

Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/1
on further measures for the exploitation of red coral in the GFCM area

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

RECALLING that the objective of the Agreement establishing the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean is to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilization of living marine resources;

RECALLING Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/2 on the exploitation of red coral in the GFCM Competence Area and in particular Paragraph 10 which refers to the development of an adaptive regional management plan;

RECALLING that red coral is listed in the Annex III of the Protocol concerning the Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (hereinafter SPA/BD Protocol) of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) which implies that its exploitation needs to be properly regulated at national and international level (consistent with the high conservation standards laid down in those acts)

CONSIDERING the importance of establishing minimum common harvesting standards pending the development of an adaptive regional management plan

TAKING NOTE of the latest scientific advice on the red coral's minimum size for exploitation, as transmitted by the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

ADOPTS in conformity with the provision of Article III, Paragraph 1 (b) and (h) and Article V of GFCM Agreement that:

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties of the GFCM (hereafter referred to as CPCs) shall ensure that red coral colonies whose basal diameter is smaller than 7 mm at the trunk, measured within one centimetre from the base of the colony, is not harvested, retained on board, transhipped, landed, transferred, stored, sold or displayed or offered for sale as raw product.
2. By way of derogation from Paragraph 1, Parties may authorize a maximum tolerance limit of 10 % in live weight of undersized (<7 mm) red coral colonies provided that a strict national management framework has been developed ensuring an authorization system and specific monitoring and control programmes are in place.
3. By 31st December 2014 at the latest, the SAC is requested to assess the impact that the implementation of the 10 % tolerance margin can have on the size composition of catches and on the sustainability of red coral harvesting.
4. Provisions under paragraphs 1 and 2 above are without prejudice to stricter measures which may be adopted or maintained by CPCs in their national management framework.

5. With a view to ensure adequate monitoring and data gathering needed to set up the adaptive regional management plan based, whenever available, on national plans, the CPCs shall ensure that red coral catches are landed only in a limited number of designated ports with adequate port facilities. The list of designated ports shall be communicated to the GFCM Secretariat not later than 31st January 2013.

6. In addition to substantiate the Terms of Reference provided in the 2012 Work Plan of its Sub-Committee for Marine Environment and Ecosystems, and pending the development of a regional management plan for red coral, as requested by the Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/2, the SAC shall also evaluate the feasibility and implications, including services needed and economic consequences, to establish traceability mechanisms including, inter alia, a DNA bar-coding system for red coral.

7. The GFCM Secretariat is requested to take actions in support of the SAC with a view to put into operation, not later than 31 May 2013, the adaptive regional management plan.

8. In order to collect data on harvesting of red coral, CPCs shall compile data collection forms provided by the Secretariat. CPCs shall return the filled forms by 31st January of each year starting with the 2013 harvesting season.