



# Status of GFCM Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs)

**First GFCM Working Group on Marine Protected Areas**  
*Bar, Montenegro, 3 February 2014*

2

## What is GFCM and what it does?

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- The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean is the RFMO with competence over the Mediterranean and Black Sea
- Promotes the conservation, rational management and best utilization of living marine resources; ensuring an appropriate protection of marine species, ecosystems and habitats which could be threatened by fisheries
- GFCM adopts fisheries conservation and management measures, binding to 24 Members; one of the few RFMOs worldwide **entitled to adopt spatial management measures** that regulate or restrict human activities **in the high seas**

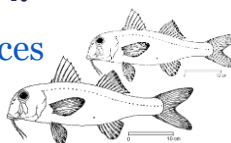
## What is a GFCM FRA?

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- Spatial protection tool under GFCM authority
- Its establishment implies **fisheries restrictions** (limit or prohibit certain fisheries/gears) within delimited areas

## What are the goals of a FRA?

- 1) **preserving fisheries related resources**
  - nurseries, reproduction and spawning grounds, adults and juveniles, etc.
- 2) **protect specific and vulnerable habitats**
  - sponges associations, deep-sea coral banks, seagrasses meadows, seamount areas, etc.

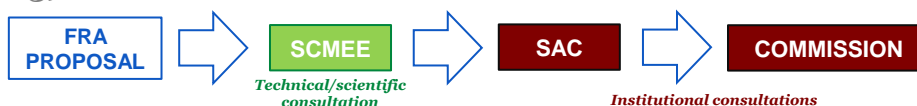


## Who can propose the establishment of a FRA to the GFCM and How ?

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- 1) **FRAs can be proposed by any stakeholder, e.g.:**
  - Institutions, scientists, policy-makers, NGOs, private sector
- 2) **Through an *ad-hoc* form available on the GFCM website**
  - providing information on the *area, site description, biological features, human activities and impacts, legal status, objective* of the FRA, etc.

### 3) **Process:**



## Existing FRAs (1/3)

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**Rec. GFCM/30/2006/3** established 3 FRAs, falling both in high seas and national waters, where **i) fishing activities with towed dredges and bottom trawl nets are prohibited** and **ii) Members have to ensure that these areas are protected from the impact of any other activity**

### “*Lophelia* reef off Capo Santa Maria di Leuca”

- 1673 km<sup>2</sup> GSA 19, Italy
- unique ecosystem of **cold-water corals**



### “The Nile delta area cold hydrocarbon seeps”

- 6043 km<sup>2</sup> GSA 26, Egypt
- **cold hydrocarbon seeps** and unique living communities of chemosynthetic organisms such as **polychaetes and bivalves**



### “The Eratosthenes Seamount”

- 14792 km<sup>2</sup> GSA 25, Cyprus
- rare deep-sea benthic associations such as **scleractinian corals and deep-sea sponges**



## Existing FRAs (2/3)

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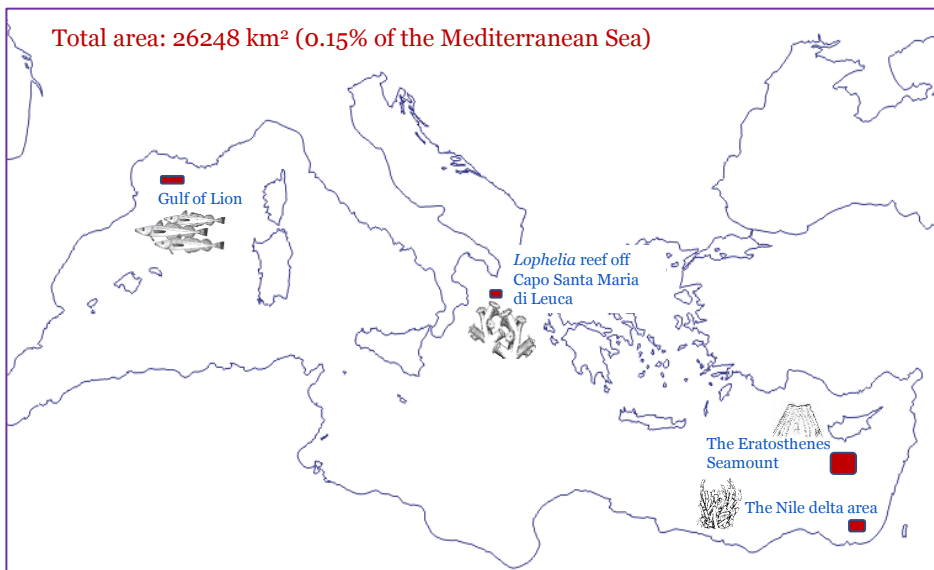
**Rec. GFCM/33/2009/1** established a FRA falling both in high seas and national waters where fishing effort has been frozen to the level of 2008 to prevent any increase of fishing activities. Members have to ensure that: **i) only vessels authorized to fish in 2008** can continue to fish in the FRA; **ii) overall fishing effort cannot exceed the effort applied in 2008**

### “FRA of the Gulf of Lion”

- 3742 km<sup>2</sup> GSA 07, France
- Important spawners' aggregations (hake, monk fish, lobsters) reported to occur in the area



## Existing FRAs (3/3)



## Status of the FRAs: the questionnaires (1/2)

- In order to review the status of the FRAs and to gather information on their (effective) management, in July 2013, the GFCM Secretariat submitted a questionnaire to its Members asking them to complete it on a voluntary basis
- Each member received **1 questionnaire** with questions specifically developed on the basis of the geographic distance between FRAs and Members

## Status of the FRAs: the questionnaires (2/2)

Information on:

- Transposition of GFCM decisions into national laws
- Fishing and other activities carried out in the FRAs
- Delimitation of the area (buoys, nautical charts)
- Control, surveillance and monitoring of the FRAs
- Scientific research carried out to study the protected habitats
- Plan of proposing new FRAs to GFCM
- Level of fishing effort and vessel list\*

\*for the Gulf of Lion only

23 questionnaires sent → 13 questionnaires received

- **Albania, Algeria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey**

57% of survey-sample, 4 out of 5 of the Members in proximity of the FRAs have replied

## Status of the FRAs: results (1/3)

### “*Lophelia* reef off Capo Santa Maria di Leuca” (Italy)

- Legal implementation: EU Regulation 1343/2011 (✓)
- Area delimited: no (X)
- Bottom trawling: not occurring (✓)
- Control and patrolling: yes, Italian Coast Guard, VMS, etc. (✓)
- Other activities with potential negative impact: no (✓)
- Scientific research: > 20 papers on *Lophelia* ecosystem since 2000 (✓)



### “The Eratosthenes Seamount” (Cyprus)

- Legal implementation: EU Regulation 1343/2011+national law (✓)
- Area delimited: no (X)
- Bottom trawling: not occurring (✓)
- Control and patrolling: yes, sea patrols, VMS, etc. (✓)
- Other activities with potential negative impact: no (✓)
- Scientific research: only few studies on cetaceans



## Status of the FRAs: results (2/3)

### “The Nile delta area cold hydrocarbon seeps” (Egypt)

- Legal implementation: no (X)
- Area delimited: no (X)
- Bottom trawling: some (?) (X)
- Control and patrolling: no (X)
- Other activities with potential negative impact: gas exploration (X)
- Scientific research: no (X)



Note: Egypt underlines the need of assistance to adopt specific measures

### “FRA in the Gulf of Lion” (France)

- Legal implementation: EU Regulation 1343/2011+national law (✓)
- Changes to the 2008 AVL: no (✓)
- Control and patrolling: yes, sea patrols, VMS data, etc. (✓)
- Control of fishing effort: VMS, Ifremer (✓)
- Comparison of 2008/2012 effort data: increased effort according to questionnaire; steady effort according to official GFCM data for 2008 (?)



## Status of the FRAs: results (3/3)

### Other Members

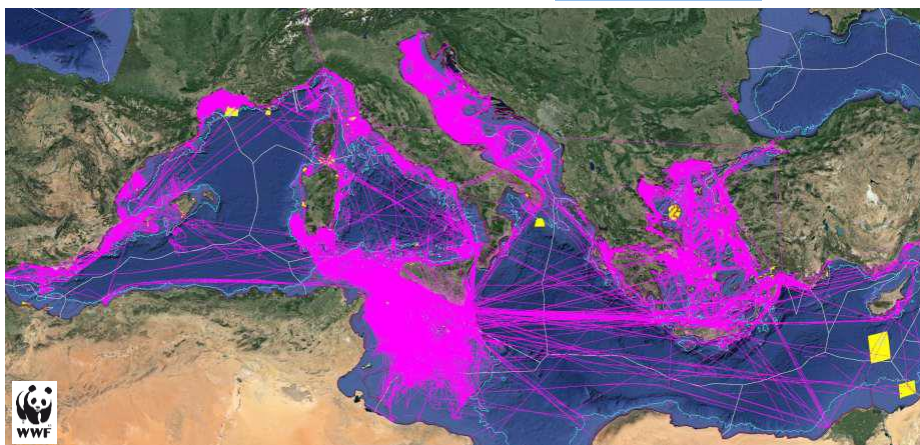
- Legal implementation: EU countries, *EU Regulation 1343/2011*; other countries, *no implementation*
- General comments: *“our fleet does not fish there ...”*
- Planning of proposals for new FRAs?: all countries *“no”*, Albania only indicates that requests for FRAs in the future could be foreseen within the establishment of new national MPAs.

## Status of the FRAs: main conclusions (1/2)

- Good efforts to protect the two FRAs off Italy and Cyprus;
- Good efforts to manage the FRA in the Gulf of Lion by France, but further investigations to assess clearly that the effort is being kept in line with the levels of 2008;
- FRA in the Nile delta seems not to be properly recognized and protected;
- Scarce interest by Members in the FRA protection tool.

## Status of the FRAs: main conclusions (2/2)

<h3>Strengths</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simple process to propose a FRA</li> <li>• no applicants restrictions (e.g. not only GFCM Members)</li> </ul>	<h3>Weaknesses</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difficult to quantify the effectiveness of FRAs</li> <li>• correct management entirely under countries' responsibility</li> </ul>
<h3>Opportunities</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• internationally recognized need to create networks of MPAs also protecting high seas</li> <li>• GFCM makes available a legal framework and a protection tool</li> </ul>	<h3>Threats</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• socio-economics implications of limiting/forbidding fishing activities</li> <li>• overlapping with other protection initiatives</li> </ul>



### WWF Mediterranean Programme

Study to assess the footprint of Mediterranean trawling vessels (2012), Automatic Identification System (AIS), Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Vessel Detection System (VDS) data (3559 vessels)

- **According to the results, tracks obtained for trawling vessels indicate that FRAs prohibitions seem to be implemented and respected** (preliminary results as not all data were available)

*Source: Assessment of the footprint of the Mediterranean trawling fleets with respect to the 1000 m isobath and GFCM FRAs in 2012 (WWF)*



# Thank you for your attention!

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