



# CONCLUSIONS OF THE FIRST REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA

27–30 November 2013, St. Julian's, Malta

## Preamble

The following conclusions have been developed based on the outcomes of the First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (27–30 November 2013, Malta). They are grouped under one cluster of general and transversal proposals and five clusters relating to the specific thematic sessions of the symposium and are put forth to urge actions in support of sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

The Symposium was attended by more than 170 participants, including policy-makers, scientists, practitioners, fishers representatives, civil society organizations, NGOs, research institutions, international organizations etc., who shared their views, opinions and experiences during the meeting. It was organized under the overall coordination of the GFCM Secretariat and with the active support of the co-organizers: FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, FAO Regional Projects (AdriaMed, CopeMed, EastMed and MedSudMed), WWF, MedPAN and CIHEAM Bari.

In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea small-scale fisheries represent an important share of the fish caught. Roughly 80 percent of the fisheries are small-scale in terms of fishing units. The socio-economic role of small-scale fisheries, their culture and ancient traditions have long been recognized. They often rely on a family-based structure and they are namely characterized by fishing activities close to the home ports, mainly employing relatively small vessels powered with engines with reduced fuel consumption and non-motorized units and using a great number of fishing techniques and mainly static fishing gear. Small-scale fisheries products

are often sold directly on landing beaches, in local markets or for exportation and provide these markets with high quality and fresh marine food. Nonetheless, it had been acknowledged that in order to provide a full picture of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, comprehensive information should be collected from riparian countries and analyzed in depth. Improving the knowledge on small-scale fisheries will help in defining strategies to address the sector in terms of management, monitoring and sustainable development actions.

The GFCM Framework Programme acknowledges the importance of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea while aiming at underpinning ongoing efforts of the FAO relating to the development of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines), expected to be adopted by the FAO Committee for Fisheries in June 2014.

## **General conclusions**

There is a widespread interest in securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, consistent with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and with the aim of contributing to the UN Millennium Development Goals and the commitments taken within the framework of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development “Rio +20”. Strong political commitment, intergovernmental cooperation and technical assistance for Mediterranean and Black Sea riparian States are needed. New transversal governance and management approaches must be developed and translated to actions underpinning the consolidation of the knowledge base, data collection and analysis, management and co-management mechanisms and integration with environmental objectives, including marine protected areas (MPAs).

Participants acknowledged the importance of the first Regional Symposium on Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to promote cooperation at all levels. In this respect, gratitude was expressed towards the Government of Malta for having hosted the symposium which was vowed for prompting the extension of the MedArtNet platform to new professional organizations.

In particular, the meeting proposed to:

- Launch a regional programme in the GFCM area fostering a domain-by-domain knowledge of all the components linked to small-scale fisheries with involving all interested stakeholders. The work plan and outputs of this programme are expected to be defined by the co-organizers, and any other interested partner, in connection with a preparatory meeting to be held during the first quarter of 2014. The organization of a second Regional Symposium on Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea should be envisaged to focus on more specific topics and to evaluate progress made with

the regional programme on small-scale fisheries. The Algerian delegation offered to host this second symposium;

- Establish, under the auspices of FAO–GFCM, a task force aimed at supporting Mediterranean and Black Sea countries in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and the creation, support or extension of platforms of small-scale fishers and fishworkers;
- Foster a strategy underpinning the valorization of opportunities and products of small-scale fisheries for the benefit of local communities and stakeholders.

Participants invited the GFCM Secretariat to promote the conclusions of the symposium in the context of high-level political and institutional meetings, as well as other pertinent fora that could foster sustainable small-scale fisheries.

## **Specific conclusions relating to the five thematic sessions of the symposium**

### **Thematic session I – Current situation of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea: strategies and methodologies for an effective analysis of the sector**

Small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black sea have been acknowledged as the main fishing sector providing food supply and livelihood in both regions. Small-scale fisheries are family-based and fishers' incomes are in general lower than their country GDP per capita. It appears that the sector has not received so far at the national level the support that it deserves, while trying to thrive in the same fishing grounds exploited by different actors. On the other hand, the scarcity of small-scale fisheries data, including information on biological indices, catch trends and socio-economic indicators, certainly demands a country-oriented monitoring system.

In light of the discussions held during thematic session I, it is proposed to:

- Bridge gaps in data and information on small-scale fisheries, their interactions with other human activities and their socio-economic aspects, with a view to developing permanent national, sub-regional and regional databases and information systems building upon the lessons learnt from case studies undertaken so far;
- Develop through the proposed programme an information monitoring system to improve knowledge on small-scale fisheries and collect relevant data and

information on the activities of the fleet, including parameters and synthetic indicators of social, economic and environmental relevance;<sup>1</sup>

- Launch, within the remit of the proposed regional programme on small-scale fisheries, a survey on small-scale fisheries in Mediterranean and Black Sea countries to provide a detailed status of small-scale fisheries;
- Recognize the socio-economic specificities of small-scale fisheries as well as the seasonal and unstable features of the sector, in order to enable investments for their development, to improve the human conditions of the people involved and to eradicate poverty;
- Include small-scale fisheries in national fisheries management plans and monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activities to deter illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, identify fishing grounds and address aspects such as safety at sea while building capacity and raising awareness among stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Participation in the Working Group on a common methodology to carry out socio-economic analysis of the GFCM Subcommittee on Social and Economic Sciences (Budva, Montenegro, 3 February 2014) is encouraged to underpin the collection of socio-economic data and the use of socio-economic indicators in small-scale fisheries.

## **Thematic session II – Management and co-management options for small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea**

Fisheries co-management has the potential to become an effective delivery mechanism for sustainable fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Joint multi-stakeholder decision-making results in increasing fishers' adherence to the rules and developing their sense of ownership. Additionally, co-management committees can foster community-based data collection programmes, gather valuable traditional environmental knowledge and involve fishers in MCS activities, hence reducing costs and increasing efficiency. Overall, co-management allows for an adaptive management of fishing activities tailored to specific local realities. However, for co-management to succeed there is a need for more case studies to be undertaken, for an adequate flow of information on lessons learnt and capacity-building programmes, in order to enable different stakeholders to acquire essential skills.

In light of the discussions held during thematic session II, it is proposed to:

- Support (i.e. the GFCM and all interested partners) the implementation of co-managed fisheries, including through the critical analysis of available case studies, the compilation of best practices and the wide dissemination of main achievements;
- Promote in a participatory way the creation of an active network of fisheries co-management pilot cases in the GFCM area which should ideally include, on the basis of the proposed regional programme on small-scale fisheries, at least one per country and ensure an equitable geographical coverage at sub-regional level;
- Evaluate capacity-building needs for fisheries co-management based on lessons learnt, including support to community-based data collection programmes and MCS.

## **Thematic session III – Integration of small-scale fisheries in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**

In the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, small-scale fisheries mainly occur in coastal areas, and MPAs are mostly located in these very areas. Consequently, small-scale fishers and MPA managers share the prerequisite to their end goals, namely making sure that biodiversity is preserved and fish stocks are restored and maintained at a sustainable level. Although MPAs are neither the only tool available to manage fisheries nor the sole conservation management option, they represent one potential solution to deal jointly with several problems at the same time. Small-scale fishers remain too often outside the relevant processes in which they should be directly involved (e.g. monitoring, management, surveillance). In the case of MPAs, their likely costs and benefits to fisheries should be evaluated

whenever adopting protection measures. Management would hence become more adaptive and rely on effective participation. This would ensure that the traditional knowledge (and know-how) of fishers is taken into account along with science. Capacity-building needs to be strengthened and funding-related considerations should be regarded as priorities.

In light of the discussions held during thematic session III, it is proposed to:

- Enhance a participatory and bottom-up approach inclusive of small-scale fishers communities in all the phases leading to the establishment of MPAs and promote a stronger involvement of small-scale fishers in MCS, in order to manage more effectively MPAs by developing a sense of ownership and responsibility;
- Facilitate the development and implementation of a work plan aimed at the adequate management of resources in and around MPAs, actively involving small-scale fishers, fisheries managers in addition to relevant institutions (i.e. GFCM and other national and international bodies as per their mandate) and other partners in the implementation of the proposed regional programme on small-scale fisheries;<sup>2</sup>
- Ensure that the network of MPA managers in the GFCM area contributes to facilitate cooperation between MedPAN and small-scale fishers' platforms with the support of GFCM, to strengthen understanding, capacity-building, relationships and the synergies required for effective participatory processes and/or co-management mechanisms for the conservation of marine ecosystems.

#### **Thematic session IV – Enhancing small-scale fisheries value chains in the Mediterranean and Black Sea**

Improving the quality of life of coastal communities has a multidimensional character, depending on the interaction among the different components which are relevant to prompt empowerment. Integrating fishing activities with other economic activities is a precondition to internalize some of the positive externalities of small-scale fisheries. Knowledge of value chains remains sporadic and confined within national borders while interactions among actors in value chains – including north-south – remain largely unexplored. The problem of fragmentation and imbalance in bargaining power between large marketing firms and downstream fisheries operators should be addressed. Vertical and horizontal collaboration could ultimately lead to win-win partnership models.

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<sup>2</sup> Participation of the network of MPA managers in the GFCM MPA Working Group (Budva, Montenegro, 3 February 2014) is encouraged to further discuss all issues linked to interactions between fisheries and MPAs.

In light of the discussions held during thematic session IV, it is proposed to:

- Support private and public stakeholders in the sector in acquiring better knowledge on local and regional value chains, particularly in connection with issues relating to the creation of added value and revenue distribution through the implementation of good practices/quality system, ecolabelling, enhancing human resources and concerted actions with local and regional authorities/organizations;
- Identify the needs of Mediterranean and Black Sea countries for an educational and scientific programme while supporting national institutions in the implementation of actions to empower fisheries coastal communities, highlighting the importance of multi-functionality and diversification activities;
- Set up technological information systems and networks to obtain and share information and policies on multi-functionality, diversification and supply chains and assist decision-makers in the development of strategies on small-scale fisheries at the national and regional level;
- Lay the ground, through the proposed regional programme on small-scale fisheries, for an integrated horizontal and vertical coordination, with special emphasis on north-south interactions throughout the global supply chain, including via the strengthening of the role of regional organizations and the identification of best practices for professional stakeholders;
- Encourage the creation of cooperatives and consortium of professionals, namely to enable direct sales.

### **Thematic session – V Setting up a regional platform to promote the implementation of the voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines)**

The small-scale fisheries sector suffers from low visibility in spite of its importance, and the success of the SSF Guidelines will ultimately depend on the possibility to ensure increased recognition of and attention to the sector's importance. The SSF Guidelines offer a unique opportunity to support small-scale fisheries as they embody a comprehensive and holistic framework for both policy and actions. Their implementation will require concerted efforts from a vast array of actors as well as political will and resources. Civil society organizations (CSOs) – representing fishers, fish workers and their communities – governments, NGOs, research institutions and other stakeholders are therefore called upon to support this process. In this context, the efforts by FAO and other partners to promote and support small-scale fishers and fish workers' organizations were acknowledged by the symposium. Collaboration, communication and sharing of experiences and knowledge should define future actions to be undertaken.

In light of the discussions held during thematic session V, it is proposed to:

- Increase the visibility of small-scale fisheries actors and facilitate the engagement of CSOs and other stakeholders in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines;
- Integrate the provisions of the SSF Guidelines in regional, national and local policies, strategies and action plans, taking into account the need to consider responsible fisheries in parallel to social and economic development and to apply a human rights-based approach, and allocate adequate human and financial resources for their implementation;
- Support the establishment and development of organizations and networks created for and by small-scale fisheries actors and having clear and shared objectives as well as adequate funding to transform shared concerns and problems into shared solutions;
- Facilitate the establishment of regional confederations to gather relevant professional organizations and platforms;
- Promote the inclusion of both men and women in decision-making processes, develop community-based monitoring and evaluation systems, ensure the collection of gender disaggregated data, support women's organizations and work towards gender equality;
- Work together within the remit of the proposed regional programme on small-scale fisheries to create and support, following a participatory approach, one or more platforms of small-scale fishers and fishworkers for enhanced communication and information to support small-scale fisheries and the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

## **Acknowledgements**

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