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SMALL-SCALE FISHERS' FORUM

Handling equipment and simple vessel adaptations to improve post-release survival of vulnerable species bycatch in small-scale fisheries

Summary of the workshop

The incidental catch of vulnerable species in fisheries including in small-scale fisheries is a conservation issue in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Bycatch can bring a number of issues for the daily operation of small-scale fishers, including identification, handling and safe release, and reporting. Within the context of the MedBycatch project, this session presented and discussed best practices, issues and hands-on solutions regarding the handling of bycatch of vulnerable species in small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean. Experts and small-scale fisheries workers presented and shared their knowledge and experiences, and discussed solutions at hand.

Summary of key issues, discussions and conclusions

Sanja Matić Skoko (Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, Croatia): "Handling of vulnerable species findings from Local ecological knowledge of SSF in the Mediterranean". Presented data are based on the collection of local traditional and ecological knowledge of fishers on bycatch and bycatch mitigation in Croatia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey to support the identification of existing, acceptable and applicable solutions for bycatch mitigation. Main findings can be summarized as follows: (1) fishers try to avoid killing endangered, threatened and protected species (ETP), (2) ETP species were mostly caught alive and released immediately, (3) fishers are somewhat familiar with how to handle with live, injured and dead ETP species (particularly turtles). As recommendation, it is necessary to: (1) organize training of fishers regarding the handling of ETP species, either living or dead and (2) try to build trust between fishers, experts and the legislator in the sense that all future actions and measures will not be taken to penalize and complicate the fisher's work but to achieve the common welfare in terms of both ETP species conservation and sustainable fisheries achievement.

Dimitrios K. Moutopoulos / University of Patras, presented some background of the legislative framework and the findings of a study compiling post-release mortality independent studies and from questionnaires responses collected from fishers in the Mediterranean. From the questionnaires conducted, survival at the time of release exhibited the highest values (100%) for cetaceans and seals whereas moderate values (50%) for sea turtles and sharks and rays.

fishers are more confident about releasing species that have been protected for years, like

post release mortality. The presenter also highlighted that future recommendations could focus on identifying high-risk fisheries and the potential impacts of various fleets/fisheries. In this case, a risk-based analysis may highlight areas where more detailed assessment is required. Improving fisher participation to ensure their contribution of expertise is critical to meeting the above target. Participatory management could lead to power sharing between end-users (fishers) and stakeholders by facilitating closer links between fishers and scientists and increasing transparency of scientific advice.