally bottom and pelagic trawlers and seiners. They often target the same species in the same zones as the small-scale operators, creating use conflicts. What is more, recreational fishing is practiced widely and in some cases can be as efficient as the professional sector.

Because of this context, Mediterranean resources suffer from the same problem of overexploitation as in other European seas.

Action plan

For that reason, in 2002 the European Commission launched the debate with stakeholders, proposing measures such as the creation of fisheries protection zones, restrictions on fishing effort, technical improvements, etc. It also announced plans to act at international level to ensure that the 27 Mediterranean and Black Sea coastal States contribute equally to the management effort and that the burden of conservation does not lie solely with fishermen from the nine coastal Member States of the European Union (EU).

This new approach was confirmed in December 2002 with the adoption of the broad principles of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and quickly found expression in detailed proposals⁽²⁾.

In October 2003, after a wide consultation of the sector, the Commission proposed a set of technical measures changing the rules that had regulated Mediterranean fisheries since 1994. This proposal for a regulation was discussed at length by the Commission, Parliament, the Member States and the sector. It was amended and finally adopted in December 2006 (see pp. 6-7).

In November 2003, the EU sponsored a major international conference in Venice that brought together the fisheries ministers of all the countries with Mediterranean fishery activities. The conference gave the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)⁽³⁾ a stronger role in managing shared stocks and combating illegal fishing, and assigned it the task of developing conservation and control measures (see pp. 8-9).

In the wake of these decisions, transmediterranean collaboration began to develop, notably with the creation of Medisamak in May 2004. This association represents the fishing professional organisations in the 14 Mediterranean countries: the seven Mediterranean EU States, as well as Croatia, Albania, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Bulgaria and Romania could also join. With this more highly structured organisation, fishermen now have 'official' representatives who can play their role of 'stakeholders' in the work carried out by regional fisheries organisations (GFCM and ICCAT⁽⁴⁾) and the European Union.

The European members of Medisamak then set up a Mediterranean Regional Advisory Council (RAC)⁽⁵⁾, with the aim of making it the European Commission's institutional partner for all matters related to resource management in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

So all the different stakeholders have joined forces to protect the fishing potential of this sea, which is seriously jeopardized. In this context, the Commission adopted in 2006 a specific regulation with the aim of creating a general framework for the sustainable exploitation of resources by introducing measures for greater selectivity, long-term management plans and stepped-up monitoring.

(2) See *Fishing in Europe*, No 21, April 2004, pp. 5-10.

(3) The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean is the regional fisheries organisation responsible for the Mediterranean and Black Seas – www.gfcm.org

(4) The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) is responsible for management of Mediterranean tuna and swordfish – <http://www.iccat.int>

(5) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 36, November 2007, pp. 4-8.

More selective fishing and better stock management

Measures encouraging the sustainable exploitation of Mediterranean fishery resources were adopted in November 2006, after more than three years of dialogue with all the stakeholders. This regulation introduces technical and management measures adapted to the realities of the region. It aims to promote sustainable exploitation of resources and to safeguard endangered species and habitats. The regulation also introduces decentralisation by allowing the Member States to take management initiatives.

The first axis of the regulation is the **enhancement of selectivity**. The aim is first and foremost to protect young fish. It is important to allow young fish to develop, both to add to the biomass of their species and become catches with higher value, and also to perpetuate stocks. A set of technical measures was adopted from that standpoint (see box p. 7). The Member States may nevertheless grant derogations from the application of these measures (except for trawlers), on the explicit condition that they apply a national management plan guaranteeing an improvement in the state of resources (see box).

Long-term management plans

The second axis is **stock management**. The guiding principles are to limit fish mortality, allow more young fish to reach maturity, encourage reproduction and protect the early months of development. The multiannual, i.e. long-term, nature of such measures is essential to ensure that they are effective.

For most Mediterranean species, management measures must nevertheless be taken at the level of the continental shelf, which is generally narrow. That is why, along with the **Community management plans** applicable in zones lying beyond territorial waters, the regulation gives Member States the possibility to establish **national management plans** within the 12-mile zone. With their limited geographical scope, these national plans can account for local characteristics, particularly with regard to their socio-economic impact.

National plans may target one or more stocks. Since it is not practical to set quotas for most stocks the measures focus on gear selectivity, the reduction of discards and fishing effort restrictions, for example by limiting the number of fishing days, banning certain gears that are too efficient or establishing closed zones and seasons. If a national plan concerns a zone where vessels from another Member State operate, it must also be submitted to that Member State and to the Mediterranean RAC once the latter is in place. None of the Member States has yet submitted to the European Commission a satisfactory national plan that meets the required standards.

Derogation

The national management plans can be used to create more flexibility in applying some of the regulation's technical aspects. If a Member State considers that a measure, such as prohibiting the use of trawls within three nautical miles of the coast, could create difficulties for a coastal community dependent on a certain fishing practice, it may grant derogations under precise conditions. The most important of these is the development and implementation of a national management plan for the fishery concerned. The derogation must of course comply with a sustainable approach and be accompanied by measures that guarantee a long-term improvement in the state of resources exploited by this fishery.

Enhanced control

The third axis is the **control of fishing activities**. If the measures laid down by the regulation are to produce effects, it is crucial to ensure that they are actually applied. In general, rules on controls are the same in the Mediterranean as in the other waters of the European Union, and the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA) ⁽¹⁾ will play a decisive role. The new regulation nevertheless introduces a few innovative measures for Mediterranean fisheries.

To facilitate control operations, the most productive vessels (bottom and pelagic trawlers, purse seines, surface longliners, pelagic longliners and hydraulic dredges) may only land and market their catches in **designated ports**. Another innovation concerns more extensive use of **logbooks**. All catches exceeding 15 kg of a single species (50 kg for tuna, swordfish, anchovy, sprat and sardine) must be recorded in the logbook. Finally, any vessel over 15 meters in length authorised to fish in the Mediterranean must now be listed in the **GFCM register** (see pp. 8-9). This measure was approved at the Venice Conference as a means to combat illegal fishing: any vessel not entered in the register will, de facto, be in an illegal situation if caught fishing.

(1) <http://ec.europa.eu/cfca>



The most productive vessels (trawlers, seiners, longliners and dredgers) may now only land and market their catches in a limited number of ports designated by the Member States.

Adoption of this regulation represents an important step towards implementing the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. The European Union is keen to preserve fishing activities in all its Member States and has developed a management tool adapted to the unique features of the Mediterranean. But its strict application is

essential, which is why several meetings have already been held since 2006 with the fisheries directors of the Mediterranean Member States. The Commission stresses the urgency of the situation in the Mediterranean, an urgency that can only be addressed by developing a truly sustainable fisheries sector.

Selective techniques

More selective gear – Nets and long lines must now meet new specifications, for rigging, mesh size (wider) and hook size (bigger). Towed nets, for example, must present square-meshed net of 40 mm at the codend.

Smaller or fewer gears – To reduce the fishing effort produced by each vessel, gears will now have to observe precise limits in terms of size or number. For example, purse seines are limited to 800 metres in length and 120 metres in drop (except in the case of tuna vessels). No more than 250 traps for deep-water crustacean fishery and no more than 3 500 hooks for long lines targeting swordfish are allowed on board.

Greater protection of seabeds – To protect seabeds and the young fish that live there, the use of certain gears is prohibited within a given distance from shore or a certain depth. For example, towed nets may not be used within 3 nautical miles of the coast where the depth is less than 50 metres.

Protected habitats – By the same token, the use of certain gears (trawls, dredges, shore and boat purse seines) is prohibited above posidonia beds, corallogenic habitats and maërl beds and at depths of more than 1 000 metres.

Fisheries protection zones – The aim is to protect certain zones that are particularly suited to reproduction or rearing of fish by limiting fishing activities. Two types of protection zones are established:

- **Community zones** lie for the most part outside Member States' territorial waters. The Council of Fisheries Ministers is responsible for establishing their boundaries on the basis of information presented to the Commission by the Member States concerned; the States have not yet submitted their suggestions, however.
- **National zones** lie in Member States' territorial waters and will be designated and regulated by the States, but here too, application of the regulation is lagging.

Bigger fish – The regulation imposes a minimum landing size for 28 species, stocks of which are declining or over-exploited. The list includes European anchovy (9 cm), sardine (11 cm), hake (20 cm), mackerel (18 cm), sole (20 cm), red mullet (11 cm), grouper (45 cm), lobster (300 mm), deep water rose shrimp (20 mm), etc.

○ Transmediterranean cooperation



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The Mediterranean and Black Seas have no fewer than 27 rim countries, which differ widely in terms of development, research status and control capacity.

The Mediterranean – which links two continents and is a convergence point between EU members and numerous non-member countries – cannot do without international cooperation when it comes to managing its fish resources. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) has coordinated this cooperation for over 60 years. But its role has been stepped up appreciably since 2004, with its Member States' commitment to promote sustainable fisheries. It now also aims to improve knowledge, management and control.

The legal situation in the Mediterranean is quite specific. On the one hand, there is no exclusive economic zone (200 nautical miles): territorial waters (either 12 or 6 nautical miles) therefore do not always encompass the entire continental shelf. On the other, with its islands, peninsulas and gulfs, the Mediterranean presents numerous narrow zones where fishermen from different countries work side by side, as in the Black, Aegean, Adriatic, Alboran and Ionian Seas, the Gulf of Lion and the Straits of Gibraltar and Sicily.

In addition to highly migratory species (tuna, swordfish, dolphinfish), many other stocks are thus also shared by the fleets of several States. This is true for demersal species such as hake, sole, pink shrimp and blue-and-red shrimp, and small pelagic species such as anchovy, sardine and sprat. Management measures applied by only a few fleets would therefore have a very limited effect on these stocks. So it is essential to develop common management, applicable by all fleets active in the Mediterranean. That is the role of the regional fisheries organisation (RFO) responsible for the Mediterranean, the GFCM.

A full member of the GFCM, the European Union has worked to strengthen this institution to give it greater responsibility for resource management. At the same time, the GFCM's overall budget has risen sharply. With more resources it can maintain a permanent secretariat, which is responsible, among other things, for organising meetings and assemblies and providing coordination for scientific work.

Management measures

At the Venice Conference in November 2003, the States called on the RFO to develop management measures adapted to the reality of the Mediterranean, in other words based primarily on limiting fishing effort and improving selectivity.

The institution's Scientific Advisory Committee immediately undertook the first phase of this work, namely evaluation of stocks. This is a difficult task, for one reason because of the difference in means allocated to fisheries research on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. *'The problem is that it is the States that provides us with researchers'*, explains Alain Bonzon, General Secretary of the GFCM. *'We do not have the possibility to pay them ourselves for the studies we need'*. Another problem is that some States still fear that detailed knowledge of stocks may result in management measures that are hard to implement.

So it is no coincidence if the recommendations of the Scientific Committee focus more on fishing zones in the northern Mediterranean, where research is more developed and scientists have set up scientific cooperation thanks to European Union coordination. However, the FAO's sub-regional scientific

cooperation in the Adriatic (Adriamed⁽¹⁾), the western and central Mediterranean (Copemed⁽²⁾) and soon in the eastern basin (Eastmed), are expected to improve analysis of the stock situation in the southern and eastern Mediterranean, as is already the case for certain countries.

With available data on catches, as well as acoustic and trawl data, scientists have nevertheless been able to draw attention to several stocks that are overexploited or in danger. At the end of 2007, for instance, they sounded the alarm on hake in the Balearic Islands and North Spain, red mullet in the Balearic Islands, North Tunisia, the Gulf of Hammamet and Gulf of Gabès, sardine and anchovy in the Alboran Sea, North Spain, South Sicily, the Adriatic and the Gulf of Lion, and anchovy in the Aegean Sea. The Scientific Committee has proposed conservation measures, including the reduction of fishing effort, an increase in gear selectivity and/or area closures and closed periods for fishing.

Then comes the difficulty of transforming such proposals into actual measures. *'We have to reach the point soon where we can say: there is too much pressure on a given resource at a given place and here's how to reduce the pressure'*, explains Alain Bonzon. *'But that is still not easy to do.'*

In order to implement measures to restrict fishing effort, the fleet and gears must be counted and registered everywhere in the same way. A working group on assessment methodologies was created in 2005 and its task led in 2007 to the adoption of a standardised framework for registering the fleet and gears, which will also offer the first-ever complete picture of the Mediterranean fleet, including the small-scale fishing fleet. *'The States now have to enter their data into the framework'*, adds Alain Bonzon. *'That hasn't been done yet, even for the first stage of the work on vessels over 15 metres in length...'* The GFCM took measures at the start of 2008 to turn the registry of fishing vessels into a reality.

These complications have not kept the GFCM from taking a number of management measures since 2005, such as the obligation of mesh size of at least 40 mm at the codend for demersal fisheries with the recommendation to use square-meshed net, the establishment of a closed season for dolphinfish from 1 January to 14 August, and the creation of fisheries restricted areas to protect the Lophelia reef (Ionian Sea), the Eratosthenes Seamount (eastern Mediterranean) and the Nile delta area.

In addition, the GFCM systematically adopts the ICCAT's⁽³⁾ management measures for Mediterranean tuna and swordfish, to oblige the GFCM States that are not members of the tuna RFO to apply them. It did so in 2007 for the bluefin tuna recovery plan and this year for the closed period for swordfish fishing from 15 October to 15 November.

The white list

A big step has also been taken in the area of control. The eradication of illegal fishing in the Mediterranean, an important element of the 2003 Venice Declaration, was also assigned to the GFCM, which was charged with developing a programme to curb illegal activity. Here too, measures are being put in place.

The first, taken in 2005, concerns the establishment of a **'white list'**, a register of fishing vessels over 15 metres authorised to operate in the GFCM zone. The States must provide the GFCM with complete electronic identity sheets on their licensed vessels and update them regularly. The GFCM forwards this list to the different national control authorities, which can then swiftly identify a vessel to determine whether it is fishing legally or not.

But the measure goes much further than simply drawing up a list, because it also represents a commitment by the GFCM contracting parties to accept their responsibility for the vessels they authorise. This regulation requires the flag states to guarantee the legitimacy of the activities of their vessels and to agree to impose penalties for violations. This is one way to avoid the proliferation of flags of convenience.

This provision is strengthened by another measure: the introduction of **general guidelines for implementation of a control scheme**. With their adoption of these guidelines, the GFCM States agreed to respect their obligations as flag states (licences, monitoring, vessel position, logbooks and sanctions) and to ensure monitoring of the activities of their vessels (inspections, observers, monitoring of landings, infringement procedures, etc.). This does not change anything for the European Union Member States that were already applying these principles, but helps introduce equal treatment for all the vessels active in the Mediterranean.

In 2006, this arsenal was completed with the introduction of a **'black list'** of vessels that have the reputation of practicing illegal fishing. And in 2008, the GFCM adopted, on a proposal from the European Union, the **port state control**⁽⁴⁾ scheme, under which states may only authorise a foreign vessel to land its cargo in one of its ports if the flag state of the vessel confirms that the fish were caught legally. This measure has already been applied in other RFOs and has proved effective in combating landings of illegal catches.

The Mediterranean and Black Seas have a total of 27 rim countries, which vary widely in terms of development, research status and control capacity. Establishing common fisheries management in this context requires a long-term effort, first for the adoption of its common principles and second for their implementation.

(1) www.faoadriamed.org

(2) www.faocopemed.org

(3) The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) is responsible for management of Mediterranean tuna and swordfish – <http://www.iccat.int>

(4) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 37, February 2008, pp. 4-8.

Bluefin tuna: 2008 season under close surveillance

In spring 2008, the Mediterranean was the theatre of an exceptional deployment of fisheries control means. The target: the bluefin tuna fishery. The objective: to guarantee compliance with the stock recovery plan which enters fully into application this year and which is intended to bring the stock back within safe biological limits in 15 years.

Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stocks of bluefin tuna are on the verge of collapse. The ICCAT⁽¹⁾ Scientific Committee announced this stark finding in 2006, and recommended vigorous measures to halt the overexploitation of this species. A month later, the ICCAT adopted, on the basis of a EU proposal, the *Multinational recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean*⁽²⁾, commonly referred to as the 'bluefin tuna plan'. This programme was transposed into Community law provisionally in June 2007⁽³⁾ and definitively in December 2007⁽⁴⁾.

The 'bluefin tuna plan'

The 'bluefin tuna plan' is based primarily on a **gradual reduction of fishing possibilities** (total allowable catch of 28 500 tonnes in 2008), **closed periods** established in terms of gears and fishing zones, an increase in **minimum catch size** and a permanent ban on the **use of aircraft to locate schools of tuna**⁽⁵⁾.

For these measures to be effective, obviously all operators have to comply with them. With that aim in view, the ICCAT adopted measures to reinforce control and enforcement of all bluefin tuna fishing activities.

Control is based on a **monitoring system** that tracks catches from the fishing vessel to release on the market. Only tuna accompanied by mandatory documents may be marketed. To allow effective follow-up of the use of quotas, the skippers of fishing vessels must now declare their catches of bluefin tuna 'in real time'.

The European Community has even surpassed the ICCAT's requirements by requiring the Member States to assign an individual quota to each vessel over 24 metres in length: catch declarations are compared to the vessel's fishing possibilities and not more generally to the overall quota for its flag state.

Every caging, transshipment or landing operation on bluefin tuna is subject to **port state control**. Each operation must first be notified to the port authorities, who may only authorise it if the flag state of the harvesting vessel confirms that the fish were caught legally.

In addition, fishing vessels must allow **observers** on board and are subject to a **'joint international inspection scheme'** which authorises all ICCAT member countries to inspect in international waters a vessel flying the flag of another country. Fishing vessels are also obliged to report their position by VMS⁽⁶⁾ several times a day.

The bluefin tuna plan adopted in November 2006 did not enter into force until June 2007, once the fishing season was well under way. It therefore failed to have all the anticipated effects the first year. On the European Community side, this meant a significant delay in the collection of catch data. The European Commission was therefore unable to end the 2007 fishing season until 19 September, although the Community quota of 16 780 tonnes had already been overshot by more than 4 000 tonnes.

Intensive overfishing

Bluefin tuna is subject to overfishing practiced either by authorised vessels that exceed their quotas or by vessels that have no quotas. According to ICCAT estimates, this overfishing brings real catches from the Eastern Atlantic to around 50 000 tonnes, well above the 30 000 or so tonnes declared.

One of the reasons for this difference is that it is very hard to check the exact amounts of bluefin tuna caught by seiners that transfer their catches to fattening farms, a branch of the market that accounts for 70 % to 80% of total catches. Since the fish are not landed after being caught, it escapes the port state control system, which normally checks both the number of fish and their weight. The tuna are kept alive and transferred in international waters from the seine to a mobile cage. The cage is then towed to the fattening farm where the fish are again transferred, this time to a fixed cage. During these transfers, divers appointed by the vessel owners and the fattening farms count the fish and estimate their weight, then transmit this data to their agents, who establish a commercial agreement and notify the catch-monitoring authorities. The control services are therefore no longer in a position to check the catch data directly and cannot count the fish until the time of slaughter, at the end of the fattening period.

But seiners are not the only vessels used to catch bluefin tuna. The stock is also exploited more traditionally by vessels using longlines, tunny nets or even pelagic trawls. These fisheries also have their share of quota overruns. As with seiners, they suffer from the lack of sufficient controls including at marketing level, the under-declaration of catches, landings in non-designated ports, the absence of VMS messages, etc.

(1) The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) is responsible for management of Mediterranean tuna and swordfish – <http://www.iccat.int>

(2) Recommendation 2006/05.

(3) Regulation (EC) No 643/2007.

(4) Regulation (EC) No 1559/2007.

(5) For details, see *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 34, May 2007, p 9.

(6) Vessel monitoring system (VMS).



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In 2006, the ICCAT Scientific Committee drew attention to the collapse of Atlantic bluefin tuna stocks. The states with fishing activity for this species adopted a 15-year recovery plan and must strictly apply its measures.

Appropriate means of control

As guardian of the Treaty, the European Commission sought to ensure that the bluefin tuna plan would be fully applied throughout the 2008 season, and in particular that it would halt overfishing. It has therefore used all available means to ensure compliance with the plan by all the parties concerned, from catch to marketing.

Based on the observation that overfishing of bluefin tuna is encouraged by the excess capacity of its vessels, the European Community has imposed an obligation on the Member States concerned to adopt annual fishing plans as from 2008. The aim is to reduce the capacity of their vessels to catch bluefin tuna and to match capacity to fishing possibilities. In this context, the biggest vessels are also subject to an individual quota scheme.

As an ICCAT Contracting Party, the European Community centralises and transmits to this body the different declarations it receives from its Member States. For bluefin tuna fishing, five people are assigned to this task throughout the season, seven days a week. Their role is not limited to collecting data. They also analyse the figures to identify irregularities that reveal potential fraud and to orientate the control, for example, by comparing quantities of catches and transfers reported by a seiner with the corresponding caging declarations submitted by the fattening firm.

The CFCA⁽⁷⁾ is in charge of coordinating the control means made available by the Member States as part of a joint inspection scheme, either at sea, ashore, in ports or in farms. The Agency has drawn up a joint deployment plan for bluefin tuna with impressive resources: 49 patrol boats, 16 aircraft, 150 inspectors trained specially for the plan, 364 days of sea patrols, 170 days of port inspections and 70 surveillance flights. These exceptional means are coordinated by a 'technical group' of seven coordinators – three from the Agency and four appointed by the Member States. Every day, these coordinators decide how the technical means will be deployed in terms of the fleet positions and the information received from the Commission and Member States.

The Commission has also appointed 12 inspectors who are assigned 300 days of missions in ports and fattening farms. The purpose of these is to evaluate the organisation and execution by the Member States of the control measures required by the bluefin tuna plan.

These exceptional measures are concentrated on the peak period of the Mediterranean fishing season (May and June), but vigilance will remain very active during the rest of 2008, notably through the ongoing cross-checking of all data on bluefin tuna catches, fattening and trade.

From seiners to fattening farms

70 to 80 % of bluefin tuna fishing in the EU enter the seining-farming process, which takes place in four stages:

1. **Catch** – The tuna are caught in a large purse seine, which immobilises the school in the water pending the arrival of the mobile cage. For tuna seiners, the fishing season traditionally begins in March and closes on 30 June, as set by the ICCAT on 30 June.
2. **Transfer** – A tugboat chartered by the fattening farm arrives at the catch location with a mobile cage. The tuna are transferred from the seine to the mobile cage, which is then towed at low speed (one to three knots) to the farm. This transfer can take several weeks.
3. **Fattening** – Once they reach the farm, the tuna are transferred to a fixed fattening cage where they are fed frozen small pelagic fish for a period of up to several months.
4. **Slaughter** – Based on demand, the tuna are slaughtered and marketed, primarily on the Japanese market.

(7) Community Fisheries Control Agency.

[In brief

> DG FISH becomes DG MARE

Following adoption in October 2007 of the Blue Book, 'An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union' (1), the European Commission is continuing its integrated approach to management of the oceans and seas. It is applying to its own structure the principle integrating sectoral policy in an all-embracing view of the European Union's maritime development. The Commission has created a Directorate-General with horizontal competence in maritime affairs, with the aim of multiplying synergy between the different dimensions of this policy. On 29 March 2008, the Directorate-General for Fisheries thus became the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. Work is organised geographically: three specific directorates are responsible for managing the Common Fisheries Policy and the integrated maritime policy in the Union's three main maritime regions (the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans, the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and the North and Baltic Seas) while a fourth directorate is charged more generally with policy coordination and development. The other two directorates are unchanged: one is in charge of international policy and market issues, while the other deals with legal matters, resources, communication and relations with other institutions and stakeholders.

(1) See *Fisheries and Aquaculture in Europe*, No 38, April 2008.

> Facts and figures on the CFP: new edition

The European Commission has just released a statistical data summary describing the fisheries and aquaculture sector clearly and concisely in figures. This work is based mainly on data compiled by Eurostat, the European Union Statistics Office, but also on figures collected by the European Commission and the FAO. It reviews the latest developments in the fisheries sector in the 27 European Union Member States and in the candidate countries. All sectors are covered: catches, aquaculture, trade, processing and all the related socio-economic indicators, such as employment, fleet and consumption. The work is available in PDF format on the European Commission site http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications_en.htm, under the heading 'Statistics'.



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