

- Concept Note -



Project proposal on cetaceans by-catch and depredation reduction in the Mediterranean and Black Seas fisheries



The aim of this note is to present the project proposal to be developed jointly by ACCOBAMS and GFCM on cetaceans by-catch and depredation reduction and to invite potential partners to propose case studies that could be included in the project. The project design (coordination, preparation of the logical framework, budget evaluation, technical assistance needs assessment, planning) will be done after identifying the case studies.

Background

Since 2006 ACCOBAMS and GFCM developed a close cooperation on the issue of cetacean-fishery interactions, considering both by-catch and depredation issues. In particular, a joint ACCOBAMS-GFCM programme has been started in 2006 to collect data about by-catch of cetaceans in fishing gears in the GFCM area (ByCBAMS project) in order to assess the impacts of interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities.

The collaboration between ACCOBAMS and GFCM includes also the establishment in 2007 of a GFCM transversal Working Group on by catch/incidental catches under the coordination of the Sub-Committee on Marine Environment and Ecosystems (SCMEE) and the Sub-Committee on Stock Assessment (SCSA). A first meeting of this transversal Working Group was held in Rome, Italy, on 15-16 September 2008, and a second meeting of the Working Group was organized on the 7-9 December 2011 in Antalya, Turkey. These meetings offered the opportunity to monitor by-catch issues and to discuss possible measures to mitigate the interactions.

During the 12th Session of the SCMEE (Rome, 23-26 January 2012), a project proposal being developed jointly by ACCOBAMS and the GFCM was presented with a view to prepare strategies on marine mammals by-catch and depredation reduction.

The SCMEE stressed the importance of the activities proposed by the project since they will contribute in increasing knowledge of the fisheries/cetaceans interactions, developing national capacities and providing solutions to mitigate the negative impacts generated by such interactions.

Objectives

The main objective of the project is to provide detailed assessment of the extent of by-catch in cetacean and to propose technical and management solutions to reduce adverse interactions between cetaceans and fisheries through case pilot studies in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.

It will aim also to (a) expand and improve data collection, especially on technical characteristics and practices responsible of impacts on marine mammals, (b) increase the awareness of fishers and (c) include some case studies where mitigation measures should be urgently applied.

The ultimate goal of the project will be to strengthen national and international relevant legislations and to develop strategies on marine mammals by-catch and depredation reduction to mitigate the negative the negative impacts generated by such interactions.

Project description

This project will include case studies in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea areas where fisheries/cetacean interactions can be considered as an issue, with negative outcome either for the fishermen (depredation and damages to fishing gears) or for the conservation of cetaceans (high by-catch rate).

The interactions concern most of the fishing techniques of coastal fisheries as longlines, bottom set nets, driftnet, purse seine for small pelagic and mid-water trawling and their impacts consist either in incidental by-catch of cetaceans or in depredation of gear and catches, resulting both in increase of mortality of cetaceans and economic loss for the fisheries.

For the case studies, technical characteristics of fishing gears as well as fisheries practices that cause negative interactions will be assessed. Participative surveys and fishers' interviews will be conducted to identify the major causes in order to define the most important parameters to correct.

A critical review of methods for reducing interaction and by-catch in different fisheries including both bibliography consultation and fishers' interviews will be carried out to identify possible mitigation measures. Improvement of the gears selectivity, modification or management of the fishing efforts in sensitive areas will be considered.

On this basis, mitigation solutions will be tested/experimented in commercial fishing conditions, based on a participatory approach with fishermen. At the same time, by-catch and mortality reduction as well as socio-economic consequences will be assessed.

Scientific information collected and lessons learned from the pilot studies will be used to promote management actions to similar fisheries cases and to develop appropriate strategies.

The project and case studies will be based on a participatory approach. Particular attention will be given to involving all relevant stakeholders, including national and international authorities, research institutes and universities, and fishing industry (from the fishermen to net-makers). Participation of expertise from outside the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea shall not be excluded.