

2012 Common Fisheries Policy Reform Recommendations for the Mediterranean

WWF has published its Response to the 2009 Green Paper on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in Europe (CFP)¹. The present document highlights those issues that we think are particularly relevant for the Mediterranean and includes some particular recommendations adapted to its context.

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1. Introduction

The Community Action Plan for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean², adopted as part of the 2002 CFP reform package, recognizes that fisheries in the Mediterranean are characterized by a number of distinctive features with important implications for the conservation policy under the CFP. The “Mediterranean Regulation”³, which established the specific management system for the Mediterranean after the 2002 CFP reform, appeared to be an improvement on the former Council Regulation (EC) No 1626/94 which it replaced. WWF supported the text when it was adopted, although it warned against possible loopholes in the text. Now it is clear to every observer of Mediterranean fisheries that the implementation of the new measures has been a complete failure and that both the management of Mediterranean fisheries and the state of resources and ecosystems in the region have not improved during the last years.

The reasons for this evident failure are deep rooted in the way the EU has traditionally addressed fisheries in the Mediterranean since the very inception of the CFP. There is consensus that management in the region should be based on the control of effort yet the necessary Community scheme for an effort management approach to fisheries in the region, tailored to a complex reality of multispecies and multigear fisheries has never been developed. Fisheries management in Europe’s Mediterranean waters is dysfunctional: there is a lack of connection between scientific advice -mostly based on opportunistic research- and management, and decision-makers adhere to a purely short-term approach aimed at keeping status quo, even at the price of a heavy deterioration of resources and associated profits for fishermen.

One of the serious problems of Mediterranean fisheries legislation is its lack of implementation and enforcement at the different levels. This includes the failure of Member States to implement the specific provisions addressed to them, and also the failure of the industry to apply the required technical measures. This lack of compliance, besides its detrimental impact on the ecosystem, has a serious socio-economic impact on the fishermen themselves and leads to conflicts within the sector. It is very important that the governance structure of the new CFP provides the means to assure the much needed implementation and enforcement of the legislation at every level. The Commission should envisage the implementation of provisional and alternative measures when Member States fail to comply with the law, and Member States should establish an effective mechanism for enforcement and control of the fishing activities in their territorial waters and of their nationals in international waters.

2. Long Term Management Plans for every Mediterranean Fishery and Regional Governance

The Regulation on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the CFP⁴, adopted after the 2002 CFP reform, and the “Mediterranean Regulation”³ both include provisions to implement management plans for fisheries. Regrettably, several years later, by the time a new CFP reform consultation process is in place, the adoption and implementation of management plans in the Mediterranean has still not happened.

WWF believes that the 2012 reform of the CFP should ensure that **all European fisheries, including in the Mediterranean**, are subject to ecosystem based Long Term Management Plans (LTMPs) following a standard format and a clear timeframe.

Regulation text should specify a mandatory requirement for all European fisheries to have functional long term management plans agreed within a specific timeframe, and that these comply with a basic set of requirements set out in the Regulation.

The new regulation should also include the basic requirements to be considered in any LTMP, such as the inclusion of an Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) approach (clear strategies for addressing discards, bycatch and habitat protection), high level objectives, a means of addressing capacity and common standards for all LTMPs to be implemented in European Waters. In addition a clear timeframe for implementation and penalties for failure to either deliver fully approved plans or elements within the plans within the identified timeline⁵.

The first step has to be, following a standardized approach, to make an inventory of all Mediterranean fisheries in Europe, for which LTMPs should subsequently be developed and implemented. Defining the management unit is the cornerstone of any rational fisheries management policy. Most demersal fisheries in the Mediterranean are multispecies, and include different types of gears.

Key to the success of any LTMP is that it is developed, implemented, monitored and reviewed by a **co-management committee** integrated by the right mix of stakeholders of the Member State(s) involved. There should be a balance of powers shared among industry, government, scientists, control agencies, NGOs and other interests.

Any long term management plan developed by the co-management committee should be based on a thorough description of the fishery. This should include an assessment of fishing effort in relation to the available resources to be undertaken following the best scientific advice. The most suitable technical measures for each LTMP should be also agreed by the committee. Time/area management and days at sea are viewed by stakeholders as the most effective measures to manage fishing effort in the Mediterranean⁶.

A regional level structure with the right balance of stakeholders⁵ will also be necessary. The main role of this regional body will be the development of LTMPs in which more than one Member State is involved. It will also coordinate and check for compatibility for all LTMPs developed by the different co-management committees at Member State level. The regional body will submit the plans to the Commission for their technical approval, to ensure they meet the criteria set out in the Regulation and stand a good chance of meeting the targets (see the schematic representation of the proposed framework at the end of the document). The role expected for this regional organization can be accomplished by different subregional bodies and not necessarily by only one for the whole Mediterranean. The four subregions proposed for the Mediterranean by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive may be an option⁷.

WWF sees the regional organization as a stakeholder group more mixed and balanced than the current Regional Advisory Councils (RACs)⁵. WWF recently undertook an

assessment of the RACs' operating rules and practices which provides recommendations to improve their performance⁸. It is a big concern for WWF that the Mediterranean RAC, officially operational more than one year ago, is not progressing as expected and is still far from fulfilling the advisory role specified by the current CFP Regulation⁴. Additionally, an effort to increase the participation of artisanal fishermen in the RAC and thus in the decision making process, which has an enormous local social and economical impact in the Mediterranean, is needed. If the Mediterranean RAC becomes fully operative, it could act as an advisory body to the regional body we propose to develop the LTMPs as well as to the Commission. However should it fail to achieve a certain level of functionality then we see no place for it in the context of future governance of fisheries management in the Mediterranean.

In some Mediterranean Member States, successful participatory processes are being developed in spatial-fisheries planning processes led by the own fisherman, including long term management plans. In this regard, a number of workshops are being organized to share experiences among fishermen, managers and NGOs. The currently increasing number of fishermen organizations committed with the development of participatory processes to push sustainable management schemes in their activity areas is encouraging. WWF believes that the new CFP should fully support these initiatives and the efforts of these fishermen keen to improve the sustainability of their fisheries. The social methodologies behind these strategies include the use of traditional fishermen's knowledge of resources and habitats, ensuring reasonable management measures from the fishermen point of view.

3. Sound Scientific Advice for the Mediterranean Fisheries

The start point of every rational LTMP should be to stick to the best available scientific advice. Failing this basic requirement will result in the failure to achieve the biological and ecosystem targets of the plans. Europe's fisheries in the Mediterranean urgently need a new governance structure that includes a **new scientific body** providing systematic and regular scientific information to support an effective management system based on effort management. Such a system has to deliver on EAF, be adaptive and able to work in data-poor contexts. Scientific advice then needs to enter into a systematic, regular and well structured decision-making process, similarly to what happens to Atlantic fisheries.

There are recognized problems due to lack of data in many Mediterranean fisheries and this needs to be addressed. We draw your attention to the section on scientific advice in our Green paper response (pages 35-37) where we identify the use of Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) and risk assessment, tools used to work with data poor fisheries

To achieve the real integration of the Mediterranean into the CFP, the new reformed CFP has the challenge to create a completely new governance system for Europe's fisheries in the region ranging from the provision of scientific advice to decision making.

4. Community leadership in fisheries management in the Mediterranean Region

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (CGPM), consisting of 23 Member Countries along with the European Community, is the Regional Fisheries Organization with full competence for the fisheries management in the Mediterranean.

The European Commission has the responsibility of promoting at least the same CFP standards across the whole Mediterranean Sea and should work actively to achieve these. It should also take the lead in compliance issues and work towards standardising an effective control and enforcement system for GFCM member's vessels across the basin.

So far, the poor performance of GFCM in delivering fisheries management in the region is another obvious failure of the European policy for the region and this body largely remains an irrelevant one, as most actors involved widely acknowledge.

¹ WWF Response to the 2009 Green Paper: Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

² COM(2002) 535 final

³ Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002

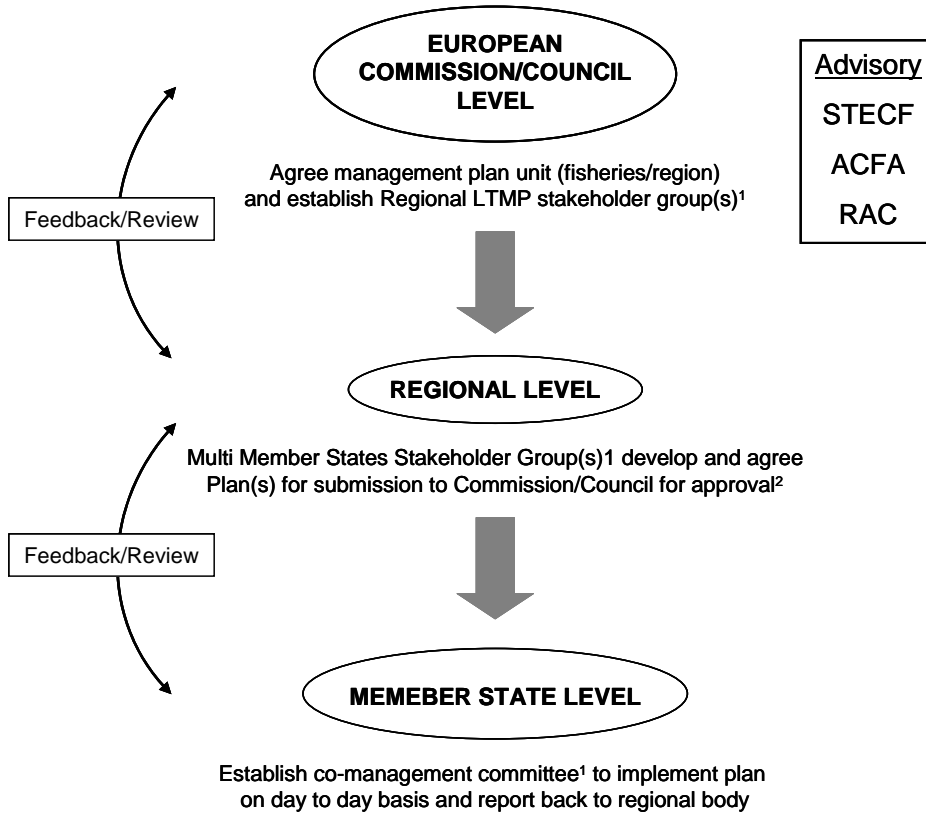
⁵ WWF Position paper: Long Term Management Plans and Regionalisation of EU Fisheries, October 2009, available at http://assets.panda.org/downloads/ltmp_full_final.pdf

⁶ Conclusions of the WWF workshop on EAF in the Mediterranean, Barcelona, December 2008. Available on request from WWF MedPO.

⁷ Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Directive 2008/56/EC)

⁸ How to Improve the Regional Advisory Councils, a WWF Study, November 2009.

**FRAMEWORK FOR
IMPLEMENTING LONG TERM MANAGEMENT PLANS (LTMPs)
AND DELIVERING REGIONALIZATION**



¹ mixed stakeholder group (government, scientists, fisheries, processors, control, NGOs)

² In those cases where only one Member State prosecutes the fishery the plan will be developed by the co-management committee at Member State level, ensure compatibility at Regional level, and submit directly to the Commission.