

Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1 on guidelines on allocated zones for aquaculture (AZA)

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

RECOGNIZING that aquaculture plays an important role in terms of contribution to economic development and it represents an important source of food and employment for coastal communities of GFCM Members;

CONSISTENT WITH the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, in particular Article 9 which calls upon States, *inter alia*, to produce and regularly update aquaculture development strategies and plans, as required, to ensure that aquaculture development is ecologically sustainable and to allow the rational use of resources shared by aquaculture and other activities;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT relevant provisions in the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development of 2002 and the 1995 Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols as amended, in particular, the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM);

NOTING that aquaculture activities are rapidly expanding in the GFCM Area, thus calling for an ICZM consistent planning and management at regional level;

ACKNOWLEDGING that aquaculture activities affect and are affected by other human activities to the extent that their relative contribution to environmental degradation needs to be controlled and adverse social and environmental interactions with aquaculture activities have to be reduced;

CONSIDERING the implementation of a regional strategy for the creation of Allocated Zones for Aquaculture (AZA) as an immediate priority for the responsible development and management of aquaculture activities in the Mediterranean and Black Sea;

FURTHER CONSIDERING that the creation of AZAs may facilitate the integration of aquaculture activities into coastal zone areas exploited by other users and contribute to the enhancement of coordination between the different public agencies involved in aquaculture licensing and monitoring processes;

ACKNOWLEDGING conflicts between aquaculture activities and other users of the coastal zone in addition to the main variables and factors affecting the development of aquaculture activities,

STRESSING IN PARTICULAR the need for the definition of common criteria for the selection of sites for aquaculture activities,

BEARING IN MIND that the sustainable development of aquaculture can be significantly facilitated by a clear vision of Allocation Zones for Aquaculture (AZAs);

DESIRING to promote in the GFCM area of competence the establishment of AZAs as a management tool for marine spatial planning;

ADOPTS, in conformity with the provision of of Article III paragraph 1 (h) of the GFCM Agreement, that:

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-contracting Parties of the GFCM (hereafter referred to as CPCs) shall include in their national marine spatial planning strategy of aquaculture development and management schemes for the identification and allocation of specific zones reserved for aquaculture activities.
2. AZAs shall comprise specific areas dedicated to aquaculture activities, and any future development thereof and their identification shall be based on the best social, economic and environmental information available in order to prevent conflicts among different users for increased competitiveness, sharing costs and services and to assure investments.
3. AZAs shall be established within the remit of local or national aquaculture plans of CPCs with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of aquaculture development and of promoting equity and resilience of interlinked social and ecological systems.
4. AZAs shall be established within the framework of ICZM, with regulations and/or restrictions being assigned to each zone in accordance with their degree of suitability for aquaculture activities and carrying capacity limit.
5. The zoning process for the establishment of AZAs shall follow a participatory approach, be transparent, coordinated by the main authority responsible for marine planning at local level and carried out in cooperation with the different authorities involved in the aquaculture licensing and leasing procedures and monitoring. The coordination of competences among the different public authorities involved in aquaculture licensing and leasing procedures and monitoring shall be ensured at national level.
6. Zones to be allocated to aquaculture activities shall be classified, inter alia, as, “areas suitable for aquaculture activities”, “areas unsuitable for aquaculture activities” and “areas for aquaculture activities with particular regulation and/or restriction”; guidelines shall be developed to this end;
7. AZAs, once established, shall be based on legal and regulatory provisions integrated into the national legislation or other adequate national administration level and on inter-ministerial coordination in order to ensure their effective implementation.
8. For every AZA, an allowable zone of effect of aquaculture activities could be defined in the close vicinity of each farm. Such zone shall be accompanied by a Environmental Monitoring Programme.
9. The Environmental Monitoring Programme shall be flexible and adaptable, taking into account scale (time and space) approach, and monitoring shall be mandatory.