

Brussels, 16 January 2007

Commission: General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean builds on last year's progress towards sustainability in the region

The European Commission has welcomed the measures adopted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the region at its annual general meeting, in Rome, last week. The Commission, on behalf of the Union, led the process that will offer greater protection to fisheries resources, improve the application of existing measures, enhance the development of reproductive aquaculture, continue to support the regional projects and develop new initiatives to increase cooperation in fisheries management in the Black Sea. This will be made possible thanks to the decisions that will now secure the administrative and budgetary basis of the GFCM making it fully operational.

Joe Borg, European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs said: "With the adoption of its Mediterranean Regulation in November, the EU demonstrated its strong commitment to an effective management policy for fisheries resources in the Mediterranean. These results now highlight the commitment of GFCM's members to the same goal. They also contribute to the current move towards stronger Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and confirm their crucial role in securing sustainable fisheries on the high seas."

Main decisions

- **Compliance:** no measures can be effective without adherence to existent measures. Implementation will be improved as the Compliance committee of the GFCM has now become operational. It will work on the development of a control and inspection scheme in the Mediterranean.
- **Recovery of bluefin tuna:** the GFCM adopted the recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for a recovery plan that was agreed last November in Dubrovnik (See [IP/06/1632](#)).
- **Data collection:** reliable data are crucial to fisheries management. Measures will be taken to ensure the setting up of a database that will enable the GFCM, among other things, to develop a management programme on fishing effort.
- **Move towards square meshes in bottom trawl nets:** to enhance selectivity in bottom trawls, GFCM members will implement, on a voluntary basis, the 40mm square mesh in the cod end. Trials will be carried out in countries which wish to acquire further information on this gear. The GFCM will evaluate the results of such trials by 2010 at the latest. The change in net mesh shape, from 40mm diamond to 40mm square, which was one of the measures agreed by the Fisheries Council in November 2006 as part of the EU Regulation on technical measures for Mediterranean fisheries, increases the selectivity of the gear (see [IP/06/1609](#)).

- **Regional projects:** The GFCM has recognised the importance of these projects to the development and support of scientific cooperation in the participating countries and to its own decision-making process. The European Commission will continue to finance MedFisis and to make a financial contribution to the EastMed , CopeMed II and Adriamed projects.
- **Sustainable aquaculture:** aquaculture now accounts for over 50% of fisheries products around the Mediterranean basin. The tasks and mandate of the GFCM's Committee on Aquaculture have been reviewed to make it more effective. Three working groups have been set up to examine 1) the sustainable development of aquaculture, 2) marketing and 3) the selection of aquaculture sites.
- **Conservation of marine mammals:** the GFCM will strengthen cooperation with the Pelagos Agreement which provides a sanctuary to marine mammals in the Ligurian Sea and the northern Tyrrhenian Sea, with a view to foster scientific knowledge on these mammals and on the interaction with fishing activities.
- **Enhanced cooperation on the Black Sea:** the GFCM will also work on strengthening cooperation with coastal states from the Black Sea with a view to developing a management policy for fisheries resources in this region. Possible opportunities to develop a Black Sea regional project under the aegis of the GFCM will be investigated.
- **GFCM administrative capacity:** last but not least, the administrative and financial basis of the GFCM were strengthened through the adoption of the budget which will allow for the appointment of personnel who are essential to make the Commission operational.

Background

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean is a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation which brings together 24 contracting parties representing the coastal states of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, including the European Union. Decisions taken by the GFCM are binding upon all the organisation's members. The European Commission has played a leading role in recent years in encouraging the GFCM to be pro-active in establishing an effective management framework, based on the best available scientific advice, for the conservation of fish stocks in the international waters of the Mediterranean.